

# Real Voices

## Are they being heard?

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Child sexual exploitation in Greater Manchester  
A follow-up report by Ann Coffey MP. March 2017



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## Executive summary

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### The first Real Voices report

The high profile Rochdale sexual exploitation case in 2012 - along with Rotherham, Oldham, Oxford, Telford, Stockport and Peterborough – revealed the shocking extent of child sexual exploitation.

In December 2013, Tony Lloyd, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester, asked me to conduct an independent inquiry into what progress had been made since 2012 and what more needed to be done to tackle child sexual exploitation in the region.

My report, Real Voices – Child Sexual Exploitation in Greater Manchester, published in 2014, explored the underlying attitudes in the police and other agencies, which meant that perpetrators could exploit children, knowing that if they were reported, it would be the victim on trial, not them.

It caused shockwaves by identifying that child sexual exploitation had become a ‘social norm’ in some communities in Greater Manchester.

The report called for a sea change in attitudes away from a culture of blaming children and young people for bringing about their own sexual exploitation.

In collecting my evidence I spoke to everyone who worked in this difficult area but I prioritised listening to children and young people and put their voices about their experiences at the very front of my report.

Real Voices recommended that the fight against CSE had to be led by young people and their voices had to be heard.

### Real Voices now – Are they being heard?

Two years on, Tony Lloyd, GM Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner, asked me to review some aspects of the report.

In this new review I have looked at how far attitudes have changed in the police, agencies and the wider community.

I have looked at whether children and young people in Greater Manchester have a stronger voice now and if this has led to cultural changes in organisations and innovative ways of working with young people to shape and deliver services.

There is an impressive amount of local leadership, energy and initiative across Greater Manchester and I have referenced some specific projects to illustrate innovative new approaches involving children and young people.

There are many more examples that could have been used.

The challenge now is how to use the knowledge gained from these projects to drive forward the cultural change in all organisations across Greater Manchester that is

needed to safeguard children better.

This report is clear that it is not the sole responsibility of the police and statutory agencies but that the wider community, together with parents and carers, have a responsibility to keep our children safe.

## **Child Sexual Exploitation**

The updated definition of Child Sexual Exploitation issued by the Home Office in February 2017 makes clear: "Child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange".

The new definition reads: "*Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.*"

## **Greater Manchester Police**

Greater Manchester Police have undergone cultural changes in their approach to tackling child sexual exploitation over the past two to three years.

This is evidenced by increased reporting of CSE offences, increased flagging of CSE on the police computer and increased intelligence reports.

This heightened awareness amongst the wider public is largely due to the work of the GMP and Project Phoenix across Greater Manchester with various initiatives to raise awareness in the community. The work being done in schools is also very important.

As the extent of the level of sexual offences, including child sexual exploitation, is revealed because of confidence in reporting and increased awareness and

training, one cannot fail to be shocked at the levels of sexual abuse of children in our communities.

## **Increase in CSE flagged sexual offences**

According to GMP figures, for the year 2013 there were 146 CSE flagged sexual offences and for 2016 there were 714 recorded – almost quadrupled.

## **Increase in all sexual offences against children**

There has also been an increase in all sexual offences against children. To give a context for incidents of CSE it is important to examine these figures too.

There were 2,317 sexual offences committed between the beginning of November 2013 and the end of October 2014 against children and young people under 18. In the period between the beginning of November 2015 and the end of October 2016 there were 3,489 crimes recorded – an increase of 50 per cent increase.

During that three year period total sexual offences committed against children under 18 were 9035. Shockingly 4,066 (45 per cent) of those offences were against girls and boys under 13 years old.

Of the 9035 offences, 1603 (17.7 per cent) were flagged as CSE offences and of those 350 were committed against girls and boys under 13 years old (22 per cent).

## **Increase in numbers of young people identified as at risk**

Since Real Voices, GMP have identified more young people at risk of CSE than ever before.

In October 2016 there were 1,732 children and young people now flagged as being a victim or at risk of CSE of which 1,465 were girls and 267 boys (15 per cent).

By way of comparison in February 2015 there were 650 young people flagged.

According to GMP, in October 2016, there were 1139

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people flagged as known or suspected CSE offenders in GM – more than doubled since Real Voices.

### **Increase in intelligence reports**

There have been 10,269 piece of intelligence received about CSE, since Real Voices published in October 2014 and June 2016, including anonymous tip offs from the public. This includes 3,277 in the six months alone between January 2016 and June 2016.

This indicates a heightened awareness in the community since Real voices reported that GMP had received 2,286 pieces of intelligence in the ten months between March 2013 and January 2014.

This is the result of strong messaging, training, awareness by Project Phoenix across GM (See Changing Culture in the Community).

### **Listening to young people**

Real Voices prioritised listening to children and young people and advocated that they should lead the fightback against CSE.

Two years on there are now many more innovative examples of where children and young people are actually helping to co-design services. At the moment the projects are small in number but they have already provided valuable insight into how young people can be engaged in the delivery of services that work for them. (See Listening to Children)

This means that we are moving on from consulting children to their full participation in designing services.

Two such innovative examples are Achieving Change Together (ACT) and 'Not Just a Thought'.

One key message learnt from co-designing with children was that if we want to engage with children who are being sexually exploited or at risk of it, we need to work with problems that they identify as a priority for them, not what we think should be their priority. If we don't listen to them why should they listen to us?

There is tremendous potential in this approach where young people are active participants in the delivery of services.

The challenge now is how to share knowledge across the whole of Greater Manchester about how relationships between young people and the services they use can be transformed.

### **The Digital Revolution**

The use of new technology is fundamentally changing the face of crime. Conviction rates for online grooming are very high because there is supporting evidence in digital format.

A significant proportion of grooming for CSE starts online and this is increasing demand on GMP's Digital Investigative Unit's resources.

There has been an improvement in waiting times since June 2014 when there was a backlog of more than 16 months for 'non urgent' computer cases to be allocated to the DIU, which examines computers for evidence.

The latest figures for December 2016 show that the oldest case awaiting investigation is five months.

The increased use of mobile phones and social media apps by children and young people increases the chances for the exploitation of children. It is now estimated that 100,000 children aged 8 and about 20,000 aged six have mobiles, according to recent research by Avivia published in January 2017.

This means that the demands on the DIU will continue.

At the same time GMP and Phoenix have taken initiatives to harness social media to prevent child sexual exploitation.

Phoenix's "It's Not Okay" campaign, website and facebook account has become more extensive over the last two years.

Phoenix also has a Twitter account @notokayGM and most of the operational, district-based, multi-agency

Phoenix teams also have their own Twitter accounts. Many of them also have their own Facebook and Instagram account.

Social media is fast moving and young people are in the best position to understand the developments. So it is very important that they are involved in how social media can be best used to inform children about keeping safe.

This was the thinking behind a new Citizen App CTZN @getCTZN, funded by a Home Office Grant, which is being co- designed by young people in Greater Manchester for 13 to 18 year olds. (See In the Palm of Your hand).

## **Working with the community**

Informing the community is key to protecting children. The increase in intelligence reports from the community does show increasing awareness.

There has been strong messaging training and awareness raising by Project Phoenix across GM with workers in hotels, councils, shopping centres, taxi drivers, night time economy workers, and housing associations as well as speaking to children in schools youth clubs and colleges.

In addition there are high profile twice yearly themed Weeks of Action to raise awareness of CSE. (See Changing Culture in Communities).

In April 2015 the Greater Manchester Combined Authority approved a new 'place based' approach in Tameside and Wigan to integrating services.

This emphasises that different approaches that are needed for different local communities and that problems have to be solved by community engagement. Place based teams will be in all the 10 GM authorities by April 2017.

This presents an opportunity for engaging local communities in the protection of children vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

## **Voluntary and community groups**

The voluntary community and social enterprise sector,

made up of small groups, could have a bigger role in getting messages about CSE out to the community.

The Greater Manchester Campaign against Sexual Exploitation, which has a membership of 60 large national and local charities, was set up after Real Voices. But there is still a need to transfer the expertise and knowledge about CSE held by large charities into smaller grassroots community groups.

## **Schools**

Schools, like health, are a universal provision and are vitally important in increasing awareness of child sexual exploitation amongst children. A lot of work is going on in Greater Manchester schools to teach children about healthy relationships, however the extent of this varies. (See Schools).

Project Phoenix has produced guidance documents for both primary and secondary schools in delivering age appropriate messages about healthy relationships, consent, grooming, exploitation and online safety, as part of the schools safeguarding responsibilities.

In March 2017 the Government announced that Sex and Relationship Education was to be made compulsory. Children from the age of four will learn about safe and healthy relationships and children in secondary schools will learn about both sex and relationship education.

This is an important step forward in ensuring that all children will be given information about healthy relationships.

But to be really effective this must be part of an ongoing whole school safeguarding strategy recognising the important contribution that young people themselves can make in developing materials and acting as mentors for other children.

## **Social norms survey**

Young people are very keen to 'fit in' and perception of what their peers are doing is an important factor in

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influencing and shaping their behaviour.

Following Real Voices, which said that child sexual exploitation had become a 'social norm' in some communities, a 'social norms' survey is now being carried out of Year 10 pupils – aged 14 – in GM schools, as part of the CTZN project.

Interim results – Sext messages and images

There have been 2,452 responses so far from Year 10 pupils - 1,303 said they were female and 1035 male.

A further 43 children described themselves as transgender, with 18 describing themselves in a way not identified in the survey and 53 pupils chose not to answer.

The interim results survey showed that there was a difference between reality and perception.

For example in relation to sexting children believed their peers were sending and receiving more 'sext' messages or images than they were.

12.4 per cent of children admitted sending a sext message or image themselves but one third believed that most of their peers were sending sext messages or images.

22 per cent of children said they had received either a sext message or image but 34 per cent thought that most Year 10s had received one - a 50 per cent increase.

This is a very valuable piece of research because perception of what is a social norm is powerful because it becomes a pressure for that social norm and yet it is often not based in reality. If children believe that their peers are sending and receiving more sext messages than them, it might become an extra pressure on them to do so.

## Missing children

Children who go missing from home or care can be at risk of CSE and other forms of exploitation. (see 'Where do they go?')

Fresh figures prepared for this inquiry by GMP show that 4,376 individual children under 18 in Greater Manchester

went missing between January and November 14, 2016, generating 16,099 reports.

Of those 743 (17 per cent) were children looked after by the local authority, generating 7,689 reports – almost half of all incidents.

This is a 35 per cent increase in numbers of children going missing from 2014 to 2016 with a 64% increase in missing reports.

Similar figures produced for Real Voices two years ago showed that 3,242 children and young people under 18 went missing from January to September 2014, generating 9,789 reports. Of those 539 were children looked after by the local authority, generating 4,520 reports – again almost half of all incidents.

Higher numbers may be due to better reporting and more stringent use of the absent category but there are still too many children going missing in Greater Manchester.

The 'absent' figures for GM between January and November 14, 2016 is 4,171, of which 3,879 reports were generated by children under 18. The 'absent' category, which did not require an automatic police response, has now been scrapped. (See Where do they go?)

The OPCC is investing in a Greater Manchester Missing Children Project to be run by the Children's Society (in collaboration with Urban Outreach and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street). It will focus on children who have gone missing between two and five times within the last 12 months to understand why they go repeatedly go missing and aims to reduce the number of incidents by early interventions.

Greater Manchester's "top ten" children have been reported missing a total of 1,843 times during their lifetime and the most frequently missing child has been reported missing on 222 occasions, according to the OPCC specification document issued in 2016 for the new Greater Manchester Missing Children Project.

It is encouraging that children and young people will be involved in co-designing and delivering this service.

## **The crisis in the children's homes 'market'**

Given that half of all missing children incidents involve looked after children, I felt it was important to look at what is happening in the children's homes 'market'. We looked at the year 2014/15 for some indication of how the care market was functioning in Greater Manchester at that time.

In financial year 2014/15, the ten local authorities within the Greater Manchester combined authority area were spending £66.6 million per annum on beds in registered children's homes, a mean cost of £163,304 per child per annum, £3,140 per child per week.

There was a total of 693 places in 182 registered children's homes in Greater Manchester at the end of March 2015. There were 400 children placed in those homes implying a vacancy rate of 293.

A quarter of the children (100) were placed in children's homes from authorities outside the area of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Half of all children placed in children's homes (200) by the ten GM authorities were placed outside their home authority and a quarter were placed outside the GM area altogether.

This begs the question about whether the provision in children's homes in Greater Manchester is meeting the needs of Greater Manchester children.

The other key question is why there are so many missing episodes from children's homes and what part do out of borough placements play?

One of the key findings of the APPG report on children missing from care, which I chaired in 2012, was that that children in placements outside their local authority boundaries are at high risk of going missing. Data obtained from local authorities for the report revealed that in those areas that responded to information requests, on average 50% of missing looked after children are children who go missing from placements outside the

boundaries of their local authority.

Commissioning of children's homes in GM should aim for a better understanding of why children go missing from children's homes and whether out of area placements are a critical factor.

## **Healthy childhoods**

Real Voices was very concerned about the impact of CSE on children's physical and mental health and resources available. The report called for CSE to be made a public health priority.

The majority of funding from Public Health focuses on issues that are primarily targeted at adults such as smoking and diabetes. More focus on support for children could prevent some of these issues emerging in later life.

There is a wide difference across the region in the amount Greater Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups are planning to spend on mental health services for children in 2017.

Young people should be involved in the design and delivery of public health messages including awareness of different forms of child sexual exploitation. Their messages are more likely to hit home because young people have a better understanding of the underlying pressures on them.

## Cultural changes in Greater Manchester Police

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This chapter looks at what changes in attitudes there have been in Greater Manchester Police and other agencies since the Real Voices report two years ago made numerous recommendations, including calling for a "sea change" in culture.

In the reports into the various national child sexual exploitation scandals there was sometimes a view by police and social workers that children consented to their sexual abuse. Indeed in law there remained offences relating to 'child prostitution'.

The Serious Crime Act passed in 2015, replaced the references to child prostitution with sexually exploited child. So in law there are now offences relating to child sexual exploitation.

This is an important change because it makes it clear that

there can be no issue of consent or fault on the part of the victim. No child under 18 can be described as a child prostitute. They are a sexually exploited child.

To recognise child sexual exploitation involves an understanding that sex takes place after a grooming process where there is unequal power.

**"Child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange."**

Exploitation has many forms and exploited children and young people define their experience differently. Each is an individual experience and children sometimes do not recognise that they are being exploited.

The latest definition of Child Sexual Exploitation issued by the Home Office in February 2017 makes clear: "Child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange".

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity:

(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or

(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.

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New Home Office definition of child sexual exploitation

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There is increasing concern about peer on peer abuse, both girls and boys can be abused, and can be a victim initially and then become a perpetrator, or be both victim and perpetrator at the same time.

Culture and attitudes define understanding of sexual exploitation by victims, perpetrators, wider community, practitioners and professionals.

As stated in the summary, GMP have undergone cultural change in their approach to tackling child sexual exploitation.

GMP said this has been achieved by continuous awareness raising and 'Myth Busting'. There has been increased training of GMP officers including using victims and parents to learn where the police got things wrong previously. GMP have also used experts, including consultant psychotherapists, to provide training sessions to staff in understanding victim and offender behaviour. This is ongoing.

There are also numerous internal and external webchats using experts, victims and male and female survivors. There is regular scrutiny and review through monthly audits and monthly peer reviews which purposely examine culture. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Rape Quality Assurance Group also assesses culture and examines use of language in CSE cases, including cases marked No Further Action and jury acquittals.

Detective Chief Superintendent Paul Rumney, who was the Head of the Public Protection Division of GMP, told me at the time of writing the report

***"In terms of changing attitudes, culture and behaviour it is the Devil's own job to try and capture the data around how successful you are being.***

***"However, what I can tell you is that reporting around threat, risk and harm is growing year on year exponentially, which shows increasing awareness".***

The following data would seem to substantiate that.

As the true extent of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation

of children becomes clearer because of confidence in reporting and more awareness amongst agencies, young people and the public one cannot fail to be shocked at the levels of sexual abuse and exploitation of children within our communities.

## Increase in CSE flagged sexual offences

According to GMP figures, for the year 2013 there were 146 CSE flagged sexual offences and for 2016 there were 714 recorded – almost quadrupled.

## Increase in all sexual offences against children

There has also been an increase in all sexual offences against children. To give a context for incidents of CSE it is important to examine these figures too.

There were 2,317 sexual offences committed between the beginning of November 2013 and the end of October 2014 against children and young people under 18. In the period between the beginning of November 2015 and the end of October 2016 there were 3,489 crimes recorded – an increase of 50 per cent increase.

During that three year period from the beginning of November 2013 to the end of October 2016 total sexual offences committed against children under 18 were 9035. Shockingly 4,066 (45 per cent) of them were against girls and boys under 13.

Of those 9035 offences, 1603 (17.7 per cent) were flagged as CSE offences and of those 1603 offences, 350 were committed against girls and boys under 13 (22 per cent).

## Increase in the number of children flagged as victims or at risk of CSE

In October 2016 there were 1,732 children and young people now flagged as being a victim or at risk of CSE of which 1,465 were girls and 267 boys (15 per cent).

By way of comparison in February 2015, there were 650 young people flagged, according to date provided by GMP

In October 2016, there were 1139 people flagged as known or suspected CSE offenders in GM – more than doubled since Real Voices.

The police say they now have a more developed picture of victims and known or suspected CSE offenders and that this increase in flagging figures is because of better reporting and better identification of risk by police and other agencies.

Project Phoenix peer reviews were launched in 2014 as a means to test out the partnership response to CSE in each district of GM, with a panel of experts acting as a critical friend in reviewing current cases of CSE open to the team. In 2015 the peer reviews demonstrated that while some CSE teams were using the flagging system very well, there were still some parts of GM where flags were not being properly added to police systems. The concern was that this was symptomatic of social workers and police not sharing information and intelligence about vulnerable young people in a timely and appropriate way.

However, the latest peer reviews issued in October 2016 said that the recording of information on police systems, including the flagging of child sexual exploitation victims, offenders and crimes had improved significantly in 2016 compared with previous years.

Significantly, the peer reviews say that the voice of the child features much more prominently on GMP systems than in the past and there is clear evidence in a number of cases that GMP, Crown Prosecution Service and partners have listened to the child before making decisions on how best to proceed with investigations and court proceedings.

## Social care

In June 2016 there were 367 children and young people open to children's social care in GM who were identified as either medium (283) or high (84) risk, compared with

139 medium and 91 high in September 2014, according to figures provided by Phoenix.

Whilst the number of medium risk cases has increased year on year, the number of high risk cases in 2016 is actually fewer than in 2014. Phoenix said this is because there is now much better identification of children at risk at an earlier stage and that Phoenix teams are better able to manage and reduce risk to children.

All social workers in each of the ten districts of GM now use the Phoenix CSE Risk Measurement Tool to identify children and young people who are particularly vulnerable to being exploited, or in some cases have already been a victim of CSE.

Damian Dallimore Project Manager for Phoenix reports:

***"This approach across GM means that the collective understanding of what constitutes low, medium and high risk is now much more consistent than was previously the case."***

Since its launch in September 2014, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to ensure its application is consistent and valid across all ten districts, with accurate assessments of the risk to children helping to shape and inform effective interventions.

Also consistency of approach makes it easier to make comparisons across boundaries. All children and young people who have been assessed as medium or high risk are flagged as a CSE risk on GMP systems and are automatically treated as high risk if they go missing from home or care. Each of those children and young people also has a trigger plan should they go missing."

## Improved police training

Training is important in raising awareness of child sexual exploitation.

Real Voices expressed concern that only 21 per cent of police in Greater Manchester had received CSE training and no police community support officers (PCSOs).

Now all frontline officers have received some form of

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CSE training ranging from briefings to on-line learning packages, Continuing Professional Development events, parent awareness; online offending; training for specialist CSE officers, Public Protection Investigation Unit Officers, custody staff, cadets, special constables, Police Community Support Officers CSOs and special operations staff. In addition 3,617 police officers have had bespoke training courses on CSE out of a total of 6,126 (59%). This is an ongoing process

There have also been changes to include CSE in many ongoing training programmes and it is part of mandatory training for new officers and PCSOs, special constables and cadets.

A large proportion of staff have also had additional awareness sessions and specialised training, for example special training for officers responding to reports of serious sexual offences.

## Intelligence reports soar

Since the publication of Real Voices, according to GMP, there have been 10,269 pieces of intelligence received, between November 2014 and June 2016, including anonymous information reflecting a heightened public awareness. (See Changing Culture in the Community).

## What are the messages from the statistics?

The above figures and especially the increase in the flagging of sexual exploitation victims, offenders and crimes and intelligence reports, all seem to suggest a growing awareness of CSE amongst the police, statutory agencies, the community and young people themselves. It also suggest increased confidence of young people to come forward to report abuse.

This is all evidence of cultural change.

## The Changing Face of Crime – The Digital Revolution

A significant proportion of CSE starts online. Tameside Phoenix say that about 85 per cent of their current CSE cases involve online activity. It is now estimated that 100,000 children aged 8 and about 20,000 aged six have mobiles.

The increased use of mobile phones and social media Apps by children and young people increases the chances for the exploitation of children. The majority of social media apps have age restrictions. The police have expressed concern that many children are assessing them much younger than the recommended age.

Chief Constable Simon Bailey, who leads on child abuse for the National Police Chiefs Council, has said that digital crime and the use of technology was "fundamentally changing the face of crime."

This puts great pressure on the Digital Investigation Unit. Conviction rates for online grooming are very high because there is supporting evidence in digital format. Faced with computer evidence, offenders are also more likely to plead guilty, which can save the victim from the trauma of a court case.

Tameside Safeguarding Children Board's annual report on child sexual exploitation 2014/15 provides evidence of how important digital investigations are.

The Tameside Offender profile:

***"Intelligence shows that the majority of CSE offences in Tameside are committed by opportunistic, lone offenders who frequently meet and groom their victims online through social media such as Facebook, Blackberry Messenger, WhatsApp and other messaging applications. Many of these local offenders then make attempts to meet their victims if they are also local. As yet, no connections have been made with CSE and any organised crime groups in Tameside. The majority of known CSE offenders in Tameside are white European males aged between 18 – 45yrs old."***

## Backlog of digital cases

In June 2014 there was a backlog of more than 16 months for 'non-urgent' computer cases to be allocated for investigation in the Digital Investigation Unit.

The latest figures show that in December 2016 the oldest case awaiting investigation was about five months.

The importance of getting electronic devices examined quickly and the harm caused by delays in prosecution was vividly illustrated by a case in my Stockport constituency. A mother whose 13 year old daughter was being groomed on line, reported it to the police in 2013, and handed in her daughter's computer and mobile phone for examination.

Ten months later the family had heard nothing.

In the meantime the man had gone on to groom another girl online from another town and then to actually meet her and sexually abuse her.

He was subsequently charged with offences, relating to both my constituent's daughter and the other girl, and was finally jailed for four and a half years in November 2016 and put on the sex offenders register.

The Stockport mother said after the court case:

***"I feel like I have had a weight lifted from me. He needed to be dealt with. I am thankful he is off the streets. I felt devastated when I heard he had abused another child."***

Offenders can make contact with hundreds of children and young people in an attempt to establish contact with them for sex.

Any delay in examining their seized computers, tablets or phones and retrieving evidence for use in prosecution increases the danger to children.

DCS Rumney, who was the head of the GMP Public Protection Division, said at the time of preparing this the report:

***"We have done some really good work intercepting online communications and recently we caught some***

***people coming in from Merseyside to commit offences on very young children. They came to meet someone they thought was going to offer them a child and instead met a police officer.***

***"We want to make Greater Manchester an extremely hostile place for online perpetrators.***

***"It's a tsunami that we can get ahead of."***

## Sharing sexual images of children

There was a successful GMP trial in one of the police divisions to target offenders who share sexual images of children – known as peer to peer file sharing - from October 2015 to January 2016.

Thirty eight search warrants were executed, offenders arrested and only one investigation failed to reach the threshold for a charging decision to be made.

It also resulted in 25 safeguarding referrals being made for children in care or control of suspect; numerous professionals and offenders in positions of trust surrounding children were identified and disrupted; five Registered Sex Offenders were identified as involved; as well as an individual seeking sponsorship of a child now prevented from doing so. This has all helped prevent further abuse of children.

This detailed information also helps the public understanding of the complexity of CSE cases and gets beyond the stereotype of CSE being committed only by groups of men.

## Creative ways of catching the offenders

Over the last few months GMP have been focussing more and more on using more creative ways to disrupt offenders associating with children. This is excellent and signals a culture that accepts that prevention of CSE in the first place is vital before a child is harmed. By getting in early to stop a crime taking place, the police and

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regulatory services can save years of trauma for the child.

They are using a variety of civil orders and disruption tactics such as Child Abduction Warning Notices; Sexual Harm Prevention Orders as well as licensing laws and Closure Orders on establishments like hotels. A closure order can be granted if a police officer has reasonable grounds for believing that a shutdown is necessary to prevent the premises being used for specified child sex offences. Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is also being used to get names and addresses of guests at hotels, which might be being used for CSE.

Sexual Harm Prevention Orders can be granted against men and women for behaviour which is causing concern, such as providing young people with cigarettes, drinks and food. There have also been examples of off licences having their alcohol licences revoked after a manager sent texts to a young girl. In one case an order was put in place because of text evidence which displayed clear grooming behaviour. It is important to note that the texts did not contain actual sexual content.

The strength of these orders is that the form part of a preventative strategy which stops children from being harmed.

Children from Tameside told police that Child Abduction Warning Notices helped them say 'No' to meeting up with potential offenders whereas previously they would have felt pressurised to do so. They issued 58 such notices in 2016 compared to 19 in 2014. (See Listening to Children). They have been reported as being very effective in Tameside and they have led to a number of disclosures being made by children who have been given breathing space as a result of the warning being issued to the suspect.

### **Awareness of boys and young men as victims of CSE**

In Real Voices I expressed concern about underreporting of crimes of CSE against boys and young men.

Duncan Craig, the chief executive of Survivors

Manchester, said that he believed there is now more awareness of exploitation of boys. GMP has engaged Survivors Manchester in supporting work force development.

The "It's Not Okay" campaign has actively included posters and messages aimed at boys and the CSE Week of Action included highlighting boys and young men as victims, and also involved a live Webchat with Duncan on the subject.

Project Phoenix asked Duncan, assisted by University College London, to undertake a review of Phoenix to gauge the level of awareness of boys as victims.

The report 'No Man's Land' said that services currently available do not adequately support male victims of CSE and certainly have an unconscious female bias, in keeping with services generally in the UK. It also showed that practitioners were more confident in detecting and understanding issues related to female victims of CSE in comparison to their male counter parts.

The report was followed by face to face interviews with each of the Phoenix teams which is currently being written up.

### **Phoenix Peer Reviews identify good police practice**

Phoenix peer reviews were launched in August 2014 as a way of supporting and challenging practice by specialist CSE teams in their partnership approaches to tackling CSE. Ten peer reviews were completed in 2016 and twenty-one overall since their introduction. They show increased knowledge, understanding and expertise in tackling CSE. Peer reviews provide the opportunity to test issues such as culture, the Voice of the Child, outcomes and levels of support for victims and victim satisfaction. They are forums to share learning, good practice and identify areas for future development.

The latest peer reviews dated October 2016 said that the recording of information on police systems, including the flagging of child sexual exploitation victims, offenders

and crimes has improved significantly in 2016 compared with previous years.

The peer reviews highlight that many detectives in specialist child sexual exploitation teams are leading very complex investigations into crimes of grooming and the exploitation of children and have developed expertise in relation to examining mobile telephones, tablets, social media accounts and other devices. Several examples have been cited through peer reviews of successful prosecutions as a result of these investigations.

The number of professionals working permanently within specialist child sexual exploitation teams has grown in the last year, mainly from children's social care and police, but also from health, the third sector, drug and alcohol services and early help.

### Scrutinising rape cases

To complement this work, quarterly quality assurance meetings take place chaired by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, which scrutinises cases of rape and seek to identify lessons for learning and sharing.

The meetings have representation from the Crown Prosecution Service, St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Local authorities and Survivors Manchester and both the Serious Sexual Offences Unit and the Forensic department of Greater Manchester Police.

This is the first such forum of its kind in England and has been recognised as best practice by both HMIC and the College of Policing.

To date, there has been scrutiny of 10 CSE cases, which have led to some recommendations for action across the range of organisations present.

As part of this review of Real Voices, the quality assurance group looked at four more cases which had been stamped No Further Action both by the police and the CPS.

When the police use NFA it doesn't mean the crime is

closed indefinitely, if the victim changes their mind and gives further evidence to support a prosecution or further evidence comes to light then the case can be re-opened.

The meaning of NFA for the Crown Prosecution service (CPS) is where the evidence doesn't pass the threshold test for the Code of Crown Prosecutors

The main feedback was that enhanced training of front line officers had worked was evidenced by better police attitudes and first responses to the cases.

There was a focus on pursuing offenders in all cases, even where the victim did not want to support the prosecution.

The OPCC said:

***"The proactive investigation of offender's mobile phones led to the identification of additional victims, who without this proactive work, may still be at risk. There is a great deal of disruption activity being undertaken with offenders.***

***"The decisions to take No Further Action, were thoroughly considered and victim focused and had an audit trail of scrutiny."***

The OPCC said this was an improvement from two years ago and that from the small sample of quality assurance reviews done after Real Voices, efforts appeared to focus decision making in terms of what is in the best interest of the vulnerable victim. It said terms like "child prostitute" were thankfully now seen as being completely inappropriate. "The CPS are also making more use of early investigation advice, which means that decisions in relation to case outcomes are made much more quickly. This means that decisions - which may not always be the one a victim is expecting or wants - are communicated more quickly."

Laura Mercer, of the OPCC, who chairs the quality assurance meetings, told me:

***"There is a real commitment to continuous learning from the agencies involved in this process. We have***

*learnt a great deal from the scrutiny process and I hope we will continue to do so."*

### **Stopping bullying victims in court**

Concern was expressed in Real Voices about the trauma of giving evidence for witnesses and the often brutal cross examination by hostile barristers who effectively put the child on trial.

In my Commons debate on this subject on July 6, 2016, the minister responded by announcing a national roll out of Section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, which provides for the pre-recording of the cross-examination of vulnerable witnesses. This was later confirmed in a ministerial statement.

Section 28 means that witnesses will no longer need to attend trials in person and be subjected to intimidating and repeated questions by barristers trying to trip them up.

The evidence from three pilot schemes in Kingston, Leeds and Liverpool Crown Courts in 2014 shows that it leads to improved cross examination and better quality evidence; is less traumatic for the witness and allows them to give evidence much more quickly following the

alleged offence, so that they can get on with rebuilding their shattered lives.

It also leads to a higher number of offenders pleading guilty. Sometimes offenders plead not guilty in the hope that a witness may be too frightened to turn up at trials or that they will crumble and not be able to give a good statement of account under savage cross examination.

St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Manchester, currently enables vulnerable witnesses to be cross examined via video link to a court.

St Mary's, which provides a supportive and less intimidating environment than a court, could also be used for pre-cording cross examination of witnesses.

## Recommendation

- People will always look to data for evidence of change. Comprehensive data and statistics are collected regularly by GMP and Phoenix but not always published for a number of very good reasons. However consideration should be given to publishing data on a regular basis which demonstrates cultural change in attitudes to child sexual exploitation and is easily understood by the media and the wider public.

## Changing culture through listening to young people

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Real Voices advocated that children and young people should lead the fightback against CSE.

The experience of young people can have a real impact on how services are delivered making them more effective. But to do that they need to be involved initially in co-designing the service.

We have to move on from listening to children and consulting them after a project has been designed to getting them to co-design initiatives from scratch.

One of the recommendations in Real Voices was a primetime radio show Next Generation Youths on Unity Radio, the urban music station, focusing on preventing child sexual exploitation.

The idea was to give young people the tools to fightback against CSE themselves via a multimedia digital network, including radio.

It was a pioneering example of co-design with young people and was supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Greater Manchester Campaign Against Sexual Exploitation. GMCASE includes Barnardo's, the Children's Society, the NSPCC and the Princes Trust and local charities such as Survivors Manchester.

### Achieving Change Together

There are a number of exciting ways in which the voice of

the young person is now more central and is changing the way services are provided.

Damian Dallimore, the head of Phoenix, told me he believed that services were now more child centred and that culture and attitudes were being changed.

I visited a number of innovative groups and projects and looked at new ways of working by the police, children's services and other agencies which all demonstrate to me that children's voices are being heard more often and helping to co-design services.

One example is a completely new social work approach to tackling Child Sexual Exploitation called Achieving Change Together.

The ACT project began in January 2016 in Wigan and Rochdale after they successfully applied for £1 million from the Department of Education's Innovation Fund to extend the work of Project Phoenix to develop a new approach to working with young people at the highest risk of CSE.

The service was co-designed with children and young people and families taking on board what they said would work.

Young people talked of the value of having one worker they could trust, saying they did not want numerous workers with inconsistent levels of contact.

One young person said:

***"At one point I had 12 people working with me and I would forget what I had told them."***

ACT listened and have provided each child with one key social worker. Support is wrapped around that professional, which means the child only needs to tell their story once.

Crucially ACT social workers, provide support outside normal 9-5 hours and are in frequent text contact. This is very important to young people who often say they feel abandoned after 5pm and at the weekends.

One ACT social worker said:

***"By prioritising what is important to young people, things like missing episodes, substance misuse and challenging behaviour are all reduced or stopped completely. Identifying what is important to them and spending time with them reduces the risks they face."***

A 16 year old girl said of her ACT social worker:

***"I got more support from her than anyone."***

Dr. Caitlin O'Neill Gutierrez, Evidence and Research Officer of the Children's Society, who has done some case file analysis, said that none of the young people said that CSE was the biggest issue in their lives and many cited problems with parents, school, anger, criminal gangs and drugs and mental health issues as bigger problems. Neglect was a major feature for all the children and so the development of a long term relationship was of great importance to them. She said:

***"CSE was often the end point of trauma and years of family difficulty and chaotic lives."***

Many of the children said CSE had left them unable to maintain age appropriate friendships because they felt isolated and could no longer relate to people of their own age because they felt so different.

Dez Holmes, of Research in Practice (Dartington), said that working with adolescents sometimes presents a real challenge as many of them have undergone prolonged neglect and maltreatment and disorganised attachment.

The one thing many of them feel in control of is their own (often risky) behaviour.

One of the lessons of this is that if we want to engage with children who are being sexually exploited or at risk of it, we need to work with problems they identify as a priority for them, not what we think is the priority.

Nick Marsh, the ACT Team Manager, said that the strong message that came through the co-design with children and families was that relationships are the key.

***"When I see chronologies of some of these young people I am amazed they are still able to function and engage with human beings because their experiences have been so traumatic. You would think they would be mistrustful of everyone."***

***"The Golden Thread is that authentic relationships change lives. We know that bad and negative relationships change lives. Good relationships can change lives too. We need to make them feel special because if we do not those horrible people who want to exploit their vulnerability will."***

## Citizens Arrows

GMP has received Home Office funding to develop a new Citizen's App @getCTZN by young people for young people aged 13 to 18. (See In the Palm of Your Hand)

The Citizen's Arrows are a group of young people from all over Greater Manchester, who are helping to create, build and design the App.

The Citizens Arrows, who also fed ideas into ACT, are a good example of how young people's voices are influencing new strategies and practices that are being developed across GM.

They also go into schools to raise awareness about child sexual exploitation.

I was impressed with their passion and enthusiasm. They emphasised the fun opportunities the App offers, including the chance to meet other young people; to learn new skills, get rewards and points for things like

## Real Voices - Are They Being Heard?

community work and clock up achievements that can be added to their CVs.

The Arrows recognised that isolated young people are vulnerable and said the App could help build confidence and to give them opportunities and the chance to "better themselves".

They said it would help young people form new relationships and give them new horizons. If a child is not getting on with their peers it gives them a chance to get out and try new things, to escape their current environment and make relationships outside school.

One Arrow said: "If a young person is getting bullied at school and feels isolated they can go on the App and make new friends. It gives you a chance to make relationships outside of school. So for example if you go on a DJ course then you will mix and bond with people who have similar interests."

"With Instagram you can just 'like' something, you don't really have a proper relationship with the other person. With this App you can talk to other people and meet them at events. It is all positive, you build up rewards, and it's good for you, good for your future career and good for your CV. There is nothing bad or serious. It keeps children away from bad things."

One girl put it beautifully when she said: "We are the generation who have it all in the palm of our hand and it is so easy to use."

## Reclaim and Reign

Reclaim is an award-winning Manchester-based youth charity which aims to ensure that young working class people maximise their full leadership potential.

Reclaim was given a grant by the Police and Crime Commissioner to raise awareness amongst teenagers about grooming and to challenge wider public attitudes.

A project called Reign was set up involving young women

aged 16 to 25 who were all groomed and abused as teenagers.

Reign was the idea of a young woman who was sexually exploited by more than 50 men by the time she was 16 years old. The abuse began when she was 11 and she was growing up in Moss side. She said she wanted to start a project to help change views in society and educate children and young people about child sexual exploitation.

The 11 young people from Reign also played a vital part in the co-design process for ACT and were consulted about their experiences of statutory services.

They came up with a manifesto, highlighting their priorities and influenced by their own experiences.

The manifesto was available online and has been shared widely on various social media forums, promoted at events and conferences and given to various celebrities such as Esther Rantzen and Maxine Peake in order to raise the profile of the project. Recognising that communities hold the key to raising awareness and changing prevailing culture and attitudes, they also prioritised putting it out to parents and young people where they gathered in community centres, cafes, shops, at taxi ranks and bus stops as well as to agencies.

Reclaim has consistently "pushed back" against stereotyped views, for example they held a Reclaim the Streets march for "young working class" people in Manchester City Centre. Also, when BBC's Panorama did a profile of Salford, which did not present it in a very positive light, the young people did an alternative video showing the positive side of Salford, for which they got 100,000 hits on social media.

I asked the Reign girls for one thought to take away in my head. Without hesitation one said:

***"If a young person says they have been abused, please believe them and support them and help them as much as you can."***

1. A child is still a child, regardless of where they are, or what they wear
2. If a young woman has the strength to speak about abuse, believe her.
3. Just because I am flirty, it doesn't mean I want to have sex with you.
4. Even if I'm intoxicated, it's still my body.
5. Authorities need to protect young women, not put them back in danger.
6. Survivors should receive support immediately after reporting abuse.
7. Men shouldn't take sexual advantage by bribing young women
8. Although I've turned 16, I still need protection.

Reign manifesto

## Examples of listening to children

### Stockport

Stockport Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation Team have been nominated for a Pride of Britain Award and have been shortlisted for this year's NWG awards.

They have had some excellent feedback from victims of CSE which provide evidence of culture in GMP, the Voice of the Child being heard and achieving better outcomes for children.

One young person told me:

*"Before I met Mark (a GMP sergeant) from Stockport Phoenix I hadn't long since got out of an abusive relationship, I was at my lowest point. I had lost all my confidence and had extremely low self-esteem. I spent most of my time at home in bed, being alone. I didn't enjoy going out or doing anything anymore, leaving my house made me anxious because I was so used to staying at home, it was horrible. The only time I would leave my house was to drink alcohol, as it took away the nerves and made me forget about the past for a few hours, however I was putting myself in dangerous situations.*

*"Then I met Mark, he gave me so many positive opportunities and ways to build on my confidence. He pushed me out my comfort zone, and gave me a chance to try new activities to find something that I was interested in, something to focus on and distract me from drinking or thinking about the past."*

*"Now I feel like a completely different person, my confidence is higher than it's ever been! I feel good about myself and I'm happy with every part of my life. Thank you Mark, I couldn't have done it without you."*

### Tameside

Tameside Safeguarding Children's Board child sexual exploitation annual report 2014/5 said that their top priority was to "Listen to Young People and put them at the heart of our work."

After listening and acting on what young people told

them, Tameside have increasingly used Children Abduction Warning Notices which prevent offenders from associating with vulnerable children. They issued 58 such notices in 2016 compared to 19 in 2014.

Young people reported to the Phoenix Team that the Notices enabled them to say 'No' to potential perpetrators whereas previously they would have felt pressurised into meeting them.

An example of how this might work would be a concerned parent attending the police station to report concerns about their child associating with risky adults perhaps in a public open space. Permission for an abduction warning would be obtained from a parent or social worker by police. A police patrol would then be tasked with locating the risky adult and would serve the warning on them. Future patrols would then conduct further visits to ensure the warning is being abided by. Tameside do proactive weekly CSE patrols using regular and special constables.

These notices are a good way of protecting children. It is interesting that adults have hitherto seen these notices as something which deters offenders, but the idea that it also gives resilience to potential victims is an insight provided by the children themselves.

## Not Just a thought

Another fresh initiative is the 'Not Just a Thought' project, which initially set out to develop, co-design and co-produce with young people a new assessment model for health professionals working with children at risk of child sexual exploitation.

The project originally focussed on child sexual exploitation. But during the course of the co-design with 75 young people it expanded to recognise more the complex needs of young people. Many of the children said, as was evidence in the Arrows and ACT discussions, that their problems were much wider and more complex than that.

The complexity of children's problems also came across

in a separate consultation of young people about a new Advocacy House for GM.

Professor Andrew Rowland, Consultant in Paediatric Emergency Medicine and Honorary Professor at the University of Salford who worked with NHS England (North) and other professionals from social care, education and charities on the project, said:

***"We as professionals have to go into discussion with our eyes open. You might think you know what the right thing to do is, but you will not know until you have spoken to young people. You have to value what they say otherwise you will get no further forward. Give them a blank sheet and say 'help me spend this money in a way that can help you'."***

Effectively the young people taught the professionals that they had to be prepared to rip up their prepared script and start again.

On the advice of the young people consulted, 'Not Just a Thought' turned into a project to provide information to professionals about how to have conversations with young people about relationships, sexuality, home life, domestic abuse, alcohol and drugs and how to spot signs of risk to young people of CSE.

When it is launched it will include a new website, a series of video clips recorded by the children and young people, a press release written by them as well as a comprehensive set of questions, tested out with children and young people that professionals can use to tackle "difficult" conversations.

## Consulting young people about a new Advocacy House

A group of 58 children and young people attended a consultation day at Salford University organised by Professor Rowland on a possible Children's Advocacy House in Greater Manchester to provide guidance and support to children.

When asked who would need an Advocacy Centre, children I spoke to estimated 15 out of 40 in their school

class had problems at home or other problems.

It is very interesting how many of the young people talked about the pressure of peers in influencing their behaviour and loneliness and isolation being factors that made young people vulnerable to bullying and exploitation. There was a lot of talk about feeling stressed as a response to pressure from both peers and adults.

Many of the things that children and young people say is important to them in how services are developed may be what determines whether young people engage with services such as advocacy services or any services seeking to offer help.

Many young people commented on the stigmatisation of visiting 'a therapy' centre and the importance of services being offered alongside 'normal' activities.

That local transport had to be affordable if services were not immediately local if the young person did not want their parent to know.

An indication of the sadness in some children's lives and the burden they carry daily were highlighted in some of their comments written on post it notes and put on a tree. They included:

***"Hope my sister gets better soon and my Mum stops being in pain."***

***"I wish my Nana would get better."***

***"I worry about my Mum because she can't go anywhere but she can go on crutches but she struggles."***

***"I wish my mum would always be with me whenever something is wrong."***

It is important to understand the pressures of young teenagers who are entering a critical stage of their development when isolation and absence of a supportive peer group or parents and feelings of loneliness can create vulnerability to exploitation.

## Recommendations

- The projects above are evidence of wider cultural changes, moving from consulting children to full participation of them in the co-design of services. As yet they are small in number. In order to engage with children who are being sexually exploited or at risk of it, we need to work with problems they identify as a priority for them, not what we think is the priority. Professionals should not assume what children need or associate positive outcomes with their processes rather than outcomes for children. Victims and young people need to be involved in the co-designing of services as a matter of course.
- The evaluation of projects should include an assessment of their wider impact on other young people and the community in raising awareness about healthy relationships and tackling CSE.

"CSE was often the end point  
of trauma and years of family  
difficulty and chaotic lives."

Evidence and Research Officer, The Children's Society

## In the palm of your hand

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One young girl summed up the power and relevance of digital media for young people when she told me:

*"We are the generation who have it all in the palm of our hand and it is so easy to use."*

Young people are avid users of digital and social media and it is estimated that almost 100,000 eight year olds have a mobile phone and that more than 20,000 were given a handset from the age of six, according to research by the insurer Aviva published in January 2017.

More than 40 per cent of children get a mobile before they leave primary school and 400,000 own tablets by the age of ten.

We need to be concerned about the opportunities that gives for the exploitation of children.

Real Voices called for a powerful online communication strategy led by young people to raise awareness about the many kinds of child sexual exploitation and the help available.

The police, children's services and other agencies need to harness digital media and use it to maximise communication with young people and the public.

GMP recognise this and have taken many digital initiatives to try and influence a change in culture such as a missing from home app launched in 2016 in which

young people could put themselves in the shoes of a police officer working on the case of a young missing person at risk of CSE.

### It's Not Okay and Twitter

Project Phoenix's online presence has expanded since the publication of Real Voices. The [It's Not Okay](#) website has grown to become an extensive and important resource. In February 2017 it had over 230,000 hits. The site provides advice from several perspectives and is aimed at children, parents, professionals and businesses. Users of the site can read about how to spot signs of CSE and how to get help and it contains awareness-raising tools, including community-led videos.

Having a wealth of resources and links collected in one user-friendly place is very useful and Phoenix website has a corresponding [Facebook](#) and Twitter page ([@NotOkayGM](#)), which are updated regularly. They are used to convey important public safety messages, such as sex offenders at large; court cases and to highlight the dangers of emerging social media apps. They are also used for safety messages around sexting, grooming, social media age restrictions and consent and missing from home appeals.

In October 2016 during the week of action the social media reach hit 4.7 million.

Phoenix has a twitter account @NotOkayGM and most of the district based multi-agency teams have their own Phoenix twitter accounts. Many are using innovative and creative ways to raise awareness.

Each year Project Phoenix organises two CSE Weeks of Action and on every occasion the team issues a social media package containing key messages. This involves numerous webchats on Twitter; flooding Instagram with pictures relating to the week and live tweets across GMP during operations at hotspots.

During the most recent week of action, Phoenix Salford attended school breakfast clubs to seek advice from children about how they could use social media more affectively. They were told to use Snapchat. This was a good initiative as it is crucial that children are consulted about what they think are the best ways of reaching them.

Children across Greater Manchester playing the popular Pokemon Go game were given information about how to stay safe online and raise awareness of CSE. Players congregate at Pokemon "gyms" where they can collect more characters and these locations can also become a 'honey trap' where offenders can potentially target young people. In Trafford a social media competition ran throughout the whole week of action with a tablet as the main prize.

Online platforms can be hugely effective tools for communicating information and it is good that real life initiatives in the Weeks of Action are complemented by online activity because the internet is where young people go to get answers and to find out about events.

The police also stress the importance of educating parents as the vast majority of children are accessing apps well below the minimum age restrictions. Parents are often unaware or are allowing this to happen.

As well as a Twitter presence some Phoenix CSE teams have Instagram and Facebook but the challenge remains of how to make sure more young people follow it. There is a danger of Phoenix's social media presence remaining mostly an echo chamber for professionals if fresh approaches are not continually pursued.

Stockport Phoenix has launched an Instagram page, complementing and highlighting its real-life awareness raising efforts, including its sponsorship of a local youth football team (JFC Barcastars).

Salford Phoenix [@PhoenixSalford](#) received a national [policing award for its use of social media](#). In October 2016 alone, it made 1.7 million Twitter impressions on users. It adopts a youth friendly approach and relies heavily on active content to get its messages across and uses memes, images, inspirational quotes and popular hashtags like [#MondayMotivation](#) all of which appeal to [young people](#).

PC Jonathan Shaw, who manages the Salford account, stressed the need to 'maintain momentum' in communications. The most popular period for Twitter use is after 5pm, for example, with peak usage time between 7-8.30pm. This means that if Twitter activity is confined to working hours then it will have inevitably have limited effect; with older posts getting replaced and lost in a user's busy feed.

On several occasions, Phoenix teams in GM have been contacted via social media by individuals who have been affected by CSE with messages of thanks for posts that made them feel less alone. They have also received tips that have led to local CSE investigations.

Phoenix provides social media guidance for its teams and it is obviously helpful for teams to keep each other informed of new initiatives and ideas to continually build up the social media presence so that the message can be received by more young people.

## **CTZN APP**

A Citizen App [@getCTZN](#) for GM children aged 13-18 year olds has been funded by the Home Office and is being developed and is currently available to download now.

The app will be an appropriate way to engage with young people over a range of issues such as how to protect themselves and how to avoid being drawn into crime.

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The CTZN App has been co-designed by young people to provide a safe social network site online and the opportunities to take part in physical activities and relationships offline, providing positive alternatives for young people vulnerable to exploitation.

It contains a range of posts from organisations with track records of positive engagement work with 13-18 year olds – publicising free community-orientated activities that the young person can join. They can sign up for volunteering opportunities with local charities and organisations to build professional experience and meet likeminded people. Or they can get the benefit of giveaways, like 1000 free recording sessions for musicians and singers at Studio 34, a recording studio run by young people.

CTZN gives information about new clubs and free dance and acting classes in the local area. This means that children who are isolated from their peer groups in schools for example have the chance to form new friendships and learn a skill. One opportunity advertised to CTZN users over the age of 16 was for 20 young people to be mentored by the Volunteer Ninety Nine project, sponsored by the Manchester United Foundation in return for volunteering.

## Using Harry Potter style 'Augmented Reality'

The ACT (Achieving Change Together) team are complementing their new social work model with an innovative new approach to digital communication and technology.

An Augmented Reality card has been created for ACT by Stuart Atherton, the managing director of media and digital Ltd.

The credit-card sized piece of plastic encourages people to 'bring the card to life' which they can do with an APP on a smart phone. The Zappar detects the card's code and – like something out of Harry Potter - the card immediately comes to life on the screen.

The effect is that information that might have been dry or one-dimensional is suddenly attention grabbing and distinctly personalised. It brings people and images to life on-screen to talk to you in front of your eyes.

The ACT Augmented Reality (AR) card features a woman social worker and a young person explaining how ACT works, bringing to life 'faceless' agencies. The effect is to create a kind of intimacy with the audience that a poster or leaflet could never do. You feel as if you know the people talking and so it makes it easier to make contact.

It also has much potential in a world where people, especially young people, graze on information on their smart phones. They want little packets of information that register quickly and not massive encyclopaedic tomes. Augmented Reality could be embedded in posters and banners in places young people visit so that information is there immediately available for them should they need advice.

There is huge potential in this developing technology. There is already the option of developing cards with multiple 'layers' of information, so that a user could choose an 'adult' or 'child', 'parent' or 'professional' version to watch, all contained on a single card. This could extend the impact of a single initiative. This impact would also be far more measurable, as so called 'Zapalytics' (which is analysis of how many people view the App, view durations and user feedback) are easily recorded by the App.

## I didn't know about that!

Part of the challenge for Greater Manchester is how to spread knowledge and good practice across the 10 local authorities and many diverse practitioners in the statutory and voluntary agencies.

I am always struck when talking to people about initiatives that are not in their local area, how often they say to me: "I didn't know about that."

The use of AR cards could be used to break down communication barriers and make transferring

information across GM boundaries and agencies easier and more effective. Simple, strong, visual messages would be more likely to filter down and spread understanding from a strategic level to practitioners.

These kinds of sensitive communication strategies, digital communities and technological innovations are exciting developments. They could enable child protection services to modernise the ways that they engage with the public and with young people.

There are some brilliant new initiatives in development since my last report and we must not lose this momentum.

### **Post script on continuing to use local mainstream media**

Real Voices urged agencies to use mainstream local media better to get their messages across.

Press coverage has been vital to pushing child sexual exploitation up the public agenda since the 1970s – it has encouraged survivors to report offences and prompted politicians, councils and the police to develop different policy responses.

For most of the twentieth century the press focused on human interest rather than on the culture and practices that enabled sexual abuse. It relied on court reporting as a source of entertainment and titillation rather than social commentary and investigations. The popular press was far less interested in considering reform proposals or conducting investigations.

However, in the last few years we have had more serious investigative reporting such as in the Times in 2012 when Andrew Norfolk exposed the extent of the child abuse scandal in Rotherham and in 2011 the Manchester Evening News' campaign on the dangers faced by runaway and missing children.

Scanning some of the MEN reports since Real Voices I noticed that there is more "context" than ever in stories and a determination by the police to hammer home the fact that they will not tolerate CSE at every opportunity

they get.

There is a positive pattern of police paying tribute to the victim and encouraging victims to come forward as well as stressing that CSE is a priority for the force. Every court case is used to drive home the message that CSE is unacceptable and not the victims fault.

Two random reports in the Manchester Evening News illustrate this pattern and show how the police are making good use of the local media to get positive messages over.

"Rochdale man sexually abused 14 year old girl after convincing her they were in a 'grown up' relationship" May 6, 2016 was about a single perpetrator who tried to blame a child.

Speaking after the case, the detective explained that this was a "typical example of the boyfriend model of child sexual exploitation" and slammed the perpetrator's attempt to blame the victim.

He explained:

***"He made her feel as though they were in a grown up relationship and encouraged her to stay over at his home address away from her parents, where he then exploited her.***

***"The fact he felt it was the child's fault is disturbing and his lack of remorse is reflected in the sentence.***

***"CSE in any form is unacceptable and we in the Sunrise team will continue to work tirelessly to investigate all reports of this nature and safeguard victims of exploitation."***

In another example: "Leigh man jailed for 11 years for sexually assaulting girl, 7, and possessing thousands of indecent images," April 15, 2016, there was another strong police statement and a paragraph from the MEN outlining the role of Phoenix and a link to the "It's not okay" website. Phoenix has a communications strategy which involves the MEN routinely carrying a paragraph outlining the work of Project Phoenix and a link to the "It's not okay" campaign at the end of stories about child sexual exploitation

This is a fantastic example of police and local media working together to safeguard children.

The Wigan detective said afterwards:

***"I hope the sentence passed today will send a clear message that GMP will not tolerate any form of child sexual exploitation and we, along with our partners, will continue to support victims and investigate all reports that are made."***

***"I would like to thank the victim and her family for the unbelievable support they have given to us, and the bravery they have shown throughout the whole of this investigation."***

***"Tackling the sexual exploitation of children and young people is an absolute priority for Greater Manchester Police, but protecting them is the responsibility of us all. It is crucial that we work together to identify individuals who prey on vulnerable children and empower young people to speak up."***

There is no doubt that media coverage of celebrity sex offences and big exploitation cases like Rochdale and Rotherham has both helped draw attention to crimes but it has also drawn attention away from the fact that sex offenders largely operate within the home.

It is important that GMP and other agencies continue to use every opportunity to emphasise in the media the different models of CSE so that none go unrecognised.

The 'It's Not Okay' campaign has generated significant media coverage both locally and nationally. There has been positive coverage of the work of Phoenix, which has coincided with a rise in reports of child sexual exploitation.

Better understanding of child sexual exploitation has also seen media coverage go beyond simply reporting court cases or reports criticising public bodies, to coverage of prevention initiatives, such as training for taxi drivers about child sexual exploitation, or sports clubs investing in safeguarding.

A broadcast journalist told us there was clearly more of

a willingness to engage on this issue by public bodies in Greater Manchester than they had seen elsewhere in the country. This had allowed them to put together broadcast packages which help explain the work of Phoenix and bring it to life. But he added there were still issues with public bodies providing data in a timely way.

This is echoed by others. A regional journalist told us:

***"I think the police and some councils are now more willing to talk about [child sexual exploitation] in broad terms, but it varies from organisation to organisation. The difficulty for journalists tends to be in getting hold of data, particularly where the police are concerned."***

However, from April 17 there is a requirement for all forces to supply data to the Home Office of reports of crime for CSE/CSA and those CSE/CSA offences that include online offending. These figures will be provided to the media nationally.

Clearly real progress has been made in how the public understands this issue, and when the media is engaged effectively it can be a powerful partner in building this understanding.

## Recommendations

- Parents should be made more aware of age restrictions on access to social media sites by children. As all children attend schools this could be part of information to parents
- There should be a forum of creatives, including young people and police officers, to share ideas about how to communicate Phoenix messages to reach more young people using present and emerging social media platforms
- In addition the possibilities of extending the use of developing technology, like Augmented Reality, to transfer information across GM boundaries and to the public and young people about CSE initiatives should be explored.

"On the day I visited Oldham they had received a phone call from a parent who said her son had been on an online gaming app and that someone had started asking questions like what was the colour and length of his hair."

Ann Coffey MP

## Changing culture in communities

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Since the publication of Real Voices there have been 10,269 pieces of CSE-related intelligence received by GMP, between November 2014 and June 2016, including anonymous tip-offs. This includes 3,277 in the six months alone between January 2016 and June 2016.

This heightened awareness shows a better understanding of how to spot danger signs and is significant increase since Real Voices reported that 2,286 pieces of intelligence had been received by GMP in the ten months between March 2013 and January 2014.

This is the result of strong messaging, training and awareness raising by Project Phoenix across GM with workers in hotels, councils, shopping centres, taxi drivers, night time economy workers, fire and rescue crews and housing associations as well as speaking to children in schools, youth centres and colleges.

Detective Chief Superintendent, Joanne Rawlinson, of GMP Public Protection Division, told me that the police have seen a big increase in the number of reports from hotels and taxi drivers. She said:

***"This is a clear indication that the training that is being delivered is effective and understood, and there is a willingness from the public to work with us to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation by reporting their concerns."***

She said that many taxi drivers, who were previously unhappy about the stigma attached to them following the high profile Rochdale trial, now provide a significant

number of reports to highlight concerns they have. Taxi drivers are seen as an extremely valuable intelligence source in the fight against CSE. Again this shows signs of a changing culture.

The Oldham Phoenix team told me that all council staff in Oldham and door staff in the town's pubs and clubs are undergoing CSE training which is leading to good results. Said one Oldham police officer:

***"One of the best referrals we have had came from a gardener in the park who had been to CSE training. He said he would never have noticed or realised what was happening if he had not been to training."***

On the day I visited Oldham they had received a phone call from a parent who said her son had been on an online gaming app and that someone had started asking questions like what was the colour and length of his hair. An Oldham Phoenix officer said:

***"It is good that people now recognise that this sort of question could be the start of something and so they act quickly. Sometimes there is no sexual element to grooming for quite a while."***

This is a clear sign that following awareness raising, parents recognise the signs of grooming and danger. It is also evidence that Phoenix teams act quickly before any offences are committed and children come to harm.

Greater Manchester is made up of many diverse communities and again there is strong evidence from

## Real Voices - Are They Being Heard?

Oldham of work being done to engage people of all different cultures.

Police officers have been invited to speak about CSE at inter faith forums and local mosques. They also held workshops for young Islamic women and used a radio link that people have in their homes for those who do not go into mosques. They also showed the play "Somebody's Sister, Somebody's Daughter" to women who packed out a hall.

Child sexual exploitation training with different communities allows the police to build up a picture of local trends and location of victims and perpetrators.

The latest Phoenix peer review in October 2016 does report, however, that some Phoenix teams said they would like to deliver more training to members of the community but that lack of capacity is preventing them from doing this.

## **Phoenix CSE Weeks of Action**

In September 2014 Project Phoenix launched a large-scale campaign called "It's Not Okay" aimed at improving community engagement and CSE prevention. There is a website @notokayGM and each year Phoenix organises two weeks of action.

These week-long campaigns have become effective targeted communication tools and are used to raise general public awareness of CSE and to focus on prevention and detection.

Each year there is a different theme and the latest Week of Action, which in October 2016, focused on public transport in Greater Manchester, as many CSE hotspots are at bus stops, train stations and interchanges, with offenders using these networks to target vulnerable children or traffic them for the purpose of sex.

Publicity therefore focused on everyone who worked on or around public transport networks and all members of the public who used public transport, encouraging them to be aware of CSE and observe what was going on around them and report any concerns.

Previous weeks of action have included the themes, online safety, peer to peer abuse, parent awareness and the links between CSE and being missing from home.

The weeks are always complemented by numerous online initiatives. (See 'In the palm of your hand').

Following the latest Week of Action, a bus driver who received CSE training noticed that a young girl was consistently getting off the bus one stop before her school and getting into the same car each day. He reported it and it transpired that she was meeting and being groomed by a teacher from her school.

## **Changing ways of working with the community**

In April 2015 the Greater Manchester Combined Authority approved a new approach in Tameside and Wigan to integrating services with an emphasis on them being place based.

Key services such as policing, health, children's services and wider council services would be delivered with a better understanding of the communities within which they operate.

It is very much a problem solving approach using the resources of individuals, families and communities and integrating local statutory, voluntary and community services to enable early help.

These different ways of working with people are a major change from a model in which each service had its threshold and people were constantly being passed around from service to service until their problems became serious enough to pass somebody's threshold for help. By this time the family's problems had exacerbated so much that they needed intensive and costly services and were assigned to the 'hard to reach category'.

New Economy have developed an evaluation framework for several more place based teams across the 10 GM authorities by March 2017. Each team will be different as each locality has its own individual needs. And there will be different project leaders, including GMP, to reflect that.

This presents an opportunity for engaging local communities in the protection of children vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Conversations with members of the public about the general health of their community offers an opportunity to discuss how to safeguard children in the community.

This would begin to challenge entrenched attitudes to exploited children and young people, who in the past, have been too often been blamed for their own exploitation.

The place based approach offers not only a way of engaging previously disengaged families but of engaging disengaged communities to better protect children.

### **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector has an important role**

Following Real Voices, the Greater Manchester Campaign Against Sexual Exploitation (GMCASE) was set up and is now made up of 60 organisations including large charities like Barnardo's, the Children's Society, the NSPCC, Brook and the Princes Trust and local GM charities. GMCASE is chaired by Duncan Craig, the Chief Executive of Survivors Manchester, and it provides a forum and network for those groups

It is important that the knowledge held by large charities is transferred into smaller community groups to give them the confidence to get out the messages about protecting children to the wider community. There are a plethora of small community groups across GM including luncheon clubs, youth clubs, volunteers, carers groups and bowling clubs who could all act as conduits to pass information to the community if they are given the knowledge and confidence.

I met representatives from small voluntary groups in Greater Manchester, including Active Tameside; medium sized organisations 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Gaddum Centre; and Bolton CVS and Action Together.

We discussed the challenges and barriers to improving community knowledge and understanding of exploitation.

They said that the language of official documents is often not easily understood by many groups and organisations and alienates many people. Some community groups are not comfortable in discussing sexual exploitation

It may be that it would be less alarming to move away from the language of exploitation and risk to talking about 'looking after our children and young people' when working with small community groups.

Project Phoenix is an excellent example of what can be achieved if the public and voluntary sectors collaborate to set the strategic direction for Greater Manchester in respect of tackling child sexual exploitation.

Experts, charities and agencies with specialist knowledge in this area need to continue to take the lead in giving information about how to recognise different models of exploitation and then the practitioners need to work with local groups about how to get the message across effectively. These messages will vary in different communities because vulnerabilities and forms of exploitation vary.

This is very much in line with the Place Based integration programme which recognises that community groups are community resources and also that communities are very diverse and need local approaches.

Part of the challenge is making sure that the expertise and knowledge that the larger charities have gets to smaller charities and community groups. However, there is excellent practice in both larger organisations and small neighbourhood projects, so it's not a one way flow of knowledge and information.

Bolton, Salford and Manchester demonstrate the diversity of the voluntary sector and the range of contributions.

10GM was born out of the need to ensure that there is a strategic framework for the local Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector approach to CSE in the

ten Greater Manchester boroughs as there is not a CVS in each GM area. They could consider how existing community leaders, key providers, volunteers, groups, organisations, children and young people, parents, carers and families could be effectively involved in keeping children and young people safe through better information, awareness raising and community support. However they also need the support of commissioners to ensure that the protection and prevention of exploitation of children is a priority.

## Recommendations

- New Neighbourhood Policing and Place Based Teams present the police with an opportunity to engage communities in protecting children from exploitation and it is important that specialist CSE teams support that community engagement with their knowledge and expertise. There should be a continuance of police and partner investment, as this is clearly making an impact in terms of intelligence and response to tackling CSE.
- Groups and organisations should be supported by 10GM to develop awareness raising of CSE messages that work for their communities and can be reinforced building on models such as 'Community Reporters' or 'Age Friendly Communities'
- Local funding such as ward funds available to councillors and community safety funds could be utilised to improve community awareness of CSE. To support this there needs to be a GM wide toolkit and training tailored to suit small grassroots groups. The experience of 10GM and GMCASE have an important role to play in this.

"One of the best referrals we had came from a gardener in the park. He said he would never have noticed or realised what was happening if he had not been to CSE training."

Oldham police officer

## The role of schools

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Schools, are a universal provision and they have a very important role in helping children develop safe and healthy relationships.

The Government announced on March 1, 2017 that Sex and Relationship Education would be made compulsory in all schools. Primary schools will have to teach age appropriate classes about safe and healthy relationships to those aged four and over, while secondary schools teach both sex and relationships.

The crucial point is that all schools across Greater Manchester will be bound by the same obligation and should ensure that every child has information about healthy relationships to equip them to deal with the modern world irrespective of the school they attend.

A School Survey of Approaches to CSE produced in December 2015 by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority said that in general there were good links between schools and the police, but improvements could be made.

It said CSE training was inconsistent across age groups, with some schools only focusing on Year 11 and others focusing on all year groups.

It reported good uptake of CSE materials such as 'Real Love Rocks' and 'It's not Okay' in particular. There was also good feedback on the use of theatre productions for CSE training such as GW Theatre's 'Somebody's sister,

Somebody's daughter' and 'Black eyes and Cottage pies,' by Essential Safeguarding, about domestic violence between teenagers.

It said there are some very innovative approaches across GM including a "tootoot" app, a confide button on school lap tops and online portals as well as the school's pastoral system. But there had been very little training uptake by parents and an inconsistent approach to training governors across GM.

Project Phoenix has produced guidance documents for both primary and secondary schools which supports teachers in delivering age appropriate messages to pupils in relation to healthy relationships, consent, grooming, exploitation and online safety, as part of the schools safeguarding responsibilities.

### Real Love Rocks

Real Love Rocks by Barnardos is a third component of the CTZN project and is used by teachers to raise awareness of the risk of child sexual exploitation and promote discussion about healthy relationships both in the real world and online.

The packs which are used across GM primary and secondary schools include animations and activities to aid interactive discussion about risk, keeping safe and understanding grooming at an age appropriate level.

Funding was provided to Barnardos for a RLR pack to

every GM school and to cover one teacher place at a training day for each school in GM.

A group of 30 young people, all vulnerable to or at risk of CSE, act as advocates for RLR and they designed some of its key features.

Barnardo's said in July 2016 that response to the offer was varied but most schools were enthusiastic.

***"There are still some schools in GM where it is maintained that "CSE is not an issue" and there remain difficulties in engaging all schools, due to the way in which the education system is now set up. There are a significant number of academies in the GM region and establishing contact with them was more difficult," said Barnardos.***

Hopefully the introduction of compulsory SRE will address the problem of some schools not engaging.

Other schools struggled to release staff to attend a day's external training because of difficulties getting cover and a significant number of schools declined the offer because they had chosen other ways of meeting the need.

For example, Manchester City have a good resource on healthy relationships in their primary school Sex and Relationship Education curriculum. They also have a curriculum for secondary schools called "I matter," which is currently being rolled out and will incorporate Real Love Rocks.

### **Using theatre to reinforce messages**

A play by GW Theatre Company: "Somebody's Sister, Somebody's Daughter" about the sexual exploitation of young people has been shown in all schools in Oldham, Stockport, Rochdale and most of the schools in Tameside. It will be shown in all Wigan schools in 2017.

After the play there is often a discussion with the actors who reported that the children felt they had a better knowledge of CSE and of services on offer after watching the play than before they had seen it. They also understood that any young person could be vulnerable to

CSE.

### **Domestic abuse within intimate teenage relationships**

A new multi-media drama called "Black Eyes and Cottage Pies," by Essential Safeguarding, is being used in schools and youth centres to raise awareness of domestic abuse within intimate teenage relationships.

It is being shown to all year 9, 10 and 11 students in Salford and Bury and some schools in Manchester.

The play tells the story of Jodie who is in an abusive teenage relationship with Jordan and how over time this escalating abuse impacts on her life.

The play also highlights issues of sexuality, adult domestic abuse, consent, sexting and the power of positive peer relationships. It was recently highlighted in the Ofsted joint targeted area inspection report for Salford as a key strength in education and preventing abuse.

There is a strong connection between domestic violence and risk of sexual exploitation and this play is being used by schools and youth centres to increase young people's awareness that domestic abuse is about power and control in relationships and this can take different forms resulting in physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, emotional and psychological abuse.

A number of professionals spoke to me about their concern about the rise in emotional and domestic abuse among young people aged 15 to 17 fuelled by young men's access to pornography. An Oldham children's services worker told me:

***"Boys and girls have lost the concept of a normal relationship. There is so much violence that they have become accustomed to it."***

Barnardos said in February 2017 that recorded cases of child on child sex offences nationally have increased by 78 per cent between 2013 and 2016 and that such abuse "may become the next scandal in our society".

## Getting the message over to primary school children

It is estimated that almost 100,000 eight year olds have a mobile phone and that more than 20,000 were given a handset from the age of six, according to research by the insurer Aviva published in January 2017. More than 40 per cent of children get a mobile before they leave primary school and 400,000 own tablets by the age of ten.

We need to be concerned about the potential access that allows predators to young children.

It is therefore welcome that the Government will introduce compulsory safe and healthy relationships education from the age of four.

There is much good work going on in GM across both primary and secondary schools to teach about respectful relationships and bullying and it should be easy to build on this work now that SRE is to be made compulsory.

Many of the young people who talked to me stressed the importance of getting the messages over to primary school children.

When I asked one group of school children about what was the best way that the police and children's services could get messages out to children and young people to prevent child sexual exploitation they all chorused unprompted: "Primary schools".

One girl expanded:

***"They should start going into primary schools a bit more. That would help people who are younger and naïve not to get into dangerous situations.***

***"When you move to secondary school you do not know the rules or how the other years will act above you and so your actions can be altered because you just want to fit in with what the other kids who are older than you are doing."***

Lonely and isolated children are more vulnerable to pressure both from peers and predatory adults. This can be exacerbated when a child moves from primary

to secondary. Children can find the transition hard and exhibit difficult behaviour which the school can respond to by excluding the child. This may increase vulnerability to exploitation.

As mentioned Project Phoenix has produced guidance documents for both primary schools and in addition Real Love Rocks materials are used across GM primaries.

Phoenix teams visit primary and secondary schools to engage children in workshops, themed events and fun but learning activities.

The pants rule and 'Pantasaurus' are good teaching aids by the NSPCC for primary pupils and are also used by Phoenix teams. Phoenix also provide inputs to parents, which is very important. The NSPCC "Speak Out. Stay Safe" resource pack is also used for primary schools.

There is also a new play produced by GW Theatre called 'Mr Shapeshifter' which is being shown in some primary schools. Preparation before and after the play is essential as an important part of learning is the discussion it encourages.

## Whole school safeguarding approach

Compulsory Sex and Relationship Education is an important step forward but it has to be part of an ongoing whole school safeguarding approach.

The Government has expressed concern that 'sexual harassment and abuse of girls is accepted as part of daily life; primary school children are learning about sex and relationships though exposure to hard core pornography and there is a prevailing culture in schools which seemingly condones sexual harassment as being 'just banter'."

And Chief Constable Simon Bailey, National Policing lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation, has said that online sexual exploitation was helping to push the number of child abuse cases to shocking levels and that children from the age of seven need to be taught about the dangers of sexting and online pornography in order to help prevent child abuse and exploitation. He said:

***"Once the police become aware a child has been abused, it is too late; they have already been harmed."***

Albion Academy in Salford is an example of a school that takes a whole school safeguarding approach and the message they enforce day after day as part of this is: 'We look after and respect each other'.

Albion was the first school in Greater Manchester to receive CSE Ambassador status for its commitment to tackling child sexual exploitation and strong peer mentoring programme.

The school is constantly trying to tackle the all-pervasive culture of sexualisation of children and over reliance on social media for unchallenged information.

This respect culture then filters out into the community which is important because ultimately the communities themselves have a responsibility to protect their children.

Albion Academy's Principal, Jenny Langley said: "We do have a strong community ethos here. If you are part of this school, you are part of a community and we all look out for each other. It does work and people do come and tell us if they are worried about someone."

Trust and early intervention is the key. The teachers say there has been a massive transformation in culture in the last four years because of work done building trust with pupils and parents and allowing the school to refer them to helpful services. Ms Langley said:

***"The best thing we do here is build that trust with parents because without that the child cannot access any help. We have to show these families that we are all on the same team. Work with the Albion. Our school is a bridge between services and the community."***

## **The importance of Peer mentoring**

Real Voices stressed the importance of peer mentors as a bridge between young people and agencies such as the police, children's services and schools.

Young people told me again and again how they benefited from peer mentoring because they felt other young

people understood the pressures they faced. They would rather speak to another young person than a "suit" or "uniform".

Albion Academy has a big team of peer mentors and children have to apply to become a mentor as if they were applying for a job and they have to have references. The peer mentoring programme provides formal accreditation that pupils can put on their CVs.

Jenny Langley said:

***"Often when there are serious issues affecting young people it is too easy to overlook their own role and voice in addressing them."***

Constantly trying to tackle the all-pervasive culture of sexualisation of children and over reliance on social media for unchallenged information, the school surveyed pupils about what they did in their spare time.

***"We knew it would be social media in their own in their bedrooms, but we were surprised at the actual extent of it."***

I met three year 10 mentors and three year 7 mentees.

One peer mentor had started off as a mentee. She said:

***"I had a mentor I could talk to who did not leave me on my own. I realised [I wanted to be a peer mentor so I could help kids like she helped me. I got bullied a lot and I did not want other kids to go through what I did."***

One mentee said:

***"I usually walked around the school staying close to the walls and doors because I am small. Mentors help you a lot. They help you get around the school and help you get confident and help with practical problems. I did not know anyone. My mentor taught me to be confident and now I have made friends."***

In Stockport schools a restorative approach is being developed, through which children help other children to resolve their conflicts and reach resolutions. We need to understand that children are a resource in themselves, which is why peer mentoring is so important.

## Real Voices - Are They Being Heard?

Stockport Youth Partnership has also produced a YouTube video, which raises awareness about coercive behaviour via texting. This sort of material produced by young people could be very influential not only with other young people but with the wider community in raising awareness about coercion in relationships.

Only a couple of minutes long it lends itself to being shown in places such as doctor's surgeries and fast food takeaways and other community spaces.

## Understanding consent

One thing that comes across frequently when talking to children is that there is no clear understanding about what is consent to sexual activity.

There are some projects, which tackle this issue being delivered across Greater Manchester, for example one from the charity Tough Cookies.

Tough Cookies has received some funding from OPCC and delivered 120 workshops on consent and CSE reaching about 3,000 pupils in Tameside. The charity believes that the understanding of consent is central to understanding respectful relationships and building their resilience to exploitation.

Kerry from Tough Cookies said:

***"In terms of peer pressure, I think that young people who are not sexually active feel that there is an enormous amount of pressure that they should be doing it.***

***"They feel empowered when we tell them it is ok not to be having sex or to say no."***

She said that many teachers had reported back that after the consent sessions many children had contacted staff about something that has happened to them.

In relation to boys, Kerry said:

***"We also say it's okay for a boy to say no to sex, it does not make you gay or less masculine. Many say they had never been told that. There is an idea that a strong man is someone who would never give up a sexual***

***opportunity."***

I spoke to some children at a school in Tameside who had been on the consent course and asked them what they felt the main pressure was on them.

One girl said:

***"Relationships probably. Nowadays everyone's supposed to be in a relationship – not doing what they want but focusing on what other people want."***

A boy said:

***"There is pressure from the media and seeing how other people live and you may want to be like that and go to extremes to be like that."***

Said another girl:

***"People should talk and ask. Most people are quite closed off now. They go on their phones and computers and are not really talking anymore. They are focused on their own lives I have seen people sat next to each other texting each other instead of actually talking to each other. It's quite pointless."***

## Social norms

Young people are very keen to 'fit in' and perception of what their peers are doing is an important factor in influencing and shaping their behaviour.

Real Voices expressed shock that child sexual exploitation in some communities in Greater Manchester had become a 'social norm'.

Following this an important 'social norms' study is being undertaken as part of the Home Office funded CTZN project in GM schools.

The survey of Year 10 – 14 year old pupils – in Greater Manchester is designed to explore young people's perception of child sexual exploitation and associated behaviour.

This is still work in progress but we have some interim results evaluated by Donna Peach, lecturer in social work

from Salford University, based on initial data collated between September 2015 and June 2016.

Perception of what is a social norm is powerful because it becomes a pressure for that social norm and yet it is often not based in reality.

To date, there have been 2,452 responses from Year 10 pupils. The way young people categorised themselves is interesting and shows the world of children is more complicated than we think and we should not make assumptions.

1,303 classed themselves as female and 1035 as male. However, a further 43 said they were transgender, with 18 describing themselves in a way not identified in the survey and 53 pupils chose not to answer.

86.2 per cent of all pupils thought they would know if someone was sexually exploiting them or using them for sex.

The interim findings showed that there was a difference between reality and perception and gave an insight into how young people compare their perceptions of their own beliefs and behaviour to those of their peers.

It showed they believe their peers are sending and receiving more 'sext' messages than they were.

12.4 per cent of children admitted sending a sext message or image themselves but one third believed that most of their peers were sending sext messages or images. So young people perceive that their friends are doing more sexting than they are.

22 per cent of children said they had received either a sext message or image but 34 per cent thought that most Year 10s had received one, a 50 per cent increase of those who admitted they themselves had received one.

It also showed young people feared being rejected if they talked about feeling pressurised into have sex and were not sure who to talk to if they felt under pressure.

40 per cent of Year 10s were unsure or were frightened of being rejected by their friends if they talked to them

about being pressurised into have sex. 56 per cent were unsure whether their peers would be frightened of being rejected.

34 per cent did not know or were unsure who to talk to if they felt someone was being pressured into sexting or having sex. But 64 per cent were unsure if their peers would know who to talk to about being pressurised for sex.

These two findings tally with my conversations with young people (See Listening to children chapter) who said that young people can be nervous about speaking to parents and many relied on the internet for information.

Said one young girl:

***"What would we do without Google?"***

When the full report is published, it will offer a valuable insight in what young people perceive to be social norms.

Previous research, particularly in health related fields such as alcohol consumption, has demonstrated that correcting misperceptions of social norms can encourage people to make healthier choices for themselves.

Social norm surveys are valuable in increasing our understanding of what young people do rather than having perceptions, which are not based on facts.

## Recommendations

- Social norms studies should be on going in Greater Manchester. Information from these should be fed into wider healthy childhood work and public health messages and communicated to children to 'bust myths' and misconceptions. This is particularly important with young people for whom beliefs about what is normal with their peers can influence their behaviour.
- The transition from primary to secondary school is a particularly difficult time for all children. More attention should be paid to identifying and supporting vulnerable children, including those isolated from their peer group, to prevent their exposure to exploitation.
- The importance of children safeguarding and looking out for each other through peer mentoring schemes. Such schemes should be encouraged and supported.

"It's okay for a boy to  
say no to sex, it does  
not make you gay or  
less masculine."

Kerry, Tough Cookies

## Where do missing children go?

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Real Voices said that children who go missing from home or care are not only at risk of child sexual exploitation but are also vulnerable to other forms of exploitation, including exploitation by criminal gangs.

Since Real Voices there has been increasing concern and evidence that some children who go missing are at risk of being groomed by those gangs to run drugs across "County Lines".

In a report "County Lines Gang Violence, Exploitation and Drug Supply 2016," the National Crime Agency raised concerns that 70 per cent of police forces were now reporting a problem with county lines in their areas. Although London continued to dominate the scene the NCA said that it had increased in other areas, such as Greater Manchester and Liverpool.

A police officer told me that children from Greater Manchester, groomed by criminal gangs, have been found selling drugs as far away as Devon.

There are many similarities between grooming of children for child sexual exploitation and for criminal drug dealing, including use of coercion and threats of violence. Children involved in County Lines are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

We have to learn from the child sexual exploitation scandals of the past, which have ruined so many lives. We cannot afford to make the same mistakes again of blaming children for being groomed into criminal

activities, which put them in danger.

This is a difficult area where the child is both victim and offender. Prevention as with CSE is critical.

### Missing figures up

Figures provided by GMP show that 4,376 individual children under 18 in Greater Manchester went missing between January and November 14, 2016, generating 16,099 reports.

Of those 743 (17 per cent) were children looked after by the local authority, generating 7,689 reports – almost half of all incidents.

Similar figures produced for two years ago showed 3242 children and young people under 18 went missing from January to September 2014 generated 9789 reports. Of those 539 children were looked after by the local authority generated 4520 reports again almost half of all incidents.

This a 35% increase in numbers of children going missing and a 64 per cent increase in missing incidents from 2014 to 2016.

This may be explained by better reporting and more stringent use of the 'absent' category or it could be that more children are going missing in Greater Manchester and could be at risk of harm.

Greater Manchester's 'top ten' children have been

reported missing a total of 1,843 times during their lifetime and the most frequently missing child has been reported missing on 222 occasions, according to the OPCC specification document issued in 2016 for the new Greater Manchester Missing Children Project..

There continues to be concern about the numbers of children, particularly those in care who are repeatedly going missing.

As the above figures show, children going missing from care continue to generate almost half of all missing reports.

## **Risk Assessment**

In 2013 the police introduced a new system of recording missing incidents, which classified a child or young person as either 'missing' or put them in a new category of 'absent'. Being classed as absent meant there was no automatic immediate police response. The latest absent figures for GM from January to November 2016 is 4,171 of which 3,879 reports were generated by children under 18.

The 'absent' category has now been scrapped following recommendations from the HMIC. The APPG on Runaway and Missing Children called for its abolition in May 2016. In January 2017 the College of Policing issued new guidance, which introduced new graded risk categories of no apparent risk, low risk, medium risk and high risk. This means that all missing episodes will now have a police response. However, it is not clear how this will be monitored to assess if children are being better safeguarded. The APPG report was clear that this will only happen if information and intelligence is shared between all agencies, particularly in assessment of no apparent risk.

## **Strong links between going missing and CSE**

Tackling the problem of children going missing is a key objective for Project Phoenix which conducted a "Missing

from Home" Review in 2015 which found that there was a strong correlation between CSE and children who go missing.

It is therefore important that good quality data on missing children is collected and shared amongst all services to inform risk assessments on children who go missing. The Government announced in February 2017 that it is developing a National Missing Persons Register which will allow police to access data about missing people across force boundaries. At the moment young people can have had a number of missing episodes in one police area and be involved in county lines in another without the connection being made.

## **Links between missing, sexual exploitation and "County Lines"**

The latest National Crime Agency report "County Lines Gang Violence, Exploitation and Drug Supply 2016" said that county lines gangs pose a significant threat to children and vulnerable adults who are exposed to emotional and physical harm. It said that "gangs typically exploit children under 18 to deliver drugs from the urban to county location using intimidation, violence debt bondage and or grooming."

The report said: "We assess that gangs utilise vulnerable children because they are a relatively inexpensive resource and easily controlled."

It said that although London gangs continue to dominate the activity that there had been an increase in reports from other counties and highlighted the emergence of gangs in the North West.

The report said eighty per cent of areas nationally saw the exploitation of children by gangs and that the ages ranged from 12 to 18 years, with 15-16 being the most common age range.

According to the NCA report the children involved in county lines are "often listed as a missing person".

The NCA said: "Although CSE is not the driving factor in county lines gangs exploiting children, a clear link

between county lines exploitation and child sexual exploitation exists".

## Return Interviews

The Department for Education issued new statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care in 2014 which states that each child who goes missing has to be offered an independent return interview.

Return interviews can give information about the level of harm a child was exposed to whilst missing and give information about what precipitated the missing episode so that action can be taken to deal with the underlying causes. They are also an important source of intelligence about perpetrators, hotspots, the changing threat of CSE and grooming techniques.

They are conducted by different organisations in each of the local authorities across Greater Manchester. The way that information is shared with the individual police divisions varies.

However, Project Phoenix say they are focusing on this and have made significant progress in ensuring that this information and intelligence is shared with key people and services at the front line.

In addition not every authority conducts return interviews on children who are placed from outside their borough. This increases the difficulty of sharing intelligence from such interviews. Out of area placements are a particular problem with a lack of uniformity about who is responsible for conducting the interview.

Assessment of risk has to be informed by all available intelligence of risks to children and exploitation in a particular area and an important source of that information is children and young people themselves.

## IT Systems

A further problem is that it is not easy for GMP officers to extract data on missing children from their current IT

systems which hinders their understanding and response to the problem.

However work is going on to improve the present systems and look at future requirements.

## Good practice

Oldham Phoenix have had good results in preventing repeat missing in a targeted cohort with a 52% drop in the number of missing episodes between September 2015 and February 2016.

Interventions ranged from informal arbitration of overnight stays with a young woman's family at her boyfriend's address to working to establish a relationship between a mother and children's home staff encouraging the mother to notify them when her son returned home inappropriately.

This approach is very much in line with a 'restorative approach' 'in finding out from the child or family member exactly what the problem is from their point of view and then working with them to resolve it.

It also helped that Oldham police and children's services shares the same data so that the same information that goes on the children's services system also goes on the police system.

As a social worker said:

***"I feel more confident when being asked to make a risk assessment on a missing child at 12 at night that I have the information I need".***

## New Missing Children Project

The GM Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner, Tony Lloyd, has invested in a Greater Manchester Missing Children Project, which will be run by the Children's Society working with Urban Outreach and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

The project will target children across Greater Manchester who have gone missing between two and five times within the last 12 months. This may include children

placed in the Greater Manchester area from a local authority outside the conurbation.

The aim is to understand why children go repeatedly missing and to reduce the number of incidents, by early interventions.

It will be looking for innovative ways to work with children, families and carers to prevent further missing episodes, to ensure consistency of response to data sharing and referral after a missing episode, develop positive alternatives for children at risk of exploitation and to have the most effective return interview system.

It is encouraging that children and young people will be involved in co-designing and delivering this service.

## **Children's Homes and Missing**

As over half of missing incidents are generated by looked after children I decided it was important to look at the children's homes 'market'.

Using data supplied by the Department for Education, Ofsted and local authorities, I looked at children's homes placements in March 2015 for some indication of how the care market was functioning in Greater Manchester at that time.

There was a total of 693 places in 182 registered children's homes in Greater Manchester at the end of March 2015. There were 400 children placed in those homes implying a vacancy rate of 293.

A quarter of the children (100) were placed in children's homes from authorities outside the area of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Half of all children placed in children's homes (200) by the ten GM authorities were placed outside their home authority and a quarter were placed outside the GM area altogether.

This begs the question about whether the provision in children's homes in Greater Manchester is meeting the needs of Greater Manchester children.

The other key question is why there are so many missing episodes from children's homes and what part do out of borough placements play?

One of the key findings of the APPG report on children missing from care, which I chaired in 2012, was that that children in placements outside their local authority boundaries are at high risk of going missing. Data obtained from local authorities for the report revealed that in those areas that responded to information requests, on average 50% of missing looked after children are children who go missing from placements outside the boundaries of their local authority.

Commissioning of children's homes in GM should aim for a better understanding of why children go missing from children's homes and whether out of area placements are a critical factor.

There needs to be further research undertaken to see if there is a connection between distance of placement and increased likelihood of children going missing and if the local provision available is meeting the needs of local children.

## **Changing face of children's homes**

Children in children's homes today are often older than was traditionally the case with a significant number having a statement of special educational needs or an Educational, Health and Care plan. In 2015, 15% of children in children's homes received a conviction or had been subject to a final warning or reprimand during the year, compared to 5% for the care population as a whole. Children in children's homes are more likely to be living away from their local communities than those in foster care. They are often targeted as vulnerable by paedophiles or gangs according to Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care in England published in July 2016.

There are additional difficulties in keeping children safe when they are placed away from their local area. GMP continue to report concerns that very vulnerable children

at high risk have been placed within the GMP area without their knowledge. All too often the police only become aware of such children when they are reported missing or following them suffering serious sexual abuse.

GMP took part in a national pilot for three months in 2016. The pilot placed requirements on local authorities to notify police immediately when they were placing a child in that force area. During the three month pilot GMP were not made aware of any child being placed in the area. And yet police were able to show that during this time many children had been placed in GM from outside the force area and that no notification had taken place.

Out of borough placements, particularly from distant authorities, can make it challenging to support children with complicated needs who may have repeated missing episodes.

Sir Martin Narey said in his review of children's homes that in social care 'knowledge and intelligence about the needs of individual children, dependant on good quality care planning, is often not aggregated to inform commissioning'.

He added:

***"Clearly too much of what I saw and heard was really about buying places in children's homes not about commissioning them."***

In financial year 2014/15, the ten local authorities within the Greater Manchester combined authority area spent £66.6 million per annum on beds in registered children's homes, a mean cost of £163,304 per child per annum, £3,140 per child per week.

By combining their resources and the information gathered to inform their annual sufficiency statements the ten local authorities could aim to reshape the market to reflect the needs of the children within the local authorities, producing a combined sufficiency plan and commissioning strategy for Greater Manchester.

The GMCA has recently applied to DFE for funding to examine the commissioning of children's homes places. However that work needs to take place alongside a better understanding of why children go missing from children's homes and whether out of area placements are a critical factor.

## Recommendation

- Because of the high number of missing reports generated by looked after children any commissioning strategy by GM of children's homes places should aim for a better understanding of why children go missing from children's homes and whether out of area and distant placements are a critical factor.

## Healthy childhoods

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### Children's mental health

Real Voices expressed concern about the impact of CSE on children's and young people's physical and mental health and the resources available to help them.

It also called for child sexual exploitation to be made a public health priority and I would like to reiterate that call again. The majority of funding from Public Health focuses on issues that are primarily targeted at adults such as smoking and diabetes. More focus on support for children could prevent some of these issues emerging in later life.

Data published on the NHS Mental Health Dashboard showed wide differences of up to £30 for each child per year in projected spending by Greater Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups in 2017.

### Lifelong heartache

The trauma caused by sexual exploitation can be very enduring and last a lifetime and victims should not face a postcode lottery. Help given should depend on need and not where a child lives.

This was brought home to me by a 19 year old girl who is being treated for deep depression and whose whole life has been affected.

She told me:

*"I just want to be normal. I have been in bed for two*

*days. I do not feel normal sad, I feel weird sad. I can't sleep. I just dream weird things."*

She watches TV most of the night and goes to bed about 4am and wakes up about 10am each day.

Most of the young people being helped by the Achieving Change Together team said they would have benefited from support for their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The Phoenix peer reviews for 2015 showed that young people with mental health or attachment issues (often in response to trauma and abuse) appear to be overrepresented in the cases then currently open to CSE teams in GM.

The peer reviews also identified some excellent examples of tier 2 therapeutic services for young people, but this appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

Staff from St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre have been present in the peer reviews and on the whole it is reported that there has been a good referral rate to SARC for the reviewed cases. In most teams, following a report of a sexual assault against a young person, referrals to SARC are made as standard in the vast majority of cases.

### Prevention

I asked Jon Rouse the Chief Officer of Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership to consider how

children might be better protected from exploitation and have healthier childhoods.

He thought it was important that knowledge was strengthened around what genuinely prevents exposure to exploitation as well as what works with respect to early detection. It was also important that there was a holistic view of child development and what is meant by child health and that efforts to achieve that should be joined up with the work that Jim Taylor, the council director for Salford, is leading on in developing a children's plan for GM.

## Integrated Children's Health and Wellbeing Board

Mr Rouse has proposed that the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership should set up a single, integrated GM Children's Health and Wellbeing Board from 1 April. It would bring together relevant work on public health, mental health, community health, safeguarding, special needs, paediatric care (including urgent and specialist.) It would also focus on the needs of specific vulnerable groups, including LAC and adopted children, young carers, children with learning disabilities and young offenders. Membership of the Board would represent a wide set of professional interests mixed with some independent challenge, and would ensure that young people's, parents' and guardians' voices are built in.

The NHS England national team have indicated that they would welcome being members of the Board which would give access to best practice across the country.

Mr Rouse said:

*"We have also decided that in GM, under devolution, we would like to restore the children's strategic clinical network, which were dismantled nationally at the end of last year."*

He has proposed that amongst other key components would be the use of social marketing to reach the wider public around 'safe' or 'healthy' childhoods; and building the importance of this kind of safeguarding into other

relevant strategies and programmes e.g. tobacco, alcohol and sexual health.

It is also important to involve non-statutory groups like Brook who have great expertise in working with young people.

This integrated GM Children's Health and Wellbeing Board also offers opportunities for co-designing services with children and young people.

It is a good step forward towards making CSE a public health priority in Greater Manchester.

## Transferring specialist knowledge

The SARC at St. Mary's is a specialist resource. Unusually it accepts self-referrals. The centre has developed a huge amount of specialist knowledge and expertise from working with children, young people and adults who have been the victims of sexual violence. Recently the centre has been extending its outreach work on a hub and spoke model.

It is always a challenge to ensure that knowledge gained in specialist resources is transferred to other teams including other specialist teams. The knowledge gained at SARC about sexual violence is invaluable but victims may also have experienced domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse.

Some thought needs to be given as to how transfer of specialist knowledge can take place between specialist resources as well as supporting front line staff within Greater Manchester.

## Young people should design health messages

Talking to young people at the Advocacy Day organised by Professor Andrew Rowland, I was struck by how important it is to target public health messages.

In a discussion about smoking the young people agreed it affected health but also said that it was 'cool' to do it. They said that "nobody" listens to advice and "the more you are

told not to do it, the more people do it". They talked about the pressure from peers, to smoke, "these are doing it so I'll do it" or "sick of the pressure so I'll do it". They also said smoking helped with stress and it was 'same with drugs'.

Public health messages to young people about healthy childhoods are more likely to work if co-designed by young people who have a better understanding of the underlying pressures on them and can give valuable insight into what might work.

This fits in with Jon Rouse's commitment to ensure that young people's voices are built into the work that the GM Children's Health and Well Being Board will do.

Young people could also help co-design messages that targeted the underlying reasons for young people smoking, drinking or taking drugs, such as stress or peer pressure. Young people can of course also give valuable insight into what works in the delivery of 'helping services'.

## Recommendations

- Young people should be involved in the design and delivery of public health messages and services for young people
- There are highly specialist resources across Greater Manchester, including domestic abuse and sexual violence, drugs, alcohol abuse. Consideration needs to be given as to how specialists can access specialist knowledge and expertise in other areas. This could include developing a register of practitioners with specialist skills and knowledge which could be shared with other practitioners across Greater Manchester.
- It is important that commissioners work together and pool budgets, so that support can be targeted where it is most needed, reduce duplication and better understand pathways. Both PCCs and CCGs have a part to play in providing therapeutic support for people who have mental ill health and they should join forces.



