

Office of the Children's Commissioner

Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation
in gangs and groups (CSEGG)

Call for evidence – Phase 1

October 2011

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

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Foreword by Sue Berelowitz

Our two-year Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) will be conducted under the Children's Commissioner's powers in the Children Act 2004. In doing so, we aim to throw light on the scale, scope, nature and extent of the sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse that girls and boys in England are subjected by street gangs and loosely formed groups.

Current data based on limited reporting indicates that up to 10,000 children may be affected. The picture we are getting from research to date, notably that conducted by ROTA, CEOP and the University of Bedfordshire, is of serious and violent sexual, physical and emotional abuse. All agree that we simply don't yet have the full picture as the data is still inadequate.

The emerging evidence is that the children and perpetrators involved are very diverse and seem to reflect the local demographic of where the abuse is taking place. It would be wrong for anyone to conclude or assert that this is an issue for one particular ethnic community.

In this call for evidence, we are seeking information to find out the true picture and to highlight where there is good practice to support and identify children and young people in these circumstances.

Accurate data is essential so that Government, police, local authorities, schools, the youth justice sector and health professionals can properly identify and protect child victims.

As a society we have a collective responsibility to uncover the facts and deal with the grim reality so that children can be properly protected, in accordance with Article 34 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Do please read the information below and send your views to us at:

CSEGG.Inquiry@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk - by noon on **20th January 2012**



Sue Berelowitz
Deputy Children's Commissioner for England

About the Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues which include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales. One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children always to operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004 the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has a statutory duty to highlight where we believe vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately in accordance with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) Inquiry

'You can't do anything where I live, go anywhere outside of the area, like everywhere you go you have to be so careful' - **young person sexually exploited in a gang.**

'Why would I go to police, I would never go to police, they don't do anything and they can't' - **young person sexually exploited in a gang**

"Families just think it's lovely place to go and play but people should know what really goes on there - it's really terrible stuff." - **young person affected by group-associated sexual exploitation**

The Deputy Children's Commissioner, Sue Berelowitz, will be chairing the CSEGG Inquiry. Sue is aware that, all around the country, people are supporting sexually exploited children. Additionally, in 2010 and 2011 Race on the Agenda published reports into the impact of gang violence on women and girls, citing the use of sexual exploitation as a form of gang-related violence, and the hidden nature of much of this exploitation. CEOP conducted a thematic assessment of 'localised grooming' working with many police forces, specialist services and children's services across the country to build a picture of this form of group-associated sexual exploitation. Most recently, University of Bedfordshire research highlighted a lack of systems and strategies in place across local authorities to adequately identify, safeguard and protect child victims of sexual exploitation.

But:

- Some evidence of the exploitation, victimisation and abuse of children remains hidden
- our understanding of scope and scale are limited

The CSEGG Inquiry seeks to build on the work of others, not to duplicate it. However, there remains much that is unknown. Many children remain hidden from specialist services and the police, only accessing health, education or youth offending services and are never identified as a victim. We will use our powers under the Children Act 2004 to uncover previously hidden information and, bringing this together with evidence that already exists, ultimately ask 'what needs to be done about it?' In order to make an impact we have limited the Inquiry to consider:

- 1) The scale, scope, nature and extent of
and
- 2) Remedial action required to address

gang and group-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse only.
(See Annex A for full list of definitions)

The CSEGG Inquiry Process

Under the powers granted to the Children's Commissioner in the Children Act 2004 (see Annex D for the full legal context) the CSEGG Inquiry will use the following methods to develop our evidence base:

- 1) Call for evidence (this document)
- 2) Data requests to national and local statutory bodies to access data on children who are being, or who meet the risk indicators of being, sexually exploited, victimised and abused in gang and group contexts, of which non-compliance can be sanctioned with a fine or imprisonment
- 3) Oral evidence sessions with the Inquiry panel
- 4) Area and service visits
- 5) Review individual case files of incidents which were recorded as, or indicate the possibility of, gang and group-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse
- 6) Visit children in a range of services using our right of entry powers in the Children Act 2004

Who we want to hear from

This call for evidence is for use by professionals and adults only. Given the emotional, sensitive and often traumatic nature of child sexual exploitation it is not appropriate for children and young people to engage directly in this aspect of the evidence gathering process. Please use evidence and intelligence from your work with children, young people and adults to submit your response, rather than speaking with children and young people to gather your evidence.

We have developed a specific participation strategy for separately engaging children and young people in the evidence gathering process. This strategy adheres to specific ethical and safeguarding protocol for the engagement of children and young people throughout the CSEGG Inquiry. We only seek to engage with children and young people in accordance with this strategy and in a way that is overseen by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. If you work with children and young people who you feel would benefit from engaging in the CSEGG Inquiry please notify the CSEGG Secretariat for support, advice and assistance.

For this call for evidence we are particularly interested in hearing from professionals who work in the following fields:

- 1) Community safety teams
- 2) Local police forces
- 3) Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- 4) Local authority children's services
- 5) Parents and carers

- 6) Education providers (including Pupil Referral Units)
- 7) Young offender institutions, secure training centres and secure children's homes
- 8) Housing providers
- 9) Health agencies including sexual health, mental health, family nurse partnerships and accident and emergency
- 10) Voluntary and community sector groups working in the areas of: child sexual exploitation, youth and gang violence, violence against women and girls, sexual health, missing, children in care, supporting BME or refugee and asylum seeking children
- 11) Youth offending services

Call for evidence

This call for evidence supports Phase one of the CSEGG Inquiry and is therefore focused on: The scale, scope, nature and extent of gang and group-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse. **We want to know what is happening, who it is happening to, where it is happening, when and how often it is happening, and who is doing it.** When submitting evidence please provide answers to as many of the following questions as possible:

- a) Contact name:
- b) Organisation (if applicable):
- c) Local Authority or Local Authorities your evidence is from:
- d) Contact email address:

Based on the definitions offered in this call for evidence (Annex A)

Scale and Scope

- 1) How many children have you worked with, or been notified or concerned of, in the past 14 months who are victims of:
 - a) Gang-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse
 - b) Group-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse

- 2) If you are able to provide a breakdown of victims by the following characteristics then please do so:
 - a) Age
 - b) Gender
 - c) Ethnicity¹
 - d) Disability

- 3) How many people (of all ages) have you worked with, or been notified of, in the past 14 months who are perpetrators of:
 - a) Gang-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse
 - b) Group-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse

- 4) If you are able to provide a breakdown of perpetrators by the following characteristics then please do so:
 - a) Age
 - b) Gender
 - c) Ethnicity
 - d) Disability

¹ For breakdown of ethnicity categories please see Annex E for Census 2011 breakdown

Where possible please provide, on a separate sheet, the initials and date of birth of all individuals counted in your submission. This will assist us in avoiding counting any individual twice. This information will be securely protected in line with our ethical procedure and will not be made public. If you are unable to provide us with this information please still make your submission.

5) Nature

Where you have further details please provide us with information on the nature of the exploitation, victimisation and abuse that took place:

5a) What happened? (i.e. what type of violence and abuse was experienced, was the child moved to different locations, over what length of time did the abuse take place, was the child known to any other agencies etc)

5b) How did it happen? (i.e. how was contact made, did the perpetrators know the victim before grooming took place, had perpetrators been victimised by others, how was the child groomed, how did the child disclose if at all, were the perpetrators of the abuse known to statutory or other agencies etc)

5c) What was the impact? (i.e. sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy, did the child disengage from education, was the child in contact with youth justice agencies, what were the mental and emotional health implications etc)

If you are interested in providing us with oral evidence based on your submission please indicate here:

How to Respond

Evidence should be submitted by professionals or adults only, as a Microsoft Word or PDF document. Written evidence will be accepted as well as video, imagery and other forms of expression. All evidence is to be submitted to

CSEGG.Inquiry@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk by noon on 20th January 2012

Confidentiality

If you would like your evidence to be treated in confidence, please make this clear at the time of submission. We will honour all requests for confidentiality within the Freedom of Information Act rules and guidance. Any evidence which could be used to identify the personal circumstances of individuals should be anonymised before submission. We will not publish any evidence that could compromise the safety of individuals and will not publish any initials and dates or births provided to us. All other evidence submitted will be made available publicly through the Office of the Children's Commissioner's website at the end of the CSEGG Inquiry process.

Timeline and next steps

We anticipate that the timetable for the CSEGG Inquiry will be as follows:

- **October 2011 – 20th January 2012**
Phase one evidence gathering
- **November 2011 – March 2012**
Oral evidence sessions held
Inquiry visits are made
- **Early July 2012**
Interim report published
- **October 2012 – February 2013**
Phase two evidence gathering
- **November 2012 – April 2013**
Oral evidence sessions held
Inquiry visits are made
- **September 2013**
Final Inquiry report published
- **October 2013**
Response to report requested

For further information please visit www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk, or contact Carlene Firmin, Principal Policy Advisor and Head of the Secretariat for the CSEGG Inquiry: carlene.firmin@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk .

Annex A: What we mean by child sexual exploitation linked to street gangs and groups

For the purpose of the CSEGG Inquiry the following definitions will apply:

Gang-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse

Sexual exploitation, sexual victimisation and sexual abuse that involve one or multiple perpetrators, who are themselves gang-associated and where the sexual exploitation, victimisation or abuse takes place as a form of intra or inter gang-related violence. As such 'gang-associated' refers specifically to the motive of the violence and/or the gang association of the perpetrator and/or victim, rather than the number of perpetrators involved in the violence.

Group-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse

Sexual exploitation, sexual victimisation and sexual abuse carried out by multiple perpetrators who are connected through formal or informal associations or networks between themselves or between victims, including but not exclusive to friendship groups. Such exploitation can involve individual, repeat or multiple victims. 'Group' refers specifically to the numbers of perpetrators involved in the violence.

Children and young people

Any person aged up to 18 years, up to 24 years for children in the care system and up to 25 years for disabled children. The use of the term 'children' incorporates 'young people'.

Sexual exploitation

The sexual exploitation of children and young people is a form of child sexual abuse. Safeguarding Children from Child Sexual Exploitation (DfE 2009) describes sexual exploitation as follows:

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Gang

The term 'Gang' will be used to refer to Criminal Gangs only and is defined using both John Pitts' 2008 definition in *Reluctant Gangsters* and the 2009 definition in the Centre for Social Justice Report, *Dying to Belong*:

'A relatively durable, predominantly street-based, social group of children, young people, and, not infrequently adults, who see themselves, and are seen by others, as affiliates of a discrete, named group who (1) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (2) identify or lay claim over territory, (3) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (4) are in conflict with other, similar groups; variously described as a crew, 'fam' (Famliy), massive, posse, or as brerrs (brothers/'bredderin'), cousins, soldiers, sabbos (saboteurs), boys or mandem' (although such phrases can also be used to described non-criminal social groups)'

Group

Two or more people, of any age, connected through formal or informal associations or networks, including, but not exclusive to, friendship groups

Peer-on-peer sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse

This is defined to distinguish between groups of adults and groups of children. Sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse of children and young people by other children and young people; in some, but not all, cases the children and young people who perpetrate this abuse are exploited by adults to do so.

Trafficking

Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol states:

(a) "“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.'

(c) 'The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article.'

Under the Palermo Protocol it is irrelevant whether a child has consented to their transportation or not.

Annex B: Aims of the CSEGG Inquiry

The CSEGG Inquiry aims:

1. To identify the scale, scope, nature and extent of gang and group-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation, and abuse of children and young people in England.
2. To identify the cultural, sociological, demographic, technological and economic factors that contributes to and helps to perpetuate gang and group-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse of children.
3. To hear and promote the experiences and views of children and young people who have been sexually exploited, victimised and abused in order to inform the process and outcomes of the inquiry.
4. To identify the physical, psychological and emotional impact on children and young people of being sexually exploited, victimised, and abused.
5. To identify and map effective interventions for the identification, rescue, support, and rehabilitation of child victims and survivors, and approaches for building the resilience of those at risk.
6. To identify and make proposals concerning necessary improvements to relevant identification, investigative and legal processes, specifically those which impact on children as witnesses
7. To make recommendations to national action plans and related policies to prevent, address, and combat gang and group-associated CSEGG including identifying and promoting best practice.
8. To make recommendations to central and local government, the NHS, police and other key agencies on how to: combat gang and group-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation, and abuse of children; develop preventative programmes; and deliver effective intervention and rehabilitation for victims.
9. To influence and advise local authority child protection services, local safeguarding and health and well-being boards, police and crime commissioners, amongst other local stakeholders to recognise and respond to gang and group-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse as a pernicious form of sexual abuse and meet their obligations to protect victims.

Annex C: Inquiry Team

Inquiry Chair

Sue Berelowitz, Deputy Children's Commissioner for England

Inquiry Panel

- **Martin Houghton-Brown** – Chief Executive of Missing People
- **Whitney Iles** – Director of No-Sex-Without-Love
- **Marai Larasi MBE** – Director of Imkaan
- **Professor Jenny Pearce** – Director of the Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire
- **Professor John Pitts** - Vauxhall Professor of Socio-Legal Studies, University of Bedfordshire
- **Dr Mike Shaw** - Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust
- **Sheila Taylor MBE** – Director of National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People
- **Kate Wallace** – Deputy Director of Policy and Research, Barnardo's

Advisor and Head of the Secretariat for the CSEGG Inquiry

Carlene Firmin MBE, Principal Policy Advisor, Office of the Children's Commissioner.

In addition to the panel, the Deputy Children's Commissioner has established an advisory group, government officials group and a number of specialist advisory groups to ensure dialogue with the wide range of stakeholders who have shown interest in the CSEGG Inquiry.

The participation of children in the CSEGG Inquiry is essential and a participation strategy has been devised to ensure that the voices of children are heard throughout the Inquiry in a safe and secure way, influencing its process and outcomes.

Annex D: Inquiries by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner

Subject Context

This formal Inquiry, led by the Deputy Children’s Commissioner, focuses specifically on gang and group-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse of children (CSEGG), and is not intended to cover all models of child sexual exploitation. The Inquiry will not duplicate the work of other organisations in the field of child sexual exploitation.

The purpose of the CSEGG Inquiry will not be to identify and rescue children. However, if any information emerges which indicates risk to individual children then the appropriate safeguarding response will be initiated, and appropriate referrals made.

Purpose

1. To promote children’s rights to protection from sexual exploitation in accordance with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that every child shall be protected from all forms exploitation, victimisation and abuse and receive help. Specifically:
 - Article 19 Protection from all forms of violence
 - Article 34 Protection from sexual abuse and exploitation
 - Article 35 Protection from abduction
 - Article 37 Protection from torture
 - Article 39 Right to rehabilitation from abuse, exploitation and torture
2. To conduct the CSEGG Inquiry in the spirit of, and compliant with the UNCRC Articles:
 - 3: The best interest of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children
 - 12: Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously
3. To ensure that the Coalition Government is fully informed about the nature and extent of gang and group-associated child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse, in support of its plans for preventing and combating this abuse of children.

Legal Context

In establishing an Inquiry into gang and group-associated sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse the OCC invokes powers under the Children Act 2004 – Part 1, s3 and the Local Government Act 1972, s250 (1-6) and will act within the general functions outlined in 2004 Children Act Part 1, s(2) .

Specifically, for the purposes of the CSEGG Inquiry:

- The Children's Commissioner or a person authorised by him/her may for the purposes of his/her function under this section at any reasonable time:
 - (a) Enter any premises, other than a private dwelling, for the purposes of interviewing any child accommodated or cared for there; and
 - (b) If the child consents, interview the child in private (2004 Children Act – Part 1, s2 (8))

- The Children's Commissioner may only conduct an inquiry under this section if he/she is satisfied that the inquiry would not duplicate work that is the function of another person (2004 Children Act – Part 1, s3 (2))

- Where the Children's Commissioner has published a report under this section containing recommendations in respect to any person exercising functions under any enactment, he/she may require the person state in writing, within such period as the Children's Commissioner may reasonably require, what action the person has taken or proposes to take in response to the recommendations (2004 Children Act – Part 1, s3 (7))

- The Children's Commissioner may require any person to attend, at a time and place stated in the summons, to give evidence or to produce any documents in his/her custody or under his/her control which relate to any matter in question at the inquiry, and may take evidence under oath, and for that purpose administer oath. (Local Government Act 1972, s250 (2))

Provided that –

- b) no person shall be required, in obedience to such summons, to attend to give evidence or to produce any such documents, unless the necessary expenses of his attendance are paid or tendered to him/her; and
- c) nothing in this section shall empower the person holding the inquiry to require the production of the title, or any instrument relating to the title, of any land not being the property of a local authority

Every person who refuses or deliberately fails to attend in obedience to a summons issued under this section, or to give evidence, or who deliberately alters, suppresses, conceals, destroys, or refuses to produce any book or other document which he is required to produce for the purpose of this section, shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level three on the standard scale, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both (Local Government Act 1972, s250 (3))

Annex E: Census 2011 Ethnicity Categories (Question 16)

16 What is your ethnic group?

➔ Choose **one** section from A to E, then tick **one** box to best describe your ethnic group or background

A White

- English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background, write in

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B Mixed / multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background, write in

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C Asian / Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background, write in

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D Black / African / Caribbean / Black British

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, write in

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E Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group, write in

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Annex G: Help and support

Should you and a child you are in contact with require support or information following this call for evidence please use the following contacts:

- To locate your nearest child sexual exploitation service:
<http://www.nationalworkinggroup.org/services>
- For advice and support for parents of sexual exploited children:
<http://www.cropuk.org.uk>
- For support following sexual violence or assault: <http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/>
0808 802 9999 (12 - 2.30pm and 7 - 9.30pm)
- For 24/7 contact line call Missing People: 0800 700 740
- For confidential advice contact Childline: 0800 1111
- In an emergency please dial **999**



Championing Children and Young People in England

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