

Police and Crime Committee – 4 December 2014

Transcript of Item 5 – Safeguarding Children and Child Sexual Exploitation in London – Part B

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): We are now going to move to the second part of our meeting looking at CSE. We have two further guests, who have been waiting very patiently. Perhaps I could ask them to join us. In this hour, we really want to look at what lessons we can learn from the review into the CSE of children in Rotherham. We are joined by George Curtis, the Pan-London Programme Manager for MsUnderstood, and also Suzanne Elwick, Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board. Can I thank you both very much for your attendance?

Tony Arbour AM: Firstly, to you, Cressida. We are told that the incidence of reporting sexual exploitation has been increasing. Can you quantify that?

Secondly, can you say from where the reports are coming? I do not mean geographically. Is it from children reporting current exploitation or is it substantially historic exploitation which is being reported?

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Certainly, Chair, this is something that we touched on at another Police and Crime Committee not long ago and we welcome your exploration of these issues. Clearly, Rotherham and Oxford and other cases have shocked us and focused our minds. You will be aware that we had launched the London Child Sexual Exploitation Protocol in February of this year. We in the MPS have put quite a lot and increasing resources into this area and we anticipate that we will probably be increasing that again in the future, I would have thought.

We have, as you said, seen a large increase in referrals. As an example, between January and the end of October this year, we had just over 1,600 reports to us where people suspected that CSE may have been occurring. I think I am right in saying that the vast majority of that is occurring, as opposed to historic. Of those, only a relatively small proportion are ones where we become clear that this is happening and that there is evidence either that it is opportunistic or that it is actually habitual exploitation.

We take all of the referrals very seriously. It is fair to say rather few of them come directly to us from children and, as I mentioned at the Police and Crime Committee and colleagues will be more aware than I, this is an extremely difficult area to investigate in a number of different ways but not least many of the victims, as we would say, do not regard themselves as victims at that time or certainly do not present themselves as victims at that time, which is why we are encouraging, again, all the other agencies - and not just agencies, businesses, for example, and we can come back to this - to be aware of the possible signs of sexual exploitation. We are already getting lots of increased interest from taxi drivers and from hotels. All sorts of businesses as well are beginning to understand what this issue may look like and coming to us to say, "We are concerned about this person". Very few come direct from children. The majority that we are getting are current, but of course some of those relate to matters which have been going on for some time or groups of offenders who have been active for some time.

As you are also probably aware, we are trying to take a very proactive approach to this. We are trying to use every single proper, lawful, ethical avenue which is an effective way of safeguarding to get offenders. Where we think it may be very hard to do a reactive investigation into crimes that have been committed because of the complexity that I talked about and the position that victims find themselves in, we are also looking to do a lot of proactive investigation where we believe that there is a group or an individual who is exploiting somebody. We will actually go after them in rather the way we would an organised crime gang member, say. Therefore, we are using the full gamut of the law and covert tactics to try to bring offenders to justice.

Tony Arbour AM: Clearly, from what you have said in relation to children not reporting directly and how it clearly comes through third parties, we have already heard that is what happens in relation to witchcraft in the previous discussion. Can I ask whether or not an important third party is something like ChildLine, when somebody rings them and they call you, or is there some kind of confidentiality thing which prevents the third party from contacting you?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): We have referrals from ChildLine. Safeguarding children overarches every part of our society and what we do. Therefore, safeguarding is primary. If there are children at risk - and ChildLine contacts us regularly regarding this - they will call us because they might get a call and the caller will hang up. When we get that information, we absolutely take that referral and we look at it very seriously and we try to locate that child and safeguard them. We will take referrals from absolutely anywhere through the MASHs because that is where health, education, police and social services obviously all come together, and they all have suspicions. We look at the Children's Commissioner's report from November 2012 where she published the warning signs for professionals and people to understand that. Those warning signs are not that CSE was definitely taking place, but they are warning signs to start to ask some questions. They are the questions that we have encouraged certainly police officers but also local authorities as well.

The referrals have increased. We now monitor those referrals and we flag every piece of information and every crime report that may have a link to CSE and that is why we have these figures. We launched the protocol here in February of this year and our first full-year dataset will be in April, but we anticipate somewhere between 1,800 and 2,000 referrals a year. Not all of those will be CSE, but they will be incidents where we should be asking the questions. We are very much about outcomes. If there is a criminal justice outcome, then we will pursue offenders, but sometimes it will be a safeguarding aspect that takes us in another direction and actually might not establish that there is CSE, but there could be other issues. It is a good system. It is in its infancy, but it seems to be that we are getting these referrals in. Therefore, the system looks like it is working.

Tony Arbour AM: In relation to this increase in reporting relating to current matters, do you think or perhaps you can tell me whether or not you believe that there is a risk of increased reporting - and maybe representatives from the local authorities can tell us - that because people who are engaged in prevention of this kind of thing have become much more risk-averse than they used to be, therefore there is an increase in reporting?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): If there is a suspicion that a child might be at risk, then I would encourage people to report more crimes and more potential risk because that is what we need to investigate. Sometimes risks can be hidden. If people have a suspicion - and this is why the Children's Commissioner published as she did - there is a whole raft of areas that she highlights that maybe - and I do say that it is maybe - would indicate CSE. We have to be sure that there is not CSE and the only way to do that is to encourage reporting and investigate all of those claims.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): We are certainly not saying that increased referrals equal increased crime. It is not a proportionate change. We are not suggesting that at all. We are suggesting, though, there is a huge amount of unreported, unrecorded, uninvestigated, hidden crime and we think, again, we are at the tip of the iceberg because we are dealing with very vulnerable people who, as I have said, may not be entirely aware that they are being victimised or, if they are, they may be terrified. They might find it impossible to do anything about it or may not want to talk to the police officer who is bringing them home after they have run away from home. There is much more we can do to get better at encouraging people, but I think there is still a hidden iceberg. I do not want to start - but it would not be a start, would it - a moral panic about this. I just think there is a lot more out there than we know about.

Tony Arbour AM: We will explore the reaction of social services later on. Can I further ask, in your intelligence-gathering in relation to this, if you have discovered that there are hotspots in London for this? Is it concentrated geographically?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): We have a figure where the referrals have come from and there is a range. There is not anywhere that stands out. This is across the board. What we have to realise is that this is, we think, very under-reported and so we are only dealing with the data that we have here, which is our own data. It is a range very much across the board and these are about referrals that take place. There are very few charges and convictions. This year we have 37 charges which are related to offences that have led from a CSE investigation. We do not always manage to charge with a sexual offence and sometimes that is because the evidence is not there, but we will look for alternative charges, whether we identify subgroups of people that are involved, and potentially we may not get the evidence around the crimes against that individual. Then we will look at alternative crimes so that we can actually convict them of other things while we can put in some safeguarding measures to support and provide safeguarding for the victim.

Tony Arbour AM: Let me phrase the question in a different way. Is there a relationship between those boroughs which are reporting suspicions to you of child exploitation and the existence of particular communities as we have seen in places like Rotherham?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): No. We do not have that. We do not have that. The figures are in front of me, the graphs. We do not have that relationship. That may be because the dataset is quite small in comparison, but we certainly have not identified that there is a particular community that is more prevalent than another.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): What we are beginning to identify, Chair, and I touched on this when I previously gave evidence, is we are again at the beginning of this really a better understanding of the amount of CSE which is related to gangs and street gangs in particular, where children are sexually exploited and sometimes exploited in other ways, to carry drugs or firearms, sometimes outside London. We have been doing some really strong work between the CSE teams and the Trident teams and those partners who work in that area and have recently had some great successes in that, but again there is much more of this than has been revealed to us in the past.

Tony Arbour AM: Yes. Again, and really finally from me, in relation to the reporting of this, does a substantial amount of reporting come directly from police or police staff? If it is coming from police and police staff in addition to things coming through the MASH or whatever it might be, are you confident that your staff are sufficiently trained to recognise these signs? That is for both of you.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): We have further to go with that, Chair. We have rolled out some general training across the whole of the MPS and are currently doing it with our new officers. It would be wrong to say it is the Forth Road Bridge. We know we need to do more. We are clearly seeing lots of officers and lots of senior officers on boroughs having this as a very high priority and understanding the issues very well. AC Helen King, who is in charge of Territorial Policing, has been very strong on this issue, but there is further to go to ensure that everybody is as alert as we would like to be.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Very early on after the Children's Commissioner's report, we published a mandatory video for frontline officers and wider units as well which related to the signs to look for with CSE and also an account by a victim of CSE and then we sought to get it on the training programme for Territorial Policing officers, which we were successful. At the moment 20 out of 32 boroughs have had that level of training and we are continuing to do that, but it has to be an ongoing cycle. New officers come in and officers leave and so it is very much, as AC Dick has said before, the Forth Road Bridge. It is something that will have to continue, but at this stage frontline officers have had training in relation to this.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): One of the issues that that deals with very strongly is I suppose the experience from Oxford and Rotherham that some of the young people that we are dealing with are by definition quite difficult for the police to deal with and some of our victims recognise in later life that they were difficult to deal with and were not likely to make life very easy for the officer, both in terms of helping them or understanding what was going on. Equally, there were some massive failings amongst our collective United Kingdom (UK) policing's consciousness and skills to deal with people who are in a traumatised state. All of us who have seen the videos and seen the training are quite sobered when we see it. It is a difficult area, but we have not been as good as we should be.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): We have worked very closely with the CPS in relation to this and the Director of Public Prosecutions' (DPP) roundtables have recognised that certainly in terms of convictions at court it has been very difficult and they have looked at specific areas of why that may be the case. One of the areas that has been highlighted is where you might have one victim who is giving evidence, but there might be six legal representatives representing a group of suspects and that individual stands there and is cross-examined by each one. That has been something that has been highlighted and spoken about and it is certainly being looked at. On that side of it, it is certainly being recognised that there are difficulties. These are, even if they may be adults, vulnerable people who have been through an awful lot and need a lot of support and certainly the court is something that is being recognised.

Tony Arbour AM: They had stopped that now. There have been directions to stop that.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Yes, and that is what has come out of the DPP's policy and examination.

Tony Arbour AM: Thank you, Chair.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I am going to move on to look at Rotherham but maybe, George, you could tell me a little bit about the organisation you are from and what they do, and Suzanne [Elwick] as well.

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): Yes. Good morning, everybody. My name is George. I work for the MsUnderstood Partnership. The partnership is made up of the University of Bedfordshire and the International Centre, which is one of the leaders on research

around CSE and young people's experiences of violence and trafficking; also Imkaan, which is a black feminist women's organisation that focuses on challenging black and minority ethnic women's experiences of gender-based violence; and also Girls Against Gangs, which is a young women's participation service that works with young women who are engaging in services to ensure that the services out there meet their needs.

At MsUnderstood, what we do is headed up by Carlene Firmin, who has done a lot of work over the last few years around young women's experiences in relation to serious youth violence. One of the things that really came out of that research was the impact that serious youth violence has on young women and girls and in particular around their experiences of sexual violence and sexual exploitation and the links to gangs and peer groups.

The aim of MsUnderstood is to challenge young people's experiences of gender inequality and one of the ways that we do that is work directly with local authorities. At the end of last year we opened applications for local authorities across England to apply to receive direct support from MsUnderstood in relation to peer-on-peer abuse and building their response to peer-on-peer abuse.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): How many London boroughs are you working with?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): We are currently working in nine London boroughs. That is the direct work, but we also have a pan-London approach to what we do and so we really want to ensure that the learning that comes out of the boroughs - and that is also based on the evidence we have been collating in working with our partners - is also fed to other local authorities. We have pan-London learning seminars that are open to professionals from across London.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Great, thank you. Suzanne, do you just want to outline just so that we are clear what your role is as well in terms of safeguarding?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): Yes. My role is the Business Manager of the Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board. As Members have already discussed in relation to the statutory role of safeguarding boards, it is to bring the partnerships together and to monitor the effectiveness of partners working in the area in relation to all aspects of safeguarding.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Great. Thank you very much. That was just useful to clarify. We could not get a borough director today because there is some event on that they had to all be at and so we will pick that up.

Rotherham clearly was highlighted as a failure across all organisations and all professionals at different levels. Maybe we will give the police a rest. Why do we not start with Suzanne? What are the main lessons as a borough Safeguarding Board that you have picked up from Rotherham?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): Obviously Rotherham was such a major issue and we have looked at the report in relation to the work that we were already undertaking in relation to our strategic response, which I will talk about a bit later. Some of the main issues were around what the young people told us that they experienced and the experience of young people not only in terms of their experiences of abuse and the complex issues in relation to the multi-layered areas of abuse they experienced and how they had been groomed, but about their experiences with professionals and some of the issues that have already been raised in relation to how young people are heard and how young people are seen.

One of the constant things around this work is that because some of the young people present in many different ways as older than their years, they are not seen as how old they are. One of the constant things we talk about in Waltham Forest is about, "She is 13. Think about another 13-year-old that you know and what would be good enough for you in relation to that 13-year-old". That is one of the issues that came out from Rotherham.

There were lots of issues around leadership. There was obviously the lack of leadership, the lack of acceptance of CSE as an issue, the lack of political leadership and then, in a way, what can sometimes now be used as not quite a red herring but taking us down the wrong road in relation to trying to identify the issue of race as the only issue that was of importance.

In some ways Rotherham is obviously important in itself but it appears to have been a particular issue, a particular time and a particular place that tells us some broader lessons around leadership and the voices of young people. Some of the work from *Real Voices* and the report from Greater Manchester, in a way, helps us think about what some of the issues are that are maybe more pertinent for London boroughs. That is, again, some of the mirroring around young people's voices, particularly around the complexity of the world in which young people live today and the way in which elements of CSE are almost the norm. Young people expect, especially young women, to experience a certain amount of sexual harassment and sexual abuse on a daily basis and that goes from the comments they get walking down the street to what they receive via social media. The whole issue around digital and social media is an issue that we really have not grasped at all yet.

Some of the other issues in relation to Greater Manchester in relation to the low convictions are the need to ensure that schools have a prominent role in relation to education and linking that with the public perception of CSE and, in a way, moving on from Rotherham to thinking about CSE in the terms that we are experiencing. In terms of our profile in Waltham Forest, we have had children from all communities who have been exploited and perpetrators from all communities. We need to be thinking about that in relation to London and also the connections, obviously, around children missing from care and home.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I will come on to that. Thank you for that, Suzanne. George, from your point of view, obviously Rotherham has highlighted all sorts of things, including that they can have wonderful policies, plans and whatever in place but if they are not properly being implemented and are hugely understaffed and so on, there are the issues Suzanne [Elwick] has highlighted. How well do you think London boroughs really understand this issue? What sort of developments have you seen over the last few years in this area that are positive or perhaps not positive that you want to raise with us?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): You have raised a really key point there. Over the last few years there has been a huge amount of work and development in London boroughs. Picking up from what Suzanne said, it is really important that we take some really key messages and key learning out of Rotherham but that we also apply those messages to the London context. We really need to understand the profile of CSE in London and the realities that are experienced by our young people. There is some really good work that is happening in multiple local authorities about really understanding their profile and beginning to start mapping. When I talk about mapping, I talk about individuals they have concerns about, but it is also linking. It is linking an individual that you might have concerns about in relation to CSE, but do they or their peer groups also feature within the gang matrix? Are there concerns around sexually harmful behaviour? Are there concerns about teenage relationship abuse? Again, Suzanne [Elwick] picked up a really key point about schools and the role and the impact of schools. Yes, there has been a lot of work and again it is seen in the increase in referrals to the police.

In terms of local authorities, when we opened applications for local authorities to receive support, over half of London submitted an application. At the time, there was funding to work with essentially one site. What six local authorities did was group up and form a cluster and so we worked with them as a cluster. What that really demonstrates is that there really is a very real acknowledgement around CSE and that there is a lot of way to go in terms of developing our response.

Again, another development that I am seeing is that there is some fantastic work that is done with individuals who are victims of CSE and there is also some fantastic work that is being done with young men. It is often done in quite an individual and isolated way and so you will work with the victim often. There is a lot of fantastic one-to-one therapeutic work that needs to continue, but what we also need to do is to ensure that around that individual support and therapeutic work there is also real disruption happening in the places where that abuse is taking place. We look beyond the individual and we look towards the context, literally the physical space in which that abuse is happening, and in terms of building profiles, it is beginning to start happening now. We are identifying those spaces. That space could be a park. If we are talking about a park and we know that abuse is taking place in a park, who is regularly going there? We might hear it from one young woman or one concerned parent or one teacher, but we really need to map everybody who is accessing that space and work with everyone who is engaging in that space, not just with the individuals. Again, that really is beginning to start happening in those cases.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Do you have an actual example with a borough you could name of good practice?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): I would not be naming at this point because what we are doing are currently carrying out an audit in each of the local authorities and that is a six-month audit based on their response to peer-on-peer. I am not in a position to name individual local authorities, but there are certainly pockets of very good practice and what we need to do is start making that consistent. That is the real issue so that it is happening across London and actually what is happening is there are pockets in lots of different areas and, again, we really draw on that strength to ensure that it is happening across London.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): How confident are you that all relevant local authority staff have the right training so that they can identify these signs of CSE and that they will take the right action to protect children?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): In terms of training delivery, as the police were saying earlier, it is something that is being rolled out and there is more of it. From the recent Ofsted inquiry, when they were reviewing training that is available around CSE, it is often of quite good quality and people feed back that it is very useful to have, but it needs to continue to be rolled out across multiple different agencies. Again, it is about working with individuals but also to support in terms of putting action plans into place, not just the identification of the young people, but actually what it is that we are going to do. Yes, training needs to continue to be rolled out. Within that is looking at professionals in role now but it is also looking at the training. How is it that we train social workers? How are we training our teachers? How are we training our healthcare professionals? Where does this element of the training come in? Yes, it is an area where there is training being delivered and, where it is, it is often very beneficial and it is about just rolling that out and increasing that.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Suzanne, as someone working for a Safeguarding Board, how confident are you that all relevant local authority staff are properly trained in this?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): For us, from a Safeguarding Board perspective, we are interested in all professionals and not just those who work in the local authority. The approach we have taken in Waltham Forest is to develop a multifaceted, multi-layered approach to training and we are looking at the moment - and again, as George [Curtis] and others have said, it is an ongoing process - at four levels of training. Level 1 is a general awareness for everybody and that is not just those who work in the local authority but staff who work in all areas where they may touch families' or children's lives.

Level 2 is our training that we have already delivered to over 70 neighbourhood officers in the borough where those are people whom we think could be the eyes and ears. That is street cleaners, enforcement officers, licensing officers, housing officers, people who are out and about on the streets very early in the morning or very late at night, who are also going to premises like restaurants and takeaways and go into the areas where CSE could be occurring, and just really raising their awareness and asking them to look at something slightly differently, and we did that rollout.

We are the first London borough to roll out Operation Makesafe, the campaign that was taken from Derbyshire, and the MPS has written to all London boroughs and asked them to roll this out. The phrase is, "If you see something, say something", and it really is going back to the issues around indicators. What we are stressing to people is that it is not your responsibility to decide if a crime has taken place. If you see something and it makes you feel a bit nervous, we want you to report it to 101 using Operation Makesafe. Then there is some work being done with the 101 call centres that have a special dropdown in relation to Operation Makesafe so that they know what questions to ask when people ring. We are hoping to get a good response from that.

Level 3 training is in relation to those practitioners who do work directly with children and families and, again, that is across all the areas of health, education and social care, etc. We have trained over 180 practitioners to be CSE champions. They have that bit of extra awareness and understanding of the issue. Therefore, they can provide additional support for people within their area.

Then level 4 training, which we are just in the process of looking for a partner to commission that from, is much more in-depth training for social workers and other practitioners who are working directly with young people in relation to really having the skills. As everybody has mentioned, it is quite complex work, working with a young person who mostly does not identify that they are being exploited or abused and has a lot of complex issues in their life, and developing skills to work effectively with that young person.

We do see it as an ongoing process and we have just put in place a CSE co-ordinator, who is then going to be providing ongoing support to this network of CSE champions so that we can keep updating people and keep awareness-raising. If you think about all the professionals who could possibly touch a young person's life, it is a lot and so it is an ongoing way --

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): That sounds very comprehensive. Is that generally what all the boroughs are doing, are you aware, or is it just Waltham Forest leading the way on this?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): Waltham Forest has had a very good strategic approach and we have encompassed that with the Operation Makesafe and with

a campaign in relation to businesses and a residents' campaign. We are the only borough in London at the moment that has done that. There is a mixed picture across London and there is some really good practice happening in other boroughs as well in terms of the business campaign and the residents' campaign. There have definitely been other residents' campaigns in other boroughs.

We launched Operation Makesafe with our business colleagues. We have targeted hotels, taxis, internet cafes, takeaways, pubs and off-licences and we are using in partnership with police - and we have had a lot of very positive support from the specialist command as well as from borough police - intelligence from licensing police officers, who told us which businesses were probably the best ones to target out of those groups initially. We then had a process of engagement with them to get them on board, which we did through a variety of means, and then we have launched Operation Makesafe in October. Training is being provided to hotels, taxis, etc, in situ by police officers to ensure that they are aware of what to look out for and we have given them additional tools and checklists about what to look out for. Again, the general message is that if you see something and it kind of makes you feel a bit uncomfortable, if you see something, say something.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): That sounds really comprehensive and it would be really interesting to hear how that develops. What I am always wondering about Safeguarding Boards is whether it is all a bit too cosy because you know each other and the people you are working with maybe even become your friends. What level of challenge really is there with the senior managers and others from the different partners or is it actually that you are not stepping up here where you should be? Does that really go on? Is it far too cosy?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): I would say for our board it is not far too cosy and actually yesterday we had our board meeting and one of the issues that we discussed is ensuring that we embed a culture of professional challenge. It is something that we do recognise. There is the fundamental element of what a Safeguarding Board is all about. Obviously you need to develop positive working relationships with your colleagues. A lot of this work is about relationships. It is about relationship building. It is about me understanding what your priorities are and what your role is and you understanding mine and obviously that has to be developed in a positive way.

I do not think that necessarily means it becomes too cosy. As a Safeguarding Board, we do a range of activities to check out what the practice is of our colleagues. Earlier, you were talking about workforce issues and issues around how you know whether staffing levels, etc, are right. One of the things that Safeguarding Children Boards do is called the section 11 order and it is section 11 from the Children Act 2004. This is an audit that is a self-audit and so it is completed by the organisation, but we have a range of mechanisms to check out and peer-challenge that. That details issues in relation to training, staffing, supervision, designated safeguarding leagues, etc, and so it gives us a picture of what is happening in our partner agencies.

We also conduct multi-agency audits. In October I conducted a multi-agency audit looking at nine cases where CSE had occurred. We get the practitioners together. Each agency that was involved in each case looks at the practice. A manager or the offline management of the direct practitioner looks at the practice and they have an audit tool to help them do that. We ask them to do that in partnership with the practitioner so that the practitioner has an opportunity to reflect and learn, and then we bring all of that information together and as a group we look at that and talk about whether that is good enough practice. It helps us to have an idea. Obviously nine cases is only nine cases, but it helps us have a touchstone about what the practice is and helps us look at the ways in which the practice is improving or if there are any areas of risk that we need to identify.

Also in relation to the leadership, in Waltham Forest there is very strong commitment to addressing the issues of CSE and holding partners to account, and we do that through the board, through the independent chair and through a range of reports and visits that are done throughout the year. Obviously we expect partners to be honest, but it is not just taking what they tell us. We do other pieces of work to triangulate that it is actually the right story.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): That sounds like really good practice. On the point you made earlier about children's voices not being heard, I wonder if I can ask AC Dick how you are ensuring that victims are taken seriously by the police. Some of the failings before from Rotherham show that the police gave no priority to this area and they regarded many child victims with contempt and failed to act on their abuse as a crime. There were clearly some perceptions about the children, as you said earlier, that can be quite difficult. What are you doing to make sure the police are taking these victims seriously?

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I said earlier that we found reading the report and seeing some of the analysis of what had gone on in a number of cases very sobering. We are very alert to that as a challenge. You will be aware, to come to the leadership point, that the MPS has been probably in the forefront in policing in terms of responding to these issues and Detective Superintendent Terry Sharpe [SOECA, MPS], whom you all know, I think, has been really proactive in setting up our central team, which is good and strong and passionate and skilled. Amongst other things, they support boroughs and borough police.

There is a constant review and audit of things like missing person reports and all kinds of - for want of a better word - soft intelligence systems that we have. Terry's [Sharpe] team is looking at those all the time to make sure that we are not actually letting things slip through our fingers. We are constantly going out to the boroughs and, as we have said, there is more to be done here, but constantly going out to the police boroughs to ensure that awareness is raised.

If we do get examples of where we think people have been either too busy or negligent even, then we will be very, very strong on that immediately. It is a subject that I find all our leaders are talking about a lot and as I have, although the specialist lead, AC Helen King, has a particular interest in this area and is bearing down on her teams. The MPS is a very big organisation, as you know. There are nearly 32,000 police officers and a number of other police staff who will come into contact with these issues, not least in the telephone-answering. I cannot pretend this is perfect, but we are on a very strong upward trajectory and awareness is being raised every day.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Is there also the right level of challenge when a child has come forward or it has been identified that they are, as it were, giving consent to sexual activity, when, as Suzanne said earlier, it is a child? They are 13. Is that sort of attitude being challenged as well?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Absolutely. We on a daily basis risk-assess all the cases that may or may not be CSE but somebody has thought that they are. That goes from the extreme of we definitely know that they are CSE cases to those that somebody has picked up one of the warning signs. We have a team within our CSE team that does those initial assessments and so we pick up those things, which is right and proper, and then we will deal with it.

A lot of it is around support for individuals. We have trained child abuse investigation officers that have years of experience of dealing with individuals who have been subjected to sexual abuse. A lot is around the support and so that is working very closely with the Safeguarding Boards and social services, and in fact our interviews

are joint interviews in many cases. We cannot always charge and convict people, but we must always protect the child.

There are two areas. One is paramount - safeguarding the child - but also then part of that safeguarding is seeing if we can pursue and convict the individuals. In the interviews that we conduct with people, there are instances where it might take up to 11 months to gain the confidence of somebody to actually disclose and even then that might not be viewed by the CPS as sufficient. In the meantime, we have to do work with the child and working with the professional partners to support, but we have to target and look at those individuals as well. Maybe that account is not going to be sufficient to bring a prosecution, but a lot of individuals who are engaged in this type of crime are engaged in lots of other types of crime.

One example I can give you is where we had that very situation and we managed to target the perpetrators and managed to arrest and charge them and convict them with a firearms offence. OK, it is not the sexual offence, but it is actually an offence and we have prosecuted and put people in prison for it. There are a lot of complexities and dynamics to it, but the welfare of the child is paramount at all the stages of this. Yes, people take this very seriously and they are very aware of the lessons of Rotherham and other places as well. That is why we launched the protocol.

What was really encouraging was that all 32 boroughs were involved in this and were all very supportive. Makesafe is an excellent example of where we are going out to because, if you look at minicabs and you look at hotels, these are places where information can be gathered. We need to look at that information and work with it and develop it and we do need the support of all the agencies and the businesses and of anybody. If they think something is happening, they must report it to us and just give us that opportunity to pursue an investigation.

Caroline Pidgeon CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Finally, AC Dick, can I ask you what for you are your immediate priorities following the Rotherham report that came out and do you think, from the analysis you have done, that there could be a Rotherham in London?

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): There are certainly lessons from Rotherham, as have already been described, and I could not put them better, really, and we need to - and are - identify those and constantly challenge ourselves against them. Do we have the leadership? Do we have the culture of challenge? Are we prone to flinching away from culturally difficult things, although London is an incredibly different context? How serious are we about this? Are we putting sufficient skill and resources into what we know will be a growing manifestation of an existing problem?

We have also discussed on many occasions that the MPS has many historic investigations going on at the moment in relation to child abuse, as you know, broadly. We do not have many in relation to CSE. I was talking to Keith [Niven] a few days ago about when Rotherham was beginning to be looked at and the work we did to look back and just see whether we were sitting on some historic failures. We do not think we are but, as I said to you before, never say 'never', and it is perfectly possible that somebody could come forward and say, "I was in this situation. I tried to do something about it. I was trying to help somebody and nobody would listen at such-and-such a place". We would then go back and look at that. We do not think we are sitting on a Rotherham. We are determined to get much, much better at this and we are putting a huge amount of energy and resource into it. I do think some of the analysis of Rotherham as a place - I do not know it very well - is very different from London and London's communities.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): OK, that is very helpful.

Len Duvall AM: You mentioned some of the disruption tactics. If you cannot get them for the abuse crime, then you do for other crimes. You may well be sensitised to that, but I sometimes get the view about the MPS in terms of dealing with crimes and the awareness of other issues that it deals with the crime and does not look at some of the allied issues. I thought the issue with Rotherham that was really underplayed was a group of individuals that was also probably involved in other activities, which I could not quite understand, and some of the connections between some of the towns and some of those other criminal activities that may have taken place.

Are we sufficiently sure that within the MPS other investigations are not just seen as the focus, they are tidied up and that they do not quite pick up on those wider issues that may well have come to light and that there may well be something in the back of the mind or they come across other evidence but their primary investigation is there? Really, it is not about your command but about other commands under you.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Sure.

Len Duvall AM: If I can give an example, a murder investigation takes place in a pub and we solve the murder investigation but we do not say, "Why is that person there? What were they doing in a pub?" There is an intermediate drug market going on and no one follows up that because we have solved the murder and everyone walks away and we might have told the local people that there is an intermediate drug market or not. How sure are you that other elements of the MPS in their day-to-day business are sufficiently on board with this piece of work?

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I accept what you say. The murder example is a good example, and we all know we cannot do everything all the time, and there are sometimes crimes going on or allegations - for example, a drug market - that we actually cannot deal with at that particular time. What I would say is officers are almost falling over themselves to identify CSE now when they are dealing with other things. I am sure it is not perfect, but Trident is a good example and we have been very much helped by colleagues here in this. I probably should not say too much because some of these cases are *sub judice*, but we are looking at cases where Trident gangs have been using young people to carry out facilitation for them, if you like, as well as undoubtedly, one would expect, some sexual exploitation. Safeguarding comes first and when we can talk more about some of these operations, we will, but safeguarding has to come first.

We have done some really good work recently, making sure that we can bring the big criminals to justice whilst safeguarding the children and we are hopeful that in the future we will start to be able to lay some charges which are more directly related with the exploitation of children - for example, trafficking charges on gang members - what we are observing - and you will have a view, George [Curtis], on this - is that many gang members, in a sense, just laugh about the thought of being caught and going to prison for a few years for drugs or something like that. They are extremely nervous and upset and angry at the thought that anybody would be thinking that they might be accused of trafficking or indeed sexual exploitation or interfering with children.

We do need to alert everybody to CSE. We do need to make sure that all our investigations take account of that and are always putting safeguarding first. We are quite good at that, but we could get better. At the same time, we need to use every tactic to bring the offenders to justice as well as, wherever we possibly can, actually bringing them to justice for CSE.

Len Duvall AM: Sorry, just one more question, I suppose, to --

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): George [Curtis] was nodding and perhaps wanted to come in on that point that you made, Len.

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): Yes. I was just really going to build on what has been said a little bit. It is really key that, yes, in the example that you gave about a murder inquiry, how actually we all - and I mean that for professionals in every single agency and service - are dissecting and analysing what we are seeing in terms of behaviour of young people and actually thinking, "Why are they behaving like that? Why is it happening?" In terms of gangs and Trident and gangs units in boroughs, they are linking up with the voluntary sector agencies who work specifically with girls and young women that are affected by gangs and that oversight is beginning to start to happen and we are beginning to start to see that mapping where local authorities are building their profile.

What we really need to do at a pan-London level consistently is ensure that we are putting in place services and responses to the behaviour and the attitudes of boys and young men who are not going down the criminal route and who are not being charged, or where crimes get marked 'no further action' (NFA). Like you said, whilst there are real positives around how you cannot necessarily convict someone and charge someone in relation to CSE you may get them in terms of other crimes, but actually are we addressing the root cause of that behaviour? Is what is going to happen once that person is released from custody that they are just going to go out and perpetrate that and actually, even though that one individual may be in custody, all of their peers are still out there perpetrating the same things?

What we need to do is really look at pan-London level at what we are doing in relation to working with boys and young men, really focus on the work around prevention and build a response based on the London profile, and I cannot stress that enough. What we know about London is that the University of Bedfordshire did a scoping exercise with London Councils earlier this year and it was peer-on-peer abuse that was rated as incredibly prevalent in local authorities and local authorities really were saying they need more support around that. How are we addressing that? Actually, a lot of national strategy around CSE is based on that quite traditional model and what we have seen in a lot of the high-profile cases where it is adults as perpetrators, often very connected adults, sometimes in relation to organised criminal networks and organised crime, therefore exploiting children. We know in London our profile is different. How are we responding to our London profile and working with prevention, working with all services, really addressing boys' and young men's attitudes and behaviour on a pan-London level consistently so that there are not just hotspots and there are not just areas where there is really good work, which is what is happening now? There are areas where there is some traction but it is not consistent.

Len Duvall AM: Allied to that work with young men and males, would you say that part of the preventative programme is also trying to empower potential victims and therefore young girls? I always thought if I had a daughter, I would give her the Max Clifford [convicted sex offender] trial notes and say, "Watch out for this type of thing".

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: It is about working with potential victims and empowering them. There are issues around low self-esteem, albeit the young girls in Rotherham - some, not all - had much more complex issues with why they were not being believed or not, which should never have happened, and those issues. Would you agree that somehow we have to try to get a preventative strategy around that and where is the best place for that? Is that our schools or in other settings?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): Yes.

Len Duvall AM: I suppose lastly the question I just want to ask is much about inter-organisational working and issues and it is addressed to you, Suzanne. One of the issues when I read about Rotherham was, I thought, the role of the voluntary sector. You had the Home Office believing and commissioning work with the voluntary sector, the council putting budgets and work there and so clearly there was an issue, but actually there was a bit of self-doubt amongst professionals believing in another sector's piece of work. I do not know if that is fair. How can we overcome that in the future? I know it is about professionalism in different ways. It is about respect for each other's work and it should be evidence-based, but what is the strategy for dealing with that? How do Safeguarding Boards feel about that interagency type of working?

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Do you want to answer your bit first?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): Yes. Shall I just respond to young women? Working with young women in relation to prevention is key. It is key to empower them so that they understand issues to do with consent. That is beginning to happen and actually in some local authorities it is happening quite a lot. Some schools are very much embracing work that comes in.

The danger with that work is often you will, say, work with 10 or maybe 20 young women in one school whom the school identifies as really quite vulnerable and would benefit from additional work. You might address issues to do with sex, with relationships, with consent, in essence to do with self-esteem, what they want from relationships and what they want from life. Your real risk is that those young women go back into the school after they have spent an hour talking about how it is not OK for male pupils to push them into the toilet and expect sexual acts from them and it is not OK that people touch them in school inappropriately - males - and they learn that in that session, but then they go back into that school and that community where actually those attitudes and behaviours are commonplace. What we have to be really careful about is not actually putting young women at further risk by giving that individual that support, but if we do not work with everybody we are not going to see a change in behaviours.

Can I quickly talk about the voluntary sector, briefly? In London there are some fantastic examples of what the voluntary sector is able to do in terms of working with individuals who have experienced CSE and continue to, and young women who are gang-affected. Personally, my professional background is working with gang-affected young women who have experienced CSE and one of the things we need to do - and I put that to this room and this building, really - is ensure that those voluntary sector organisations are able to work in ways that we know work. We know because what reports like the Office of the Children's Commissioner's (OCC) inquiry and multiple others say is that real support comes from that long-term relationship with one individual. Therefore, who that individual is, and if it is going to be someone who works in the voluntary sector, let us look at what we are saying in terms of funding in how long you can work with the young person. If we are saying you can only work with someone for six months, what are we actually saying about what service that young person deserves? We need to look at our local authorities. It is not OK that the voluntary sector is doing this work in cafes and shutting down a conversation in Starbucks because a young woman wants to tell you what happened to her at the weekend, and actually you are in Starbucks and that is not a safe place for that conversation. That is not OK.

What can we do to ensure that those systems are in place for our voluntary sector and also that as social workers begin to pick up this work more, there is still that real role for the voluntary sector because it is invaluable in terms of the additional flexibility in which they can work with young people. There are some real

examples, actually, in particular of voluntary sectors working in things like the Multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings, which are the new meetings around CSE, where you really see it in terms of that professional challenge and learning, I would like to call it, because that is what we are all doing. We are all learning. It is the real, valuable contributions the voluntary sector makes in those meetings because actually they often really know the young people. You often have people with more of a violence-against-women-and-girls perspective. You have people there who work specifically with gang-affected young people and they come in with additional information and again challenge. I have heard voluntary sector people challenge the language that is used to describe exploited young women and also men. It is a room for real growth, but it is happening.

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): Just to add to that in relation to thinking about and understanding our profile, we are building our profile using the intelligence that we have from the police but we are aware that the police profile is only those elements that have come to the attention of the police. In Waltham Forest, we have used that data and put that together with the information that we have from our gangs programme because we have quite a complex gangs programme within the borough, and it is also about adding to that. We have a harmful sexual behaviour lead, who works with a range of professionals who are Assessment Intervention Moving On (AIM) trained, which is the assessment process for people whom you feel may be perpetrating harmful sexual behaviour, and bringing all of that together so you actually understand who it is that is being affected within your borough. As George [Curtis] said, just based on the information that we have from the police profile of the cohort of perpetrators, a large cohort was aged between 13 and 19. It is about peer-on-peer. We call it peer-on-peer; it may be obviously a 13-year-old and the perpetrator may be 19, but it is about looking at those issues as well as some of the more traditional models.

In terms of how we address those issues, it is about schools. It is about education. It is about educating young women as well as young men and doing that in a safe way but also in a joint way so that you do not get the situation, like George [Curtis] says, where someone is outside of that environment and then they go back in. In Waltham Forest we did have quite a good programme called the Healthy Relationships Training Programme (HEART), which was funded by European funding and which actually did work in schools with groups of young women and groups of young men separately and also did one-to-one work. We want to look at how we can further develop that in our next stage of our campaign.

It is also about parents and what we do not want is, again, in relation to thinking about who the perpetrators are, to stereotype our victims either. It is not all about young people who are looked after or who have a very difficult relationship with their parents because some of them have very good relationships with their parents. That is not necessarily what is making them vulnerable to exploitation. It is also equipping parents to really understand what CSE is about and how they can pick up the indicators so they can actually seek help themselves to help at the earlier stages of when things are being identified.

In relation to the voluntary sector, we have voluntary sector partners that sit on our MASE panel that are doing direct work with young people affected. As George [Curtis] says, they can give a real different flavour to bringing forward some of the issues that are happening in relation to those young people.

In having that leadership in relation to being clear that CSE is an issue that we are only just touching, that there is a serious amount of work still to do and that, as George [Curtis] said as well, it is about learning and it is about holding ourselves to account and, as I said earlier, having a culture of professional challenge. We have an escalation policy whereby people are very actively encouraged that if they make a referral or highlight an issue with any professional body within the borough, they understand who they escalate that to if they are not

happy with the response that they get. That is part of having an accepted culture of professional challenge, and I know from my own work - not necessarily in regards to CSE but other safeguarding issues - that colleagues in the voluntary sector do feel reasonably confident about doing that, and they use our escalation process when they feel that it is appropriate.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Thank you. Can I just move on now to touch briefly onto the role of Ofsted? Ofsted has recently stated it is going to take more of an interest when it is reviewing local authorities and safeguarding boards to how they prioritise CSE. I presume that that focus is welcome. One of the issues it picked up was that the problem in the past where there have been gaps or mistakes has been that professionals simply failed to apply child protection measures to young people who were presenting with CSE. Is that your view as well and what is taking place in boroughs to actually rectify that problem? I do not know who wants to go first.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): I think everyone would accept that in the past the signs have not been picked up, and that has certainly been a part of Sue Berelowitz's [Deputy Children's Commissioner at The Office of the Children's Commissioner] work, Helen's work and your work, George, that the attitudes of some of the individuals, as AC Dick mentioned, some police officers did not take those cases seriously enough and we absolutely understand and agree that that is the case. That is why we have now focused ourselves on this to say - and we touched on it before around court - that people present in many ways because of the background and where they have been and what they have actually experienced. They might not present as ideal witnesses in a court. I absolutely accept that and so do all my colleagues. It is around support for individuals. Actually they need more support. They need support to go through a court process if it gets to that stage, but also they need support in relation to safeguarding. We have individuals who may come into the police and into the criminal justice system whom we will safeguard. They will be placed with potentially temporary foster carers but they might not stay there. They may go back to that situation where they have come from because actually that has become the normality in their lives and those individuals need even more support because they do not actually necessarily see themselves as being victims.

In relation to police officers, and that is what the training is focused upon and the protocol is focused upon, these are the warning signs and again they might not be correct but they are warning signs to start asking those questions and start looking at a safeguarding angle in relation to those individuals. Certainly in the video that we have shown, that was an individual who was out late at night. She was coming into custody. They are some of the signs that were not picked up in relation to what was actually happening to her, and she says on the video, "If somebody had just asked me, I probably would have told them". It is the attitude of all the agencies in relation to, "Just take some time to listen". When you do that and you provide the right level of support, and certainly in relation to debriefing, because of course a lot of children go missing. They go missing quite regularly. The police will do a form of debrief, but people are not always necessarily comfortable talking to the police and so we work very closely - Barnardo's is one, the Safer London Foundation - where they can give time to individuals. I said before that it could take 11 months to actually find out what has happened in relation to a criminal prosecution and a statement, but time has to be part of it and the right people to do those debriefs have to be made available. It would probably touch on funding and resources and all those areas, but we have to ensure that that level of support is there.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): I want to ask you all about information-sharing because in previous child protection reports in the past, it has often been that the information-sharing was not adequate and information was not passed on. Perhaps I can start with the MPS. How do you ensure that information that you have about a child that might be at risk is shared across the partnerships? That is obviously going to be

vital to increase the rate of prosecutions. What more do you want local authorities and other partners to do to assist you in that?

Then I would like to come to George [Curtis] and Suzanne [Elwick] to ask in particular about the level of information-sharing that you see and the development of local profiles. Are they, I suppose, fit for purpose, or do they miss things? Perhaps if we start with the MPS.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): I suppose it goes back to the development of the MASHs and how they were actually grown and why they are with us. They are with us for that very reason around a lack of information-sharing, and we know we can name cases where the consequences have been absolutely catastrophic. I am reassured around the level of information-sharing for the MASHs, which are now up and running in London, and so that is a good thing.

As for information-sharing with the local authorities' social services, if children are on child protection plans, every six weeks there is automatic sharing of information in relation to the police data and we also on a daily basis scan to see where the children on plans have become new victims of crime for whatever reason. It might not be connected to the plan. They might just be victims of crime in other ways. That information-sharing is certainly there. There are robust processes and structures for that.

If you ask me where there is room for development, it touches back to and I very much echo the thoughts around education because the victims, as survivors of these cases, have that information. What do we provide for them? What environment do we provide for them to actually talk about this? It might not be that it is a criminal route, but what about the information so that they can be safeguarded? Schools play a really important part in this. There needs to be consistency and there are pockets of really good practice and that is fantastic and must be welcomed, but I do not know whether that is consistent across the board, and potentially that is something that we should explore and all the other agencies as well. There is a massive amount of information and data held on lots of agencies that are involved. Do we see all that, as the police, to identify who the perpetrators are? I would suggest we probably do not? We need to encourage that because if we gain the information - and we touched on it before - we will not shy away from it. We will use that information; we will develop it and if that means we can arrest people and pursue them criminally and convict them and put them in prison, then that is where we want to get to. There is a long way to go yet.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Does your MASH and CAIT system allow for cross-borough information sharing as well?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Yes, absolutely. We spoke about it before. The MASE meetings are where we have these monthly meetings where the professionals all come together. At that point, they will have highlighted individuals who are high risk and that is the purpose of them and those agencies come together. Those meetings can grow or shrink; it depends on the professionals and the voluntary services that are required there. That information is exchanged and then action can be taken and it is either criminal or it would be safeguarding or both and that is the value of those. In our CSE team, we have the single point of contact based in one place under Terry Sharpe, our Superintendent, and those individuals go to those boroughs. They are very much a part of those meetings and contribute to them.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Thank you. Perhaps I could ask Suzanne and George with regard to the information sharing and the local profiles if they fit the purpose, and also perhaps pick up in more thoroughness in particular about what you are doing about ensuring schools have adequate training. When we

looked at girls in gangs about 18 months ago, this was one of the key issues that came out and also the issue that many schools do not want to state publicly that they have an issue for fear of damaging their reputation.

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): In relation to information sharing, as colleagues have said, we have the MASH information sharing agreement. Obviously professionals work within and work together. If there is a concern about a child being at risk, then they understand how to share that.

As we all know, and you have spoken about serious case reviews earlier this morning, in any case review, the issue of sharing information always arises. It is a constant challenge for all of us working within the profession to ensure that people constantly are reminded of the need to share information and the way in which to do that. That is complex and not just in CSE, but in relation to CSE, one of things that we talk a lot about is the jigsaw going back to what we were saying in relation to the Operation Makesafe as well. It is like you do not know the whole picture; you just have one little bit of it but that actually may help somebody else draw that picture together and put those pieces of the jigsaw together. In relation to CSE, it is even more so for practitioners to be mindful of the fact that something they think is not important may be and encouraging people to do that.

Obviously there are the mechanisms in relation to assessment processes and child protection processes and core groups, etc, which are when the young people are already known and in the system but it is that other bit outside of that. One of the things we ask people to use our MASE for is not just referring those young people who are at significant risk but particularly thinking about teachers and people working in youth services or probation who may hear bits of information because young people are chatting about stuff and they are talking about something that is happening. Even if they do not have actual details that any crime has been committed or that they actually have the names of people, they might just have a bit of an idea that something is going on at a particular house and they also refer that information in. Again, it is about that jigsaw and putting those things together.

In terms of profile, as I said earlier, we are trying to bring all of that information together, looking at the information we have from the police and putting that together with information from service providers such as Safer London Foundation or gangs, etc. Also, we are aware that we need to draw that together with data on children missing and children missing from a care home and from education.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): We will ask some questions on that in a moment.

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): OK. I will not say that, then. Then schools, yes, schools definitely. It was stated in Rotherham and in *Real Voices*, schools are crucial. There are pockets of good practice happening. Some schools are fantastic. They take a whole school approach. They are less concerned about whether it is saying they have a reputation for CSE or not. They are aware they work with young people and young people are at risk of CSE and therefore they need to do some positive work with that. We have some schools that are doing good work in Waltham Forest.

It is about making that consistent. The two aspects of the work we are looking at are rolling out "Chelsea's Choice" and getting all our secondary schools year 8 and above - I do not know if Panel Members are familiar with Chelsea's Choice - and getting them to put that in all of their schools. We are hoping to do a tour in spring of next year and then we have also agreed with our strategic education group to start a task and finish group around primary, therefore, we can look at what education we are going to get into primary. We are looking to the schools in our borough to say, "Look, we need to do this as a borough and we need to have not

only a whole-school approach but a whole-borough approach”, which fits in with going back to the age-old safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility. We are looking at our schools and working with parents and businesses to say, “It is all our responsibility to try to address these issues”.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): George, do you have anything to add to that?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): Yes, I agree. In terms of individuals and sharing information about individuals, where there are concerns about their vulnerabilities, there are improvements particularly in regards to young women. When I say ‘young women’, I mean the young woman who may be a victim or survivor. I am not sure we are there with young men in terms of really sharing concerns around young men's behaviours and attitudes. I hear more about the concerns we have for young women than young men and that means that not all the professionals are aware and that even when concerns are raised, there is not always action plans put into place. There are not interventions and there is not support put in place which is different when we are talking about young women. The key matter is that for any of these cases to go to court, the young woman has to want that and what we know specifically when we look at the London profile for a lot of London boroughs is that is not what young women want. They are not there yet; they do not want the case to go to court for convictions. They are not ready for that process.

It is about working beyond that. Young women in particular were getting things like the MASE meetings and the Multi-agency Planning (MAP) process is really helping. It is really interesting to hear about the sexually harmful behaviour lead in Waltham Forest. Again they are in some sites. Some local authorities have these and others do not. We really need to work on that. There is obviously aim but what do we do for young men who are not charged and there is no conviction of the cases that are NFA.

In terms of information sharing, what we can really still be building on is that information sharing about contexts because what we are doing is sharing information about an individual but just the behaviours of an individual not seen within the context around them is not as useful as if we knew what was happening. If we have the information but actually they live in this place, what do we know about this place? We know the gang situation is this; we know the crime situation; we know actually there are some areas. A lot of practitioners will be able to tell you about where the stairwells are in certain estates where assaults are frequently happening. What are we doing about that stairwell? What are we doing about those parts? What are we doing about that bus route, those young people walking to and from school and also schools? Like Suzanne [Elwick] said, some schools are really engaging in this, which is great. There is work to do with other schools as there is around all of those contexts and all of those youth centres where young people spend their time. Are they safe? We know that a lot of youth centres generally are used predominately by young men than young women, the same for the Catch 22 service. Generally work more with young men than young women but we have these excellent services that work with young women. How do we create these partnerships that enable them to do that?

Again in terms of cross-borough, yes, how do we really work on and build on our cross-borough information sharing? We have a transport system in this city which allows young people to move for free. There is a general perception and we relocate and we move young people all of the time and that is because of the risks to them and that is also risks that they pose to others. What we are now seeing is after really relying on relocation for quite a long time is that we have our most vulnerable young people all over this city and country and we do not actually know where a lot of them are in relation to the context we place them in. We might know their individual address but that information from that lead social worker does not necessarily know

anything about the area that young person is in. Once they step out of their own borough, often they leave access to all of the support they may have been receiving. Yes, that is a real thing to look at.

In regards to the whole-school approach, it is a fantastic philosophy but let us see it in action. Whole school approaches take years. What we have to do is create a really safe environment within schools which means everyone from head teachers, teachers, students and support staff. The support staff who are in the canteens at lunchtime and supervising the playground area understand what we are talking about to really create that safe space.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Thank you. Victoria, you wanted to get on to your questions?

Victoria Borwick AM: Yes, if I may just to go on to that just briefly, I absolutely accept the points you make about how the local authority boundaries are artificial, which is very valid, but the problem is of course for the social worker. They are employed by a particular borough and it desperately needs to be rather like at the Greater London Authority (GLA). We work across boroughs and it is a really important point you make that it is artificial. If we are going to tackle this sensibly, we have to have a more London-wide approach in that sense.

Following on a couple of cases locally, people can be put in a children's home or separated or put into care or put somewhere else that people actually do not know what is happening in that environment and, therefore, I do certainly support comments you have made there for the sake of what we are talking about today.

I just want to take us briefly back to Ofsted, which was the point that Suzanne made and then go on to missing children and children in care. Is Ofsted providing a valuable role here? It rather managed to escape any of the problems over Baby P. I do not know who wants to answer that one. Does that fit neatly into your relationship?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): I do not think it is necessarily my position to comment on whether Ofsted got out of Baby P.

Victoria Borwick AM: That answer is volumes, is it not? My personal view - and I will say that - is that the problem is that its particular way of what happened did allow Ofsted to escape the blame for more of a role it could it play. I do not know whether others think that Ofsted could have been more proactive.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I am not sure it is appropriate for us, Victoria. Suffice to say if they are more active in the future, we will welcome their active involvement, certainly.

Victoria Borwick AM: OK, that is very interesting.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, we work with HMIC and they are doing a lot with us.

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): I would say that again, moving on to the future, certainly in MsUnderstood we look to engage with multiple different partners around how we support young people who are experiencing CSE and Ofsted is certainly one of those partners to ensure that everyone essentially is pulling on the same information and evidences and research.

Victoria Borwick AM: Moving on to what I really wanted to talk about, which was children in care and missing children, obviously again a child can be placed in care and I do know very good evidence of where the

police, when told somebody is vulnerable, will make sure they are looking out and will take some proactive work. I have anecdotal evidence of that and I will certainly put that down. Obviously I would like an update on what you feel that the police are doing to protect vulnerable children, looked-after obviously, from these sorts of problems and how do you think that relationship is working with local authorities in order to support those children?

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): If I could start, your previous point about cross-border is very important, not just within London. We have a very pan-London approach and we are very confident of our systems across London. Sometimes we come up against borough boundaries or other boundaries but, within the MPS, we have a strong London focus. As you will be aware, sometimes our young people are placed miles away from London but might be coming back into London to be exploited or going somewhere else to be exploited. This is definitely a very big challenge.

In terms of missing people, a consistent theme of most of the reports on things that have gone wrong has included missing young people and that opportunity or that moment to get information or to nudge or to understand better what is going on is being missed. We are extremely alert to that and all our officers are extremely alert to that not just in CSE but more broadly. Missing people, as you are probably aware, is an issue that the MPS prioritises very highly and the way in which we do a risk assessment immediately when the report comes in and that sort of thing is getting better and better as a system that has greater effort put in.

Sometimes these young people will be relatively frequently missing. The key there is what happens when they are found and when they return. It is not, we think, our responsibility to do the extensive debriefing that might be required. We have to call safe-and-well checks and then it is key that we do the information sharing with others.

Victoria Borwick AM: The trouble is they cannot be locked up in their children's home and yet then the next day they abscond, for want of a better word.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): There have been occasions where secure accommodation has been found.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, we have done it, actually.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Very little of that in London but we have had a case where the vulnerability of an individual was so great that actually that was one of the options that was carried out.

Victoria Borwick AM: Is that a sort of the conversation you have with local authorities?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Yes.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes. In that particular instance, it was an extreme action of course, but it works incredibly well and allowed us the opportunity to both safeguard and then the young person's attitudes began to change and the offender was brought to justice. It is a long process but not something we would routinely do but we do talk about missing people absolutely routinely. The debriefing is usually done by the voluntary agencies or by the borough.

Victoria Borwick AM: What role does the young person play in trying to sort this out? How do we monitor somebody who is possibly out of borough and how do we monitor how they are responding to this being done to them in a sense of feeding back? I do not know what the opportunities are there.

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): Whichever borough places a young person outside of their area, it still maintains the responsibility and is the corporate parent of that young person. What we have done is try to engage with the providers that we use outside of the borough as well as those providers in our borough. We have quite a lot of children's homes in Waltham Forest and therefore we are a net importer of looked after children. We do not use all of the homes in the borough for placement for Waltham Forest children but we have engaged those providers and the providers we use outside of Waltham Forest and there is a quarterly meeting that takes place with those providers where CSE is always on the agenda. We have done particular training with them and some of those providers are part of our CSE champions network.

I think it is a two-pronged approach. One is about raising awareness for children's homes as much as any other professional in relation to CSE. There are the issues about an individual child, therefore, if a child is going missing, then the lead professional, in this case it would be the social worker, would be alerted to that. It is about getting a bit more sophisticated, as you have said, in relation in cross-borough issues, about using the MASH in a way to help with those cross-borough issues. For us because there are a lot of young people who go missing in Waltham Forest that are not Waltham Forest children, as in they have been placed by another authority, we still need to work with the police to get that intelligence and think about at our MASE because if those young people are experiencing CSE or other crime or are gang affected, etc, it is also going to affect the children that live in Waltham Forest or the possible looked after children that are placed in that home. It is about using the processes we have in place to be a bit more sophisticated about how we share that information when it is cross-borough. Obviously, in London, that is quite a complex picture.

Victoria Borwick AM: How do we listen to the voices of the children themselves to say whether or not what they feel in fear?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): It is very much about the return interview, who does that and how is that done, but then it is not just capturing it on that one occasion but actually monitoring the situation. For any child who goes missing who is a looked after child in Waltham Forest, they should complete a risk assessment in relation to CSE. We ask the question: do we think their missing episode is in relation to them experiencing CSE? Then the future, as a preventative measure, is looking at all secondary age children and doing a risk assessment of them going missing, therefore, trying to think beforehand whether there are any particular issues in relation to making them more at risk of going missing.

Victoria Borwick AM: Some of these children are repeat and regular and daily disappearers. Are you saying that will not happen every time?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): If that is happening, then that should be being addressed as part of their care plan. There should not be children that are repeatedly going missing and no action or intervention has taken place. It is also important to recognise that it is very complicated for the practitioners. Our colleagues talked about extreme examples where young people are incarcerated in a secure environment which is a decision of the courts to do that but that is obviously an extreme issue. Working with young people who are being exploited who do not understand they are being exploited, who think they are consenting to the exploitation that is taking place, who may, at that

point of their grooming, feel like they are being treated as special, they are going out for nice meals, they are being given gifts; why are you telling them to stop doing that? It is complex work and it is an ongoing process and sometimes during that process of trying to engage with that young person, to secure their safety, they actually do not want to secure their safety because they do not understand they need to be safe.

It is important for us to recognise that complexity and all of the professionals need to be aware and raising those safeguarding concerns, having that conversation with each other, looking at what mechanisms can be put in place in order to keep that young person safe but sometimes that may mean that happens over a period of time before that security is made.

Victoria Borwick AM: OK, just a quick follow-up. Anecdotally, and I say this as a school governor, we are told that sometimes teachers, members of staff, as you say, meal supervisors and other people who come into contact with young people raise concerns appropriately with the authorities but then feel that they do not hear back and then they raise the next case and they raise the next case and after a bit because they do not hear back, they think, "Why am I bothering to do this?" What changes should be made to the system in order that schools feel sufficiently part of it?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): That goes back to the comments I made earlier about professional challenge and escalation certainly and leadership. The divisional director in Waltham Forest, whenever she meets with teachers, with head teachers, and that happens on a fairly frequent basis in terms of head teachers' forums, etc, will always prefer that teachers know, that heads know, that if they have any concerns in relation to social care practice, they can raise them directly with her. We do have the escalation process and we do say not only is it the responsibility of the person taking the referral or taking the information to take that seriously, but as a professional working with children, if you have a concern, it is your responsibility to ensure you get that concern heard. It is not all right to say, "I made a referral and nobody came back to me". You need to chase. You need to go --

Victoria Borwick AM: I fully understand that but you can quite understand that after a bit, if they do it quite often, they begin to feel, "Am I being listened to?" This is particularly if they do not see a change. We have had reported to us teachers who are making these referrals but are feeling disappointed in the response they are getting back either from their local authority or because they do not know whether the police or other agencies or voluntary agencies are. What process do you have to feed back other than your statutory quarterly - or whatever they are - meetings? How do you make sure that person --

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): On an individual basis, any referrer should get a response back. If they are making a referral into social care, then they need to get a response back and if they do not get a response back, then they should then chase. It is not a quarterly basis; that is a meeting that happens with providers. You would not be talking about individual young people at that quarterly meeting. That is more general or more strategic issues that were get then but on an individual basis, any practitioner, anyone who raises a concern should have a response back in relation to their direct referral.

Victoria Borwick AM: I need to take the word 'should' there.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): I also have George [Curtis] and possibly Cressida wanted to come in as well.

Victoria Borwick AM: The time, yes, I know there are a couple of things.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Two quick points. Firstly, although obviously we are not in every school by any means, there is quite a big role here for our school officers that we have not even mentioned yet. Certainly the ones that I have been to visit recently and seen and talked to, a lot of our school officers will say that either sexual exploitation or at least learning how to deal with unwanted advances and the sort of cyber stuff around sex is a huge part of their caseload now, working with young people and working with schools to help on all sides of the equation, if you like. They have a big role to play.

Perhaps slightly more controversially, I do think there is probably more we can do with education. Keith was just reminding me that education is not routinely always in all our MASHs. I know this is about resources, but we need a greater tie-in. I would not say 'buy-in' because that --

Victoria Borwick AM: It must be partly because they are usually - and we discovered this when we were doing the Health Commission - where children can be seen every day --

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Yes, of course.

Victoria Borwick AM: -- other than of course those who have gone missing, but they are probably on some other agenda, so to speak. Actually, that is the place where you can see some gradual or sudden deterioration.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Quite, yes.

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): Going back to your initial point about CSE referrals essentially not being picked up, it happens and it is happening less and less. We are on a learning curve for all local authorities. There are some real elements of effective practice that is happening in some local authorities to try to overcome this. On one site, the violence against women and girls sector, which provides a specialist CSE service to gang-affected young women and actually young women experiencing relationship abuse on any level in the borough, sits in the MASH two days a week. Part of its role as referrals come through is to look at them, to receive them and also to support MASH colleagues in doing those initial assessments and what to look for around CSE and bring knowledge and information to that environment, which is really useful.

Back in the days when I used to train multi-agency practitioners around CSE and what they should do, there are those really simple things that we can all do as well. When we are referring in, if our concern is around CSE, be explicit. Say that on the referral. It has a lot more impact than just writing a paragraph about behaviours you are concerned about. Be explicit. Say, "This has 4 of the 11 vulnerability factors that we know from the OCC report and inquiry". Use the language of safeguarding. Sexual exploitation is a safeguarding issue. Reference the 2009 guidance if you need to. Once you get into the habit of it, this takes you five minutes when you are typing up your referral. We are still at the point where these things need to be done and we need to be encouraging everybody because, like you say, referrals are getting missed.

On your instance about schools, it does happen and, again, it is just about that level of persistent and being really persistent with that.

Victoria Borwick AM: We have probably covered it, but do we think that the London boroughs are effectively making the link between not only safeguarding but the other points you made: going missing, trafficking, criminality, drug action or any of those other exploitative practices?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): To some extent it is happening, but probably there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of recognising the complexity of some of the issues that our young people are experiencing. It is about helping practitioners to have an informed, considered approach when doing their assessments and not giving them eight different risk assessment tools to use when they are trying to actually get to know a young person and find out what is going on for them. That is quite complicated. Therefore, it is about continuing. As we have said repeatedly, you cannot raise awareness of something and then move on to the next thing. You have to keep all of the issues going all of the time.

Victoria Borwick AM: Do you think there is a role for you helping schools bring that together into an easier assessment tool so that, again, everybody could work together and everybody recognises the right vocabulary, if I can paraphrase what you said?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): Yes, definitely. From the Safeguarding Children Board, it is about the leadership and the engagement with schools to get schools to work positively together. We all know that schools are individual organisations and it is about getting them to work all together with all of the partners on a strategic level as well as an operational level, which they do on a day-to-day basis. It is trying to understand what is going to work as well for a teacher, what is going to work for a teacher in terms of doing their assessment and getting that information forward and also what is going to work for a teacher in terms of being part of the multi-agency partnership.

Victoria Borwick AM: OK. That is a good lesson for us all. Thank you.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Thank you. I want to finish with a brief question on your new MASE meetings. We have heard a little bit about them, but perhaps you could just briefly tell us if these are central meetings or are they in the boroughs?

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): These are borough-based and we will have a representative from the sexual exploitation team, which is the specialist unit. There will be single point of contacts identified from those boroughs who will actually host those meetings. The agencies will be there. It was interesting when we were talking about missing persons. Actually, care home managers are invited to those meetings as well. These will be very much focused meetings where issues can be raised so that if we do have a repeat missing person, how can all the agencies together do something about it? Care home managers have been very valuable in those, as has been fed back to me, because they are actually looking after the children who are going missing. That is the focus of it.

When we look at missing persons, we have local missing persons units and we have four missing persons hubs across London now that look very much at those repeat missing persons. One of those hubs is based next-door to my sexual exploitation team and co-location has been very valuable as well. They will feed into those MASE meetings. It is an opportunity for the boroughs, the specialists, all the agencies, voluntary and care home managers as well to get together to look for solutions when we do have those difficult situations where a child may be going missing repeatedly. Organisations such as Barnardo's and the Safer London Foundation have very much been part of the debriefing. There are numerous organisations involved. It is, one, the information exchange and what we know and, two, how we can get the information from the child or the individual because that is the person who actually holds most of the solutions and the key for us to unlock these problems.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): It is early days but perhaps --

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Yes, very positive.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Are they making a difference?

Suzanne Elwick (Business Manager, Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board): It is early days and we are looking to move our MASE to a more Multi-agency Risk-Assessment Conference (MARAC) arrangement and style of meeting. There is very good partnership. You have asked lots of questions about information-sharing. There is a lot of positive sign-up by all the partners and it is a really effective forum to share information. It is a good platform that we need to use more in relation to cross-borough issues and also looking at issues for adults.

We have adult safeguarding representatives on our MASE. That is for two reasons. Firstly, we will take referrals for young people above the age of 18 because we know that at 18 you do not suddenly become invulnerable and so we will take referrals for particular young people. Also, we had an adult with learning disabilities living in the borough whose home was being used for the purposes of exploitation of young people, locally known as 'trap houses'. We have been able to discuss those cases and have the adult safeguarding rep as part of that. As I said earlier, it is about bringing the information together in relation to the profile and so we want to build our profile of victims at the MASE because it is obviously the opportunity to bring all the information together and try to identify any trends and themes that then need to be fed back to all the agencies.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Thank you. George?

George Curtis (Pan-London Programme Manager, The MsUnderstood Partnership): The thing with the MASEs is, yes, they are new and they are being delivered very differently in every local authority. It really is a case of trial and error. What is great is that there is a lot of reflection, usually, in most meetings about, "Is this working? Do we want to change it? Let us do it like this for three months and then review", which is great.

In terms of where I am seeing real effective use of the time - and bear in mind that it is predominantly senior managers in the meeting - is when they really look, like you say, at the trends and when they do not necessarily focus on the individual cases - and bear in mind that young people at risk of CSE should be having a MAP or an individual meeting around their own case anyway and lots of young people have child protection plans - and when they use that time to discuss trends and look at localities. There have been meetings when they have acknowledged that three assaults have taken place within a very small vicinity and then it is about saying, "Who are the young men who are in that vicinity? We have a detached youth work team that has a mobile bus. Let us move it to this vicinity and do some work with these young men. Let us ensure that their schools are aware of it and that the schools are getting specific offers of support".

At the moment, there is a lot of emphasis on the individual and what we know is that the predominantly young women who are victims and the young men who are victims and also the young men who are involved in the abuse are terrified. As a general blanket position, they are incredibly fearful about speaking, whether it be to police or other professionals. Actually, it is about us therefore bringing information together that is not just reliant on what they tell us but that we use all our different methods we have to really understand the context they are in and look at, "Based on where you are, who you know and the young people around you, we think this could be happening", and therefore put an intervention in place.

Therefore, yes, the MASEs are all really different, but certainly when they are looking more for trends and when they are really focusing on building their profiles and on what it is they can do and using the space to identify young men as well who they have concerns around, it is really beneficial. It is definitely a work in progress. What is so great is that there is ongoing reflection that is happening in all the local authorities.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): We have come to the end of our questioning. Can I thank you all for attending. As I started this, we were very pleased with the MPS's response to our recommendations and all of us would recognise that it is an ongoing issue, but as a Committee we have been greatly reassured by some of the work that is happening in this area.

Before we let you go, we would like to formally put on record our thanks to Assistant Commissioner Cressida Dick. You are now leaving the MPS and we are sad to see you go, but we do wish you well for the future.

Keith Niven (Temporary Commander, SOECA, MPS): Hear, hear.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Hear, hear.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): Thank you very much. It has been a great privilege and thank you all as individuals on this Committee and beyond for what you have done to help the MPS.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Thank you. We will miss you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, absolutely.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): However, as I said, best wishes for your new future career in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, I believe.

Cressida Dick (Assistant Commissioner, MPS): I do not know about 'career', Chair, but thank you very much. 'Role' is OK.

Joanne McCartney AM (Chair): Can I just thank you again.