



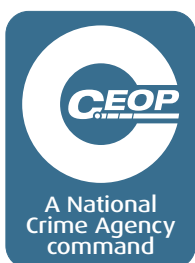
# NCA

National Crime Agency

## **CEOP Thematic Assessment**

### The Foundations of Abuse: A thematic assessment of the risk of child sexual abuse by adults in institutions

October 2013





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# Director's Foreword



The sexual exploitation and abuse of children is most likely when vulnerability meets power. Both vulnerability and power can take forms which are subtle, informal and – to a passive outside world – often barely visible.

Events of the last year have brought into focus an issue which has, in truth, been in our consciousness for much longer – that there is something about institutions that can amplify both vulnerability and power to a point where sexual abuse of children within them can become endemic.

Institutions with children or other vulnerable people in their care, have special obligations to safeguard them. Where the risk increases, so do these obligations.

The aim of this assessment is not to deliver a verdict on any of the institutions which have come under close scrutiny since October 2012. To the contrary: recognising that such scrutiny may take years, that there are (regrettably) many other institutions that have been venues for abuse in the past, and that there are some common factors that can as easily be learned from them, the NCA CEOP command aims to deliver an authoritative assessment of how institutions can lay the foundations of abuse.

More importantly perhaps, we make recommendations based on our assessment, that we believe could make institutions safer today.

We must not assume that all the lessons have been learned, that it could never happen now or here; protecting the most vulnerable from the worst abuse is always current, urgent and important.

## **Peter Davies**

Director  
NCA CEOP Command

## **Institution**

A society or organisation founded for a religious, educational, social or similar purpose.

- Oxford English Dictionary

# Key Findings

- 1) Children in institutional settings are not only at risk from adults who are inclined to abuse them sexually; but also from adults who either fail to notice abuse or, if they do, fail to report it.
- 2) Where institutions put their own interests ahead of those of the children who engage with them, abusive behaviours are likely to become normalised, potentially leading to sexual abuse.
- 3) The culture within an institution has a strong influence on the degree to which abuse might occur within it. Poor leadership, closed structures, ineffective policies and procedures together with the discouragement of reporting, facilitates a malign climate which colludes with those inclined to sexually abuse children.
- 4) Where institutions are held in high regard and respected by the communities they serve, positional grooming can be perpetuated, whereby offenders conduct social or environmental grooming and mask their actions by virtue of their formal positions within an organisation.
- 5) Potential risks from those with a sexual interest in children who pursue work in institutions can be mitigated by vigilant and effective leadership and management.
- 6) Intense loyalty and conformity of workers to the mission, norms and values of an institution can inhibit them from reporting concerns.
- 7) The historic nature of many cases currently exercising media attention, together with developments in safeguarding, might give a false perception that this type of offending can no longer occur. Offenders continue to exploit systemic vulnerabilities where they exist.

# Introduction and Methodology

1. In recent years, a number of institutions which provide services to and otherwise engage with children and young people have been identified as potential venues for child sexual abuse by individuals or groups of abusers. In many cases, the abuse was only disclosed many years after it occurred.
2. Elementary situational crime prevention theory and practice show that, in order to explain institutional child sexual abuse (ICSA), it is not enough to focus only on understanding offenders or their victims (both of which are the subject of much practical knowledge in the field of child sexual exploitation and abuse). It is also important to focus on the environment in which the crime takes place. Learning from institutional sexual abuse cases indicates that there is something about institutions, as environments for child sexual abuse, which appears to aggravate the vulnerability of potential victims and amplifies the power over them that abusers can exercise. This means that institutions are high risk environments for children, young people and indeed other vulnerable people. Such a high risk, coupled with the vulnerability of potential victims, requires a higher investment in mitigation.
3. There is a substantial body of literature and research which seeks to account for the behaviour of abusers and the failure of institutions to protect the children for whom they are responsible. Many past case reviews and official inquiries have made recommendations to prevent the reoccurrence of institutional child sexual abuse. However, these steps have been insufficient because:-
  - much of the learning and change has taken place within the institutions themselves, meaning that consistency, transparency and shared learning is limited;
  - only the most comprehensive reviews will have addressed all the relevant issues, again limiting the scope of learning and improvement;
  - some of the dynamics around reviews – such as the imperative for reputation management, institutional aversion to litigation and the need for pervasive culture change – hinder a full and thorough exposition of the issues, thereby limiting adoption of good practice; and
  - failure to identify the full scope of the current risk means that not all organisations are aware of the potential for institutional child sexual abuse.

## Objectives

4. For the purpose of this assessment the term “institution” is widely defined to include all organisations where parents or guardians entrust other adults to provide activities, care or instruction for children in formal or informal settings. The majority of children who engage with institutions derive a positive experience from it. For those who do not, their negative experience can impact adversely on personal relationships, life chances and community. This assessment seeks to answer the principal question, “What features of institutions exacerbate the risk to children of sexual abuse?” The principal objectives of this assessment are:

- i. to produce a literature review, summarising academic thought on the subject;
- ii. to identify the common characteristics of institutions which make them higher risk locations for the sexual exploitation or abuse of children and young people;
- iii. to consult widely with subject matter experts and safeguarding practitioners; and
- iv. to identify and recommend practical options for addressing the characteristics of institutions that either escalate risk and/or cause individual or organisation-wide risk aversion.

## Data Collection

5. Institutions were categorised into three constituent strands that exhibit structural similarities: education and pastoral, residential and care, and corporate and religious. The educational and pastoral strand considers schools, youth groups and youth sports teams; the care category includes residential care homes and secure units; and the corporate and religious group encompasses all faith groups and denominations, as well as companies and charities that engage with children. A wide-reaching literature review was conducted, outlining academic thought on institutional child sexual abuse. Following this, a scoping exercise was conducted and six cases from each identified strand were selected for further analysis and research.
6. Analysis involved one-to-one meetings and group workshops with various stakeholders, subject experts and police officers involved in the selected cases. These meetings continued throughout the preparation of the assessment in order to subject the emerging themes and thinking to continuous revision. Since the purpose of the assessment is to understand the causes of institutional child sexual abuse and not to apportion blame or identify specific offenders or their victims, the case studies used have been sanitised. No sensitive intelligence or materials from on-going investigations have been included in this assessment.
7. In order to ensure that the themes and trends identified by the assessment are consistent and relevant, investigators involved in current cases have been consulted and stakeholders have been invited to peer review the finished product.
8. While emphasising that the inclusion of their names may not imply that they agree with the conclusions of this assessment, we are nevertheless grateful to the following for their contribution to this work: NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit, Barnardo's, Office for the Children's Commissioner (England), The Scouts' Association, The Football Association, The Rugby Football Union, Bridget Day (LADO), Celia Brackenridge (Brunel University London), MPS (Operation YEW TREE), SOCA/North Wales Police (Operation PALLIAL), Independent School's Inspectorate, North Somerset LSCB, Plymouth LSCB, Dame Janet Smith Review, Crown Prosecution Service, Church of England, Roman Catholic Church, Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, Department for Education, Flintshire County Council, National Association of People Abused in Childhood, Ministry of Defence, Board of Deputies of British Jews, Norwood, Faith Associates, Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service, Church Child Protection Advisory Service, Police Services and Local Authorities across England and Wales.

## Limitations to the Research

9. Case research was limited to England and Wales and does not include child-on-child sexual abuse. There are a large number of organisations within the working definition of institutions and, in the time available, it was not possible to consult them all. Stakeholders consulted were representative of the sectors used in the definition, according to their availability.

# Findings from the Literature

10. In order to inform the thematic assessment, a wide-ranging literature review was conducted to determine the landscape of academic thought on institutional child sexual abuse. There exists a substantial body of work on ICSA and this review brings together key pieces, exploring the themes and risk areas identified by research.
11. Some institutions are recognised as a prominent threat to the children who are part of them; over the decades these organisations have provided child sex offenders with the opportunity to manipulate and abuse.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> This problem has been recognised in a range of countries<sup>4</sup>, including the USA, Australia and Canada.
12. A large proportion of British children engage with institutions: there are over 40,000 children in local authority care at any one time<sup>5</sup> and around 32% of all children are involved in out of school sports clubs<sup>6</sup>. At some point, almost every child's safety and welfare will be the responsibility of an institution.
13. Often, those within institutional settings find it difficult to believe that abuse could occur in that setting<sup>7</sup>. Local communities have had difficulty believing that trusted institutions – such as local government authorities and churches – could ever have accommodated ICSA<sup>8</sup>.
14. Due to potential reputational damage to institutions, awareness of ICSA may be accompanied by a reluctance to report it. Allegations of abuse may lead to a loss of credibility, funding or charitable licence<sup>9, 10</sup>. As a result, child protection is often subservient to an institution's need to protect itself<sup>11</sup>.
15. Historically, cultural and attitudinal norms within some institutions have not been conducive to safeguarding children. The threat posed to children by those responsible for them has been recognised since 1958<sup>12</sup>. In the 1990s there were still concerns over the male dominant culture of institutions, particularly as 77% of the child sexual abusers identified at that time were male<sup>13</sup>.

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1 Utting, W. *People Like Us* London: HMSO (1998)

2 Nolan, L. *First Report of the Review on Child Protection in the Catholic Church in England and Wales* (2001) [[www.nolanreview.org.uk](http://www.nolanreview.org.uk) – accessed June 2013]

3 Sullivan, J & Beech, A. 'Professional Perpetrators, Sex Offenders Who Use Their Employment to Target and Sexually Abuse The Children with Whom They Work' in *Child Abuse Review* 11 pp. 153-167 (2002)

4 Colton, M. 'Learning Lessons from Men who have Sexually Abused Children' in *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* (Feb 2012) 51, 1 pp. 79-93

5 Erooga, M. *Towards Safer Organisations* NSPCC (2009) [[www.nspcc.org.uk/inform](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform) – accessed June 2013]

6 [www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/aug/09/children-physical-activity](http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/aug/09/children-physical-activity) accessed 06/2013

7 Bloom, R. B. 'When Staff Members Sexually Abuse Children in Residential Care' in *Child Welfare* (Mar-Apr 1992) 71, 2 pp. 131-145

8 Wolfe, A et al. *Child Abuse in Community Institutions and Organisations* Law Commission of Canada (2003)

9 Discussion with CCPAS Simon Bass

10 Kendrick, A. "Who Do we Trust?": *The Abuse of Children Living Away from Home in the United Kingdom* (Sept. 1998)

11 Discussion with CCPAS Simon Bass

12 Anthony, J. 'Other People's Children' [first published 1958], in Tod, R.J.N. *Children in Care* London: Longmans (1998)

13 Rosenthal, J. 'A Descriptive Study of Abuse and Neglect in Out of Home Placement' in *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal*, 15 pp/249-260 (1991)



16. Numerous guidelines on contact with children have been directed at those who work within institutions<sup>14, 15, 16</sup>. However, despite these guidelines, in most cases of ICSA the abuse normally took place over a long period of time and the extent of abuse went unrecognised. In a number of cases there was more than one victim and offender involved<sup>17</sup>. Where abuse was recognised it was not always dealt with according to policy<sup>18</sup> and, in one case, collective denial effectively prevented administrators from recognising the possibility that ICSA was taking place<sup>19</sup>.
17. Studies have demonstrated that one of the most effective safeguards within organisations or professional settings is to provide frequent, open and supportive supervision of staff<sup>20, 21, 22</sup>. There is a call to increase awareness within institutions of the dynamics of ICSA, particularly the grooming process<sup>23</sup>. In particular, staff need to be able to recognise how offenders construct a trusting relationship with a victim and then abuse that relationship<sup>24</sup>.
18. Once embedded within institutions, offenders have often manipulated closed cultures or worked to foster secrecy. Opinions are divided on whether offenders specifically choose jobs to enable them to have access to children. Research conducted by Sullivan and Beech in 2004<sup>25</sup> found that over half of offenders had specifically chosen their job so that they could abuse children. However, recent NSPCC research carried out in 2009 contests this view<sup>26</sup>. Offenders will utilise an institution's unique environment to enable their abuse and will endeavour to prevent any disclosure regarding their offending<sup>27</sup>. They are able to achieve this due to their ability to build positive relationships with others, a key skill while working with children, but one used maliciously by offenders in order to create an environment in which they can abuse<sup>28</sup>. An offender's socially acceptable manner is designed to be deceptive and practitioners need to recognise that any list of offender typologies or risk indicators is not exhaustive.
19. Offenders do not limit their approach to just the child, often grooming the victim's family, other protective adults and other agencies concerned with the child's welfare. Some offenders will attempt to gain the trust of the community and ensure that they are considered above suspicion<sup>29</sup>. If accused, these offenders are able to capitalise on the community's ready acceptance of their innocence<sup>30</sup>.

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- 14 Protection of Children: Disclosure of Criminal Background of Those with Access to Children London: Home Office (1986)
  - 15 Working together: A guide to arrangements for Inter-agency Co-operation for the Protection of Children from Abuse London: Department of Health and Social Services (1988)
  - 16 Protection of Children: Disclosure of Criminal Background of Those with Access to Children London: Home Office (1994)
  - 17 White, I.A. 'Report of the Inquiry into the Management of Child Care in London' in *Social and Legal Studies* (1995)
  - 18 Finkelhor, D. 'The Legacy of the Clergy Abuse Scandal' in *Child Abuse and Neglect* 27 pp. 1225-1229
  - 19 Brackenridge, C. *Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport* Abingdon: Routledge (2001)
  - 20 *Choosing with Care* London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office (1992)
  - 21 Reyome, N.D. 'Executive Directors' Perceptions of the Prevention of Child Abuse and Maltreatment in Residential Facilities' in *Child and Youth Care* (1990)
  - 22 Spencer, J.W. & Knudson, D.D. 'Out of Home Malreatment – an analysis of risk in various settings for children' in *Children and Youth Services Review* 14, 6 pp. 485-492 (1992)
  - 23 There is a divergence of opinion regarding the use of the term 'grooming', some agencies and academics prefer alternatives such as 'entrapment'
  - 24 McAlinden, A.M. 'Setting 'Em Up': Personal, Familial and Institutional Grooming in the Sexual Abuse of Children (2006) London (CA.): Sage Publications
  - 25 Sullivan, J. & Beech, A. 'Are Professional Perpetrators Different from Other Sex Offenders?' in *Journal of Sexual Aggression* (2004)
  - 26 Erooga, M. *Towards Safer Organisations* NSPCC (2009) [www.nspcc.org.uk/inform – accessed June 2013]
  - 27 Brannan, C. & March, J. *Castle Hill Report* Shrewsbury: Shropshire Council (1993)
  - 28 Erooga, M. *Towards Safer Organisations* NSPCC (2009) [www.nspcc.org.uk/inform – accessed June 2013]
  - 29 Salter, A. *Predators, Paedophiles, Rapists and Other Sex Offenders: Who they are, how they operate and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children* New York: Basic Books, 2003
  - 30 Sullivan, J & Beech, A. 'Professional Perpetrators, Sex Offenders Who Use Their Employment to Target and Sexually Abuse The Children with Whom They Work' in *Child Abuse Review* 11 pp. 153-167 (2002)

Within some religious communities, offenders can also play on the fact that, throughout childhood, parents instruct their children to respect and obey their spiritual leaders, and display this behaviour themselves. In addition, where abuse has been disclosed, religious authorities have historically moved offenders on to a new position or location where offending has continued<sup>31, 32</sup>. The lack of consequence, either through dismissal or prosecution, enables abusers to offend against a number of victims over a number of years<sup>33</sup>.

20. Not every child within an institution is a victim of ICSA. Prevalence studies are scarce but a study in 1992 by Nunno<sup>34</sup> of 1000 children in care found that 158 reported that they had been sexually abused. Offenders can often be selective when targeting their victims, seeking vulnerabilities such as low self-esteem, separation from family and feelings of being unwanted<sup>35, 36, 37</sup>.
21. Outside institutions, victims already face significant barriers to disclosure<sup>38</sup>. Additional barriers exist within an institution that must be overcome in order to elicit disclosure. These barriers include a victim's fear that the abuse will increase as a consequence of a disclosure<sup>39</sup> or that retribution will be meted out. Victims may perceive that their offender holds absolute power<sup>40</sup>, particularly when they represent a religious institution or an organisation that is held in high esteem within the local community. These are only some of the barriers to disclosure and they will vary from case to case. These barriers have led to a historic and on-going lack of disclosure and, consequently, an underestimation of the prevalence of ICSA and other types of child sexual exploitation.
22. Children who suffer sexual abuse are not the only victims. Suderman and Jaffe<sup>41</sup> found that children who were aware of abuse in their institution lived in fear of becoming the next victim. This fear could later manifest in the form of difficulties similar to those experienced by actual victims of abuse. Those who do disclose are often re-victimised when their credibility is questioned and denials by the offender are readily accepted as a result of their skill in manipulation<sup>42</sup>.
23. Although many similarities in ICSA across different institutional cultures are highlighted by the literature, there are some unique elements in respect of the modus operandi of offenders and the selection of victims. Communities may be in denial or unaware of the problem of ICSA, resulting in offenders rarely facing significant punishment. Case studies demonstrate that the victim is often afforded the lowest priority in the institutional response. Where disclosures are made, institutions often look first to protect their own reputation rather than protecting the victim. Victims can be the most severely punished, often having their own credibility questioned, being ostracised by their community and receiving little support in recovering from their ordeal. Despite being ostensibly designed to safeguard children, institutions can instead place them at significant risk.

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31 Hartill, M. *Concealment of Child Sexual Abuse in Sports* London: Routledge (2013)

32 Finkelhor, D. 'The Legacy of the Clergy Abuse Scandal' in *Child Abuse and Neglect* 27 pp. 1225-1229

33 White, I.A. 'Report of the Inquiry into the Management of Child Care in London' in *Social and Legal Studies* (1995)

34 Nunno, M.A. 'Factors Contributing to Abuse and Neglect in Out of Home Settings' – Paper presented at the NSPCC Conference on the International Abuse of Children London (1992)

35 Hartill, M. *Concealment of Child Sexual Abuse in Sports* London: Routledge (2013)

36 Barter, C. *Abuse of Children in Residential Care* NSPCC (2003)

37 Olson, N. 'Entrapping the Innocent: Toward a Theory of Child Sexual Predators Luring Communication' in *Communication Theory* 17 pp. 231-251 (2007)

38 *Threat Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* CEOP (2013)

39 Sullivan, J & Beech, A. 'Professional Perpetrators, Sex Offenders Who Use Their Employment to Target and Sexually Abuse The Children with Whom They Work' in *Child Abuse Review* 11 pp. 153-167 (2002)

40 Anthony, J. 'Other People's Children' [first published 1958], in Tod, R.J.N. *Children in Care* London: Longmans (1998)

41 Suderman, M & Jaffe, P. *Children and Youth who Witness Violence: New Directions in Intervention and Prevention* (1997)

42 Finkelhor, D. 'The Legacy of the Clergy Abuse Scandal' in *Child Abuse and Neglect* 27 pp. 1225-1229

# Findings from the Cases

25. Analysis of the case studies selected for this assessment indicates a number of factors that demonstrably increase the risk to children from sexual abuse within institutional settings. These are broadly similar in scope to those identified by the literature. There are four key areas of risk: institutional structure; institutional culture; offenders and opportunities; and victims and vulnerabilities.

## Institutional Structure

26. Within institutional settings there is considerable risk around rigid, inflexible hierarchies. Junior staff members often feel disempowered within stratified organisations, unable to report issues that affect senior staff and managers. This compounds the general fear of being ostracised or otherwise punished, which is a common reason for failure to disclose. Rank, grade and other hierarchical structures additionally act to stifle effective reporting by leaving staff unsure of the appropriate pathway to escalate or raise allegations and concerns.
27. In Case Study 4, learning support assistants had legitimate concerns about the offender's actions with children and approach to classroom management. Although some raised their concerns with the designated teacher for child protection, and some of these were ultimately referred to the head teacher, no further action was taken. This left staff demoralised and uncertain of how to report, especially since the recognised channels did not lead to positive action. As a result, staff ceased to escalate concerns and the offending continued.
28. Where considerable power is vested in one person as a result of a hierarchical structure, there is the potential for failures in disclosure to go unnoticed, since the position of authority atop the hierarchy often lacks effective checks and balances. This can lead to the creation of a single point of failure, immune to supervision and with the power to halt – either wilfully or through inaction – effective reporting. The implications of this are far-reaching. Case Study 10 illustrates that a single point of failure can lead to explicit safeguarding recommendations – in this case, calling for the dismissal of a member of the religious institution – being overruled or ignored, allowing abuse to continue.
29. Effective supervision of staff is also important in a broader context, with failures in management leading to the subversion of policies and procedures designed to safeguard children. In Case Study 17, ineffective administration and leadership allowed an offender to produce indecent images of children (IIOC) using a mobile telephone. The context of this case suggests that, without the ability to create and distribute IIOC, the abuse would not have taken place. The events outlined in Case Study 16 show that, in addition to failure to uphold good procedures, poor procedures can facilitate abuse, in this case creating supposedly legitimate reasons for offenders to conduct strip searches of female children.
30. Vetting is another factor to consider. Whilst it can never eliminate risk – it only provides information on those who are already known to have offended – poor vetting practice invites unnecessary risk into the institutional setting. Whilst the primary risk is that failures in vetting may allow those with a sexual interest in children into the institution, there are additional issues. In Case Study 13, ineffective vetting procedures allowed an influx of untrained and unqualified staff. This not only lowered the quality of care, but also meant that staff felt unable to challenge the actions of the key offender.

31. An additional risk to emerge from the structure of institutions is the threat of ‘positional grooming’. In order to reduce suspicion and gain compliance, offenders groom not only their intended victims but also those around them. This process of social or environmental grooming involves gaining the trust of those with the power and responsibility to safeguard the child involved. However, institutional offenders enjoy a low threshold for social grooming, furnished by their position within an institution.
32. ‘Positional grooming’ revolves around the inherent trust elicited by institutional settings. There is a degree of transference between the level of respect attributed to an organisation and to those representing it. By virtue of holding a position within a respected institution, an offender carries some of that respect – and the trust subsumed in it – vicariously. This is immediately apparent in case studies involving religious institutions, where victims and those around them are often in awe of offenders, considering the attention paid to them as an honour.
33. Case Study 7 demonstrates how religious leaders can be placed above suspicion based on their position within the faith group. This case is representative of the aforementioned common theme whereby the attention paid to victims by offenders is often welcomed by their families<sup>43</sup>.
34. However, positional grooming is not unique to religious institutions; it can exist wherever an institution and its representatives are held in high esteem. In Case Study 2, a youth group worker was able to organise additional sessions with a smaller group of children enrolled with the youth organisation. This was possible because of the position of responsibility held by the offender: he was considered to be dedicated to an institution which actively worked to help develop children. As a result, parents were not concerned that their children were attending sessions overseen by only one adult. It is due to this level of trust – created by positional grooming – that much of the grooming and abuse was facilitated.
35. In summary, institutional structure can facilitate child sexual abuse. A rigid hierarchy disenfranchises junior members of staff, stifling reporting through a lack of clear pathways. Furthermore, it allows for the emergence of potential single points of failure through poor supervision. Ineffective supervision also facilitates the subversion or disregarding of policies and procedures designed to safeguard children. Finally, the unique position and structure of institutions allows for positional grooming, enabling offenders to readily gain the trust of those around their victims.

## Institutional Culture

36. An issue that straddles both structure and culture is the notion of ‘closed institutions’. Whether through design and supervision, or a pervasive mentality amongst staff, institutions can become closed to wider scrutiny.
37. The culture within closed institutions tends towards the internal management of concerns or problems. In Case Study 3, senior authorities within a religious group were aware of offences taking place within the community and had received a confession of guilt from the offender. However, due to the faith group’s belief that offences should be handled internally, the appropriate authorities were not informed.

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<sup>43</sup> This is illustrated by Case Studies 1, 5, 7 and 10 where the presence of the religious leader was invariably considered a privilege or honour. Case Study 1 is indicative of how support for the institutional position held by a religious leader can continue following trial and conviction, with the offender still receiving letters of support and communicating with the community they formerly served.

38. Similarly, Case Study 14 illustrates that religious institutions can feel obliged to keep an offender within the institutional setting due to a feeling of obligation towards members of the community. Handling concerns internally and allowing known offenders or those considered a risk to continue to access the institutional setting are responses symptomatic of a closed institution. Non-religious institutions can also cultivate closed cultures: in Case Study 16, for example, children who were alleging abuse were threatened with court proceedings by the institution involved. Closed institutions in effect discourage reporting and the external referral of concerns.
39. Another risk emerging from poor institutional culture develops from low staff morale. Case Study 9 demonstrates that institutional settings suffering from low morale can foster an environment where poor practice can flourish. In this case, conditions led to lowered morale amongst staff, resulting in a gradual lapse in standards. This, in turn, developed into failures in reporting and recording, alongside an acceptance of poor standards of behaviour towards children.
40. Falling standards in care highlight another area of concern linked to institutional culture and the normalisation of negative behaviours within the institution. This is apparent across several of the Case Studies and can be illustrated with specific reference to Case Study 4. Here, the offender normalised both poor behaviour and a failure to adhere to procedure and accepted practice. He flouted formal dress codes – instead favouring casual clothes – and regularly acted to contravene systems put in place to assist the teaching process. This pushing of boundaries led those around the offender to ignore actions outside the accepted norms of behaviour, ultimately leading to a failure to disclose concerns.
41. The normalisation of inappropriate behaviour also played a key role in allowing offences to occur in Case Study 17. In this case, the offender’s overtly sexualised behaviour – showing colleagues sexual images and discussing sexual acts regularly in the workplace – meant other members of staff felt it difficult to report concerns, since inappropriate behaviour appeared to be commonplace and accepted.
42. Poor institutional culture can act to stifle reporting and disclosure. A widespread fear of being ostracised by colleagues and by the wider institutional community is often prevalent amongst those in a position to raise concerns. This was considered by safeguarding practitioners to be a key element in explaining the low levels of disclosure in institutional settings.
43. This low degree of reporting may also result from the ‘bystander effect’. This can be described as a situation in which people are aware of potential impropriety, or have concerns about children or colleagues, and yet fail to disclose them. This can be further exacerbated by statutory bodies that consider children to be unreliable witnesses who cannot offer compelling testimony.
44. Bystander effect can arise from a variety of sources, ranging from the aforementioned problem of normalised negative behaviours to a more generalised belief that the responsibility to report does not sit with the individual in question. Bystander effect is prevalent across the full breadth of the Case Studies, arising in a number of forms. In Case Study 12, those with responsibility for overall management of the sports club involved had been made aware of concerns but did not refer these, fearing the implications to reputation and funding for the club.
45. The emergence of bystander effect can also be attributed to the inherent challenges in reporting. Making allegations tantamount to accusing someone of sexual activity with a child deters many from coming forward due to the momentous effect such accusations can have. This was evident in Case Study 8, where people suggested to youth group leaders that inappropriate contact between one volunteer and children may be taking place. The offender was not confronted by colleagues due to reticence arising from a lack of indisputable evidence.

46. Bystander effect may also come about through unclear reporting pathways within institutions. Uncertainty of how to disclose and lack of clarity about whose responsibility it is to raise concerns make it unlikely that issues will be reported. This was evident in Case Study 4, where staff ultimately stopped raising concerns when it became clear that no action was taken by senior managers and where more junior staff were unaware of other means of disclosure, for example, not recognising that they could approach the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). It is clear, therefore, that bystander effect can also develop gradually as a result of consistent failures to act on allegations.
47. Institutional culture can therefore, in itself, act as a risk factor. A closed culture has a chilling effect on external scrutiny, whilst low morale and a normalisation of inappropriate behaviours can act to raise the threshold for reporting. Those within institutional settings often fear being ostracised following disclosure and may not feel that it is their role to come forward. Ultimately, this manifests as bystander effect, whereby those with concerns do not raise them or report them to the relevant authorities.

## Offenders and Opportunities

48. Within institutional settings, offenders predominantly engage in reward or privilege-based grooming. This arises from the considerable power differential the institutional setting imposes upon the victim and offender, creating a situation in which rewards, status and positions of privilege are within the offender's gift.
49. Whilst Case Study 5 is illustrative of wider positional grooming, the offender manipulated the victims by inviting them to visit and stay at his house, and asking them to assist at social gatherings there. These offers were portrayed as a privilege and the family of the victims felt honoured that their children were invited to stay at the home of a religious leader. This was also true of Case Study 7. In Case Study 1 the offender took some children swimming, offered others alcohol and – in an act uniquely possible for offenders from religious institutions – suggested that allowing the abuse would further the victim's spiritual journey. The evident trend across these cases is that the offenders groomed the victim by offering something within their power to give, a method made far simpler by the power differential established by their involvement in institutions.
50. Case Study 2 also demonstrates how privilege can be used to groom, with the children targeted by the subject of that case being invited to engage in special, additional meetings of a small subset of the youth group where access to alcohol and pornography was offered. Within a school setting, the hierarchy amongst students can also be exploited by offenders looking to bestow rewards and privilege. In Case Study 14 one victim was offered a senior position within the student body following abuse by an offender responsible for choosing who would hold that role.
51. This system of grooming was also used in residential care homes, with victims in Case Study 6 being offered privileges and rewards in a hierarchy established by the offender in order to perpetrate abuse. However, a more general distinction can be drawn between care homes and wider institutional settings. It is of note that, in contrast to many settings, a number of care home Case Studies – including those where reward/privilege-based grooming took place – involved grooming predicated on threats, coercion and violence. In Case Study 18, there is evidence that the offender used threatening, violent and humiliating methods disguised as a form of therapy in order to create a level of dependence amongst victims.
52. There are a number of possible reasons behind this distinction but it is clear from Case Studies that some residential care homes where abuse took place systematically dehumanised the children in their care. This facilitated more violent forms of physical and sexual abuse. At the time that the abuse took place the use of corporal punishment was widespread. As such, a progression in abuse can be

charted from physical to sexual and the use of physical methods to gain compliance could be easily disguised as a form of punishment. In addition, the alternating behaviour of the abuser – rewarding and later chastising the victim – can confuse the child, whilst ultimately the very cessation of physical abuse can be seen as a form of reward.

53. Regardless of the method used, and despite the distinction between care homes and other forms of institutions, the ultimate aim of the offender was to cross the threshold for manipulation, allowing them to cultivate a relationship that facilitated the commission of abuse.
54. Within institutional settings, offenders can have greater scope for creating prima facie legitimate one-to-one time periods with children. The legitimacy of these periods derives from the role the offender has in the institution. For example, in Case Study 12 the offender – who was a sports coach – organised additional coaching for gifted young sportspeople. These sessions were invariably one-to-one and allowed the offender unsupervised access to children. Parents felt that their children were gaining a significant benefit from these sessions and did not think to question the motive of the coach. In effect, the offender was above suspicion while being able to create opportunities to offend at will.
55. Case Study 15 illustrates the broad scope for creating opportunities to offend. The subject of this case used his position as a media personality to legitimise offers of personal tours of recording studios where children would not be accompanied by parents. In both Case Studies 12 and 15 the offenders were assisted in the creation of these opportunities by positional grooming that occurred as a result of their roles within institutions.
56. Whilst it is important to note the heterogeneous nature of offending, many offenders are more likely to commit abuse in a one-to-one setting due to a lower perceived level of risk. Where only the offender and their victim are present, the likelihood of disclosure is diminished as a result of the common perception that without corroborative evidence a victim will not be believed.
57. In summary, the majority of cases of ICSA studied were predicated on a process of grooming based around the provision of rewards or privilege in return for compliance. This is not universally true, however, with some cases in the residential care sector involving endemic levels of emotional and physical abuse, where grooming was focused on coercion and threats of physical violence. Despite this distinction, the end goal of the process was to cross a threshold for manipulation, enabling the offender to perpetrate sexual abuse. This is facilitated within institutional settings by the ability of offenders – by virtue of their positions – to create apparently legitimate periods of one-to-one contact with children.

## Victims and Vulnerabilities

58. Whilst the level of vulnerability to sexual abuse differs significantly amongst children, with many exhibiting strong resilience to potential abuse, there are a number of factors that have been sought out by offenders within institutional settings.
59. Within residential care homes, children regularly lacked access to parents or other primary carers. This can leave children particularly vulnerable to grooming and abuse which is predicated on the provision of attention otherwise unavailable to them. In Case Study 11, a lack of access to parents left children unsure of who to approach in order to disclose allegations of abuse: this led to an offender who held a position of seniority being considered beyond accusation.
60. In contrast to this, in many of the Case Studies the victims were still living at home and had complete freedom to engage with family members. Often, this did not affect their propensity to disclose. In Case

Study 5, positional grooming led to the offender being held in high regard by the victims' family. This contributed to the parents finding it difficult to believe their own children's allegations.

61. There is no evidential correlation across the case studies to suggest that children are any more or less vulnerable to ICSA when they lack access to primary carers.
62. Offenders have, however, targeted children with a number of other vulnerabilities. In addition to approaching devout families, the subject of Case Study 10 actively sought out families where there were marital difficulties, or where marriages had broken down. This allowed the offender to offer victims additional attention that was lacking following the break-down of the family unit.
63. Offenders also commit abuse against children who are less likely to be believed by adults. In Case Study 18, the offender ran a residential children's home which accepted children who had been moved on from other facilities. This case is indicative of wider concerns, whereby young people who have been branded as 'bad' or who are considered 'problem children' are even less likely to be believed by those to whom they disclose.
64. Children who would normally be considered relatively resilient to potential abuse have also been targeted by offenders within institutional settings. One of the victims in Case Study 12 was a successful youth sports player in a club with a number of friends and with no marked vulnerabilities. However, the victim's proficiency was used as a means to justify additional coaching sessions during which the abuse took place. This targeting strategy is based upon the offender's ability to use her or his position within an institution to justify one-to-one access to their intended victim and does not necessarily require obvious vulnerabilities in the targeted child.
65. Whilst many children are groomed by offenders prior to the commission of abuse, some particularly young children have been abused without a threshold for manipulation being reached. Childhood can itself be a vulnerable status, with some young victims unable to understand what was happening to them. In Case Study 17, the offender targeted very young children and, as a result, avoided any risk of disclosure.
66. It is evident from the Case Studies that offenders can effectively groom and offend against children with no evident vulnerabilities within an institutional setting. The determination of an offender to commit ICSA, along with the opportunities provided by institutions, may overcome a lack of vulnerability and many factors normally considered indicative of resilience to potential abuse. The key concern here arises from the institutional setting, which has the potential to legitimise what would otherwise be unsupervised contact between an adult and a child.
67. Disclosure of abuse is hard to elicit from children, and there are often considerable delays between the commission of offences and allegations being reported. Victims of child sexual abuse fear that they will not be believed by family, friends or the authorities. This situation is often exacerbated within institutional settings by exaggerated loyalty to a positional hierarchy which affords adult offenders legitimate power.
68. This issue is manifest in Case Study 6, where children were stigmatised within the institution and considered untrustworthy as a result. The offender in this case forged strong links with parents, authorities and the wider community, appearing beyond reproach to those they abused. Often, an unassailable position such as this does not have to be actively sought, since positional grooming – upon which the reliability and innocence of some offenders is expressly based – revolves around the notion that a formal position within an institution carries with it not only a degree of express, but an inherent level of trustworthiness.



69. Victims are sometimes made to feel indebted to offenders. In Case Study 1, the offender's provision of funds to many of their victims left the children feeling as if they owed it to their abuser not to disclose and to collaborate with the abuse. The offender continued to provide funding to the victims throughout their childhoods and, in some cases, into their adult lives. This also contributed to a feeling amongst the victims that they were somehow complicit in the offences, again reducing the likelihood of them disclosing. Within institutions, the structural power differentials effectively facilitate this system of control.

## Summary

70. It is clear from the case studies that children are no more or less likely to suffer ICSA on the basis of their levels of access to primary carers. Some offenders target children with vulnerabilities, but in institutional settings the high degree of opportunity for offending combined with the determination of offenders can override a child's apparent resilience to abuse. Children often struggle to disclose, a problem worsened by the exaggeration of hierarchy that can occur within institutions. The power differential inherent in institutionally based relationships allows offenders to make victims feel complicit in their abuse and indebted to the offender for the level of attention they are given.

# A Model of Exploitation

71. Celia Brackenridge offers a contingency model of sexual exploitation in sport. This can be adapted to illustrate how sexual exploitation may occur in institutional situations<sup>44</sup>:

Scenario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Abuser inclination	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High	High	High
Situational opportunity	Low	Low	High	High	Low	Low	High	High
Child vulnerability	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Likelihood of Abuse	Low	Low	Low	High	Low	High	High	High

72. In Scenario 1 the inclination for the adult to offend and the vulnerability of the child are both low and, because there are sound safeguarding policies and procedures in place, abuse is unlikely to occur. Abuse is similarly unlikely to happen in Scenario 2 since a vulnerable child is protected not only by the low inclination of the adult to offend but also because the organisation's safeguarding provisions are robust.
73. In Scenario 3, even where there is low adult inclination and low child vulnerability, the adult might be tempted to engage in opportunistic, exploitative behaviour in the knowledge that that behaviour would be unlikely to be detected due to poor safeguarding measures. However, he would have to overcome the resistance of the child and the risk remains comparatively low. In Scenario 4, even if the adult is not inclined to abuse, due to the vulnerability of the child and the poor safeguarding procedures, they might offend on the basis of opportunity. The risk is therefore higher.
74. In Scenario 5, where the child is able to resist and the organisation offers low opportunity, the adult will be unlikely to commit sexual abuse, even when he is highly inclined to do so. The resistance of the child and the strength of the institution's cultural or structural protections may result in the adult being rebuffed, reported or both. This therefore increases the risk to the potential offender. In Scenario 6, high adult inclination and high child vulnerability may result in the adult seeking ways to subvert the institution's safeguards and use grooming techniques to abuse the child.
75. In Scenario 7, low child vulnerability is not enough to prevent exploitation where both adult inclination and opportunity are high. The child may benefit from personal protective factors but the organisation offers no protection, either by not listening to the child or failing to act on the concerns of other adults, or as a result of other disincentives to report. This culminates in Scenario 8 where it is relatively easy for a determined sex offender to abuse the child because there are no effective safeguarding measures in place and the child is highly vulnerable.

<sup>44</sup> With permission: Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport by Celia Brackenridge 2001

# Conclusions

76. Children who engage with institutions are at risk not only from individuals who aim to sexually abuse them but also from all adults who fail to see the abuse or, if they do, who fail to report it. They are unable to trust adults; in one case they might abuse them and in the other they might not detect or work to mitigate the risk of such abuse. They may be placed in institutions for safeguarding and protection yet their exposure to sexual abuse might become more acute.
77. The sexual abuse of children in institutions requires three essential components: a victim who is abused, an offender who abuses and a situation or opportunity in which the abuse occurs. Education and training may help to protect them by building the resilience of potential child victims but the ultimate responsibility for protection from abuse does not lie with the child. Better recruitment practices such as Disclosure and Barring Service/employment checks and value based interviewing may weed out potential offenders but there are no guarantees that a determined offender will not be able to subvert these processes. However, there are far more opportunities for organisations to prevent abuse by effectively managing the situations where abuse occurs and by denying offenders opportunities to abuse. This can be achieved by ensuring that the organisation's culture, structure and procedures work in harmony to safeguard children.
78. The literature and Case Studies show that ICSA is a product of a malign culture within an organisation which colludes with an offender's propensity to abuse. That culture is set by poor leadership with rigid and closed structures; ineffective and unmonitored policies and procedures where staff are reluctant to report or discouraged from reporting their concerns; and where the interests of the institution are valued above the interests of the child.
79. The Case Studies illustrate how, where abuse has been revealed in care, corporate, educational, pastoral, religious and sports institutions, leaders have placed their own interests first, and have failed either to take appropriate action or to involve the legal authorities, allowing the offender to move elsewhere to offend again. This has usually been done in the mistaken belief that it protects the reputation of certain key players or the institution itself. However, this is a counter-productive action because when serious abuse cases come to light, particularly those cases which create a media sensation, institutions probably suffer a greater loss of reputation than if they had been more open in the first place.
80. Furthermore rigid, hierarchical (usually male dominated) and closed organisations can accelerate a process of de-individualisation. Power relationships become distorted not only between adults and children but also between managers and their staff. There is a complete submission to authority leaving individuals powerless and blind to their rights. In pursuance of the institution's goals, staff are unable to see signs of abuse or, if they do, are fearful for their careers if they report it. Those who show signs of such dissent are ostracised and excluded from the 'group'.
81. Those who work in institutions buy in to the mission that its members (staff, volunteers, supporters, etc.) associate with it. Commitment to the cultural dynamics of an organisation's mission acts as a moral and social force, resulting in a "group think mentality" which can override all other commitments. Because this is a shared commitment, the effect of others around the individual reinforces the sense that it must not be betrayed by whistleblowing or reporting. Staff fail to come forward with their concerns for fear of "rocking the boat".

82. An institution's culture is determined by the quality of its leadership and the governance of that leadership. Where institutions have failed to protect children, invariably they have not incorporated safeguarding at a strategic level or ensured that policies and procedures are monitored and evaluated. The leadership of the institution has failed to value all who work within it. The children for which the organisation is responsible have no voice. The leadership has not encouraged disclosures or provided appropriate opportunities and pathways for the reporting of concerns.
83. The media is currently excited by revelations of historic sexual abuse by prominent broadcasters, celebrities and entertainers. Stories of abuse in care homes, faith organisations and schools which occurred twenty to thirty years ago continue to emerge. A common refrain for organisations confronted with their past failures is to admit that, at one time, things went wrong but they have now put measures in place so this will not happen again. There is a risk, however, that this attitude leads to complacency concerning ICSEA. To the determined abuser, such measures represent a barrier that requires more effort to climb but which is not insurmountable. By studying both historic and recent cases, this assessment demonstrates that institutions are still not safe from abusers. More needs to be done. Vigilance, strong leadership and management, and a safe environment to report are fundamental for institutions – they form the foundations of safeguarding.

# Recommendations

84. From the analysis and through liaison with stakeholders and partners, the NCA CEOP Command has produced a number of recommendations for mitigating the potential risk to children from sexual abuse in institutional settings. In some instances stakeholders have presented divergent views regarding particular recommendations – these differences have been highlighted where appropriate.
85. **Put the Interests of Children First:** – the interests of institutions are best served by putting the interests of children as a primary focus: all other organisational outcomes should subserve this aim. Everyone working with children needs to be fully cognisant of their obligations under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.
86. **Create a Safe Environment for Reporting:** – a lack of disclosure by those working in institutions has allowed offenders to continue abusing. Concerns and allegations have often failed to reach the appropriate authorities and have not been flagged by the staff aware of them. Therefore, institutions need to cultivate an environment that is conducive to the reporting process by:
- i. conveying a consistent message to staff relating to which behavioural norms are problematic and what behaviour is inappropriate. This should be made clear and understandable to limit the possibilities for individual (mis)interpretation;
  - ii. providing clear, concise and widely-disseminated means and methods of reporting. It is vital that a simple system of reporting is available to all within an institutional setting. Additionally, hierarchical tiers should be designed out of the reporting process as much as possible, allowing for the efficient and timely transfer of information to the appropriate authorities;
  - iii. de-stigmatising the concepts of disclosure and referral. The current usage of the phrase ‘whistle-blowers’ carries considerable negative connotations which are not conducive to encouraging reporting. Whilst prescribed bodies can offer some protection to those currently seen as whistle-blowing, a cultural shift towards accepting reporting as a legitimate, commonplace practice to ensure safeguarding is needed in order to elicit the necessary levels of disclosure. Institutions need to make reporting an intrinsic element of their institutional culture, effectively normalising reporting as a positive behaviour.
87. **Create a Compulsion to Report:** – it may be necessary to ensure those working in any capacity in institutional settings come forward around safeguarding issues via some form of mandatory reporting. A form of mandatory reporting already exists for those working in “regulated activity”<sup>45</sup>. The definition of “regulated activity” could be extended. However, there is a divergence of opinion from partners and stakeholders consulted on this issue. It therefore requires further consideration by senior policy makers. Such a system could involve one of three levels of reporting:

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45 As defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. However this is for vetting purposes.

- i. reporting of actual knowledge of offending;
  - ii. reporting of third-party allegations. This could be made mandatory, requiring those with knowledge of accusations of offending to raise them through the appropriate channels. This would require a higher level of capacity to process and act on reports but might be feasible;
  - iii. mandatory reporting of concerns. Requiring those who have noticed indicative abuse or grooming to report it could provide a high level of protection at an early stage in offending.
88. **Effectively Implement and Monitor Safeguarding Policies:** – Institutions must have policies for safeguarding awareness, practice and training but these will only be effective when actively implemented. They should be regularly monitored and checked against a baseline measure of provision of child protection. Robust and continued monitoring should ensure greater buy-in within institutions and, as a result, achieve higher levels of active implementation.
89. Within institutions there is a risk of single points of failure where an individual is responsible but fails to act on reports or concerns raised by colleagues. Effective supervision and monitoring of people in roles that have the potential to become points of failure should help to mitigate this risk. Since these people are invariably responsible for ensuring the implementation of policies and procedures, regular review will effectively review those responsible for them.
90. **Create Consistency Among LADOs:** – Partners and stakeholders universally praised Local Authority Designated Officers for their role in safeguarding children. However, they noted that due to the dispersal of LADOs and the lack of a centralised body to represent them, there was a potential for a lack of uniformity and consistency of advice. In order to encourage uniformity, a central body would represent these key roles and provide a more effective interface between LADOs.
91. **Extend the Legal Definition of the “Position of Trust”:** – partners and stakeholders overwhelmingly argued in support of extending the legal “position of trust” to a wider range of roles with access to children. Currently, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 dictates a limited number of positions which are considered to be “positions of trust”. Included in s21 of the Act are roles in care homes, hospitals and educational establishments. However, stakeholders noted the benefits of including those engaged with children in a wider capacity, such as sports coaches, civilian cadet instructors, religious leaders and those in youth groups. To do this would give additional authority to the pre-existing rules and regulations established by institutions to safeguard the children in their care.
92. Institutions providing coaching and tuition would benefit greatly from this wider definition. Legislating to this effect would help to protect children by providing deterrence through harsher sentencing guidelines. It would also more effectively define the relationship between adults and children in institutional settings, diminishing the offender’s ability to blur interpersonal boundaries in order to facilitate abuse.
93. To maximise the effectiveness of this suggestion, the position of trust should be expanded to encompass volunteers and staff in all organisations where parents or guardians entrust other adults to provide activities, care or instruction to children in formal or informal settings.
94. **Improve Protection Through Safer Recruitment:** – whilst effective vetting cannot create entirely safe institutions, its role in reducing offender’s access to children, and as a deterrent, cannot be underestimated. Safe recruiting and selection of volunteers goes further than just vetting. References must be insisted upon and followed up and applicants for roles engaging with children should participate in a value-based interview. This will go some way to determining whether they are suitable for the role: it can also be utilised to ascertain whether prospective staff are likely to contribute to a safe environment for reporting, or whether they are unlikely to raise concerns.

95. **Release Alleged Offenders' Identities:** – in recent high profile investigations, police forces have noted the benefits of openly identifying those they are investigating for child sexual abuse. Doing so can elicit further disclosures from victims, corroborating evidence and building a better picture of patterns of offending. However, practitioners note that, due to occurrences of mistaken and false allegations, along with the legal presumption of innocence, there are arguments to support anonymity for those accused of committing abuse. If appropriately risk-managed on a case by case basis, identifying an alleged offender can be a useful option during a complex investigation.

# Appendix

## Case Studies

96. The following Case Studies are drawn from across the full breadth of the definition of institutions as outlined in the Introduction. Information on the cases was gathered through open source material including news reports, serious case reviews and inquiries. Open source reporting was verified by talking directly to the case officers involved in the investigation. Additional information was provided by interviews with agencies and officers involved in the cases. In order to emphasise the assessment's focus on trends, as well as to honour the NCA CEOP Command's commitment to anonymise data, all the Case Studies have been sanitised to remove names and identifiable locations.

### Case Study 1

97. A religious leader offended against a number of children over a prolonged period. The offender would invariably approach deeply religious families particularly those exhibiting common vulnerabilities, such as marital difficulties. The religious leader's presence at the homes of these families was considered an honour, and the offender was considered above suspicion on merit of their position of responsibility and respect. The subject of the case would use promises of furthering the victims' spiritual journey to ensure their compliance and would incentivise sexual activity through the provision of gifts of alcohol and privileges, such as visits to local swimming pools.
98. Due to the prolonged period in which the abuse took place, the religious leader developed a number of different grooming strategies to best utilise his changing situation. Having conducted grooming of both the intended victims and their families – supported by the formal position the offender held – the offender committed serious sexual abuse.

### Case Study 2

99. A youth group worker offended against several children over a number of years. The offender was heavily involved in the group and achieved a high degree of seniority within the organisation. The institution provided the worker with considerable levels of access to children and the offender used this as an opportunity to conduct reward and privilege grooming through the provision of alcohol and pornographic material.
100. In order to secure access to small groups of potential victims, away from other volunteers, the subject of this case established a sub-group that met both during holidays and evenings other than those scheduled for official group sessions. These meetings were used as an opportunity for further grooming and abuse. Victims would be offered access to alcohol in larger group settings, and dared to engage in sexualised games involving nudity. Further similar grooming took place at the youth group worker's home.



### **Case Study 3**

101. A member of a religious group offended against children within the congregational setting. This offender targeted a number of children and two of the victims came forward, informing the parents of the offences they had suffered. The senior members of the group were notified of the allegations and, following an internal investigation, the offender was confronted. At this point, the offender confessed to abusing the two children. The religious group felt a high level of responsibility for the offender and it was decided that the authorities should not be informed. As such, the member was not apprehended and committed further abuse.

### **Case Study 4**

102. An educational professional offended against several children in a school setting. The offender was a long serving member of the establishment's staff and enjoyed the confidence of the head teacher. This offender targeted children and provided them with privileges and gifts. At the commencement of the school year, the offender would target children he deemed most vulnerable and would then proceed to groom them, orchestrating opportunities for one-to-one contact, whilst also occasionally committing offences within the classroom setting where the potential for discovery was high.
103. Whilst several members of staff raised concerns regarding the offender's behaviour through the appropriate channels, none of these were escalated effectively by those responsible for safeguarding. This allowed the educational professional to offend for a prolonged period of time despite the concerns held by colleagues.

### **Case Study 5**

104. A religious leader offended against the children of a devoutly religious family. This offender gained access to victims through their engagement in a musical group linked to the religious institution. The family based their trust of the offender on his role in the religious group and allowed the children to stay at the offender's house unescorted, going as far as to allow them to assist at social events hosted there. This served as part of the religious leader's grooming process, since the invitation to stay at the residence was considered a privilege. The subject in this case was close to another offender, who committed offences within the same community and conducted grooming through the provision of additional tuition to a musically gifted child.

### **Case Study 6**

105. The head of a care home utilised his position and reputation to gain access to a large number of children, several of whom they offended against. The children were subjected to a restrictive, coercive and hierarchical system. The offender would groom victims through the provision of privileges – such as access to television and additional money – and created opportunities to offend by conducting many of the night shifts alone, despite procedures requiring two members of staff to be on duty.
106. The level of grooming conducted led many of the victims to feel reliant on the offender and several expressed regret at coming forward – feeling that they had betrayed their benefactor. In the wider community, those around the offender never questioned the presented image of an effective head with impressive qualifications, many of which were later found to be false.

## Case Study 7

107. A religious leader committed a number of sexual offences against two victims both at home and on site at the premises of the religious institution. This offender targeted a devout family and groomed the children predominantly through the provision of privilege and rewards. The family of the victims allowed one to visit the offender's home in order for the religious leader to provide support. The other victim attended faith classes led by the offender who granted the child a position of responsibility and honour. This was used in order to create opportunities to offend, but also to create complicity with the privilege used as a reward for enduring the abuse.

## Case Study 8

108. A youth group worker committed offences against children attending his group. The offender was a volunteer in a group that was organised along rigid, hierarchical lines. The abuser targeted children with vulnerabilities and used mobile phone contact to blur the lines of authority, and subvert the volunteer-child relationship by posing as an understanding and caring friend. The offender used this additional contact and level of trust to cultivate opportunities for one to one meetings where serious sexual abuse took place. Other volunteers around the offender expressed some concerns regarding the apparently close relationship between the subject and some children participating in the youth group, but due to a lack of certainty that anything other than a potentially inappropriate level of contact was taking place these were not escalated to the appropriate authorities.

## Case Study 9

109. A number of offenders sexually abused children within a care home. A high level of offending took place within this institution, where poor and ineffective management led to failures in escalating concerns and where key reports relating to allegations made by children within the care home were misplaced. Fragmented leadership combined with a demoralised workforce to stifle reporting, and appropriate pathways for making complaints were unclear. Ultimately, this led to poor standards of behaviour towards the children in care becoming widely accepted within the institution and a wide range of abuse – ranging from physical and emotional through to sexual – was perpetrated against children. A lack of effective vetting allowed those with a sexual preference for children to be employed by the care home.

## Case Study 10

110. A religious leader groomed and offended against a number of children. The offender targeted the children of devoutly religious families who were heavily involved in activities and organisations around the religious institution. Whilst families with vulnerabilities such as marital difficulties were targeted to an extent, the offender invariably focused on those that professed the same faith. Victims were invited to stay with the religious leader and provided with alcohol and access to pornographic films. When two early victims came forward to allege abuse an internal investigation led the offender's dismissal being recommended. However, this was over-ruled by an authority within the faith group and the offender was supported by those within the religious institution, going on to commit further abuse.

## Case Study 11

111. In this case, senior staff within a care home committed abuse against a large number of children in their care. One offender would invite some children to staff lodgings, providing access to a television and occasionally offering the children alcohol. This was considered a privilege by pupils and the practice continued despite some staff raising concerns with the head of the care home. Certain

children would be invited to the lodgings regularly and these were targeted for sexual abuse by the offender. A rigid hierarchy within the institution made the appropriate pathways for reporting unclear and both children and other staff felt that the offender's role placed them beyond reproach.

112. Another offender committed offences against children both at the care home and at a private residence. The offer of a visit to this residence was framed as another form of privilege or reward, and victims were instructed not to mention what took place. This silence was further supported through fear of the power wielded by this offender on merit of his position of responsibility.

## **Case Study 12**

113. A sports coach offended against several children who attended their club over a prolonged period. This offender selected children to groom on the basis of opportunity for one-to-one contact. The coach targeted one child who demonstrated a high level of skill in the sport, offering to provide additional coaching following normal sessions. These were unobserved and ultimately led to abuse taking place in the changing rooms. The additional time required for these training sessions was not considered concerning by parents, since the coach was highly regarded for producing a winning team and the offer of opening the doorway to a potential future career for the children in the sport. Whilst some victims exhibited additional vulnerabilities such as familial difficulties, the offender predominantly selected quieter children who were less likely to disclose.
114. The subject of this case also offered academic tuition and coaching at an after-school club where he committed abuse. One parent made an open accusation of abuse, but this was not taken further or effectively escalated to the appropriate authorities.

## **Case Study 13**

115. Several cases of abuse took place at a single care home, perpetrated by a number of offenders. Over a prolonged period of time a number of complaints regarding one of the key offenders failed to reach the senior management team, and when concerns were effectively escalated offenders were able to avoid disciplinary proceedings by resigning from their posts. Vetting was limited and offenders were able to transition from care home to care home. A number of staff who were hired by over-arching, regional bodies were unqualified for their roles leading to ineffective supervision of individual care homes.
116. Some victims in this care home were abused by multiple offenders and those abusers in a position of power were not investigated and were effectively considered above criticism. Unskilled, failing staff were unsupported and this exacerbated already low levels of reporting as physical abuse became widespread within the institution.

## **Case Study 14**

117. Several members of a religious group offended alongside lay-educational professionals in a school setting. The offenders ranged in position and level of authority and some senior members of staff were implicated in the abuse. Allegations of abuse were made by children, on occasion being appropriately escalated through the hierarchical system but ultimately reaching a senior staff member who was also an offender. As such, allegations were not forwarded to the appropriate authorities.
118. Offenders targeted a range of children, but those from the religious community would regularly offend against those from a more devout background. One offender utilised the widespread culture of corporal punishment to facilitate the commission of acts of both physical and sexual abuse, whilst the most senior offender in the institution groomed victims through the provision of privilege and rewards. Non-religious members of staff were accepted by parents – in one case into the family

home – on the basis that their position meant they could be trusted. One offender was allowed to stay within the religious community attached to the school despite previous allegations leading to an investigation, on the basis that the group owed the offender support due to mutually held beliefs.

## Case Study 15

119. A media personality committed a large number of offences of sexual abuse against a range of victims, many of whom were children. The offender's position allowed him to accrue a high level of respect. This was responsible in part for the families of some victims failing to disclose abuse. The subject in this case groomed victims through a mixture of reward and privilege – offering them extra-curricular lessons, or by suggesting that they could be given tours of broadcast studios. There was little in the way of safeguarding practice within the institution and, whilst parents often acted to ensure that their children never came into contact with the offender again, no concerns or allegations were escalated to the relevant authorities by either parents or co-workers.

## Case Study 16

120. A number of children were abused by members of staff at a secure unit. In this case, the abuse conducted was sexual, emotional and physical. Victims were moved from unit to unit after they made allegations of abuse and even where considerable evidence was available, no investigation was launched for some time. Where investigations were threatened, offenders could escape further inquiries if they resigned from the unit.

121. Procedures also facilitated abuse, with male staff authorised to conduct strip searches of female children within the unit. Victims who ran away were returned and prevented from further disclosures by being made a 'ward of the court', effectively granting the institution full control of their lives. In addition, this secure unit acted as a closed institution with little external supervision and no formal complaints procedure.

## Case Study 17

122. A nursery worker committed offences against a number of young children within the nursery building. A lack of effective management created a chaotic environment in which policies and procedures were not followed, and where the offender was able to gain regular unsupervised access to children. Whilst the offender exhibited high levels of sexualised behaviour and often engaged staff in inappropriate discussions of sexual activity, no concerns were escalated to the manager and no action was taken to curb these conversations. The offender utilised the abuse to produce indecent images of children, which were then forwarded to other offenders. These were produced using the offender's mobile phone in the work environment, contravening nursery policy, which required that staff store their personal phones on entering the premises.

## Case Study 18

123. Within this care home, an offender was able to conduct prolonged abuse of several children. The care home worker was employed at a home where there was little training and low staff morale. As a senior member of staff, the offender was able to manage the daily pattern life for the children at the home, and also determined the type of care and therapy provided. In addition, the offender was afforded a high level of discretion and autonomy on the basis of perceived results with children who had struggled at other homes. Emotional abuse was also widespread and the subject of this case introduced a form of therapy that facilitated this form of offending, effectively making victims increasingly vulnerable to other types of abuse. Wider, external management was ineffective and failed to respond to concerns raised by those visiting the home.









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