

See Me, Hear Me: Framework for Action from the Final Report from the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups

Summary

See Me, Hear Me: Framework for Action, Chapter 2, Final Report of The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_743. This recommends how to put measures identified in the Final Report into force (see Policy Briefing # 103). Phase 1 ran from 2011-2012 and gathered evidence on the nature and scale of CSEGG across England Practice Areas Affected: All staff working with children or young adults.

Practice Areas:

For all practitioners, managers and senior manager working with children and young people.

Status:

Final Report from Office of Children's Commissioner, November 2013.

Linked Briefings:

79: Interim Report from the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (http://www.trixonline.co.uk/website/news/pdf/policy_briefing_No-79.pdf)

103: Final Report from the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (http://www.trixonline.co.uk/website/news/pdf/policy_briefing_No-103.pdf)

Introduction

This briefing should be read in conjunction with Policy Briefing # 103 Final Report from the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, which identified nine significant failings, what was working well, and local and national recommendations for action. This briefing is a summary of Chapter 2 of the Final Report from the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, and outlines the *See Me, Hear Me* Framework for Action.

The Inquiry notes no single agency cannot respond alone, or on a case-by-case basis to child sexual exploitation (CSE) by gangs or groups. A coherent local and national response to child sexual exploitation is necessary to address the range of strategic and operational agencies and services involved in the protection and safety of children and young people. It is in this context that the *See Me, Hear Me Framework* was developed. It provides a child-centred approach for protecting children and focuses on:

- Preventing the sexual exploitation of children;
- Identifying, protecting and supporting the victims;
- Disrupting and stopping perpetrators, securing justice for victims and obtaining convictions.

The Framework ensures that children and young people who are victims of CSE, or who are at risk, are seen, heard, supported and understood; it is about ensuring the child is visible. It has been developed with the assistance of young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation and representatives from key agencies. It draws extensively on evidence of effective practice found by the Inquiry.

The Framework sets out the agencies, networks and stage-by-stage coordination of what is needed to enable effective practice and to ensure joined-up working; from the top strategic level down to the on-the-ground handling of cases with victims and perpetrators. This joined-up approach reflects all messages in Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance on CSE (DSCF, 2009) and all the major child abuse enquiries. It is underpinned by principles of effective practice (from page 55 in the Final Report – http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_743).

Principles of effective practice

Evidence to the Inquiry demonstrated that a strategic and operational framework would struggle to be effective if not founded upon the seven principles set out below. These are predicated on Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The principles need to be in place to ensure children and young people are seen, heard and made safe.

1. **The child's best interests must be the top priority:** The best interests of children and young people and their rights to protection must drive all decision making. The paramountcy principle (Children Act 1989) must be adhered to where applicable and children's rights under UNCRC Article 3 fully honoured.
2. **Participation of children and young people:** Services need to involve children and young people when decisions are being made about their care, protection and on-going support and be kept informed on any issues that affect them throughout. Professionals must be mindful of children and young people's needs and equalities. Their UNCRC Article 12 rights must be honoured.
3. **Enduring relationships and support:** Support must be tailored to meet the needs of the child, according to their age, identity, ethnicity, belief, sexual orientation, disability, language, and stage of development. Children and young people told the Inquiry that a consistent person who stays with them throughout the whole period of their protection and on-going care is crucial to their recovery.
4. **Comprehensive problem-profiling:** It is critical agencies regularly problem-profile their local area to analyse and understand all the patterns of exploitation to which children and young people are subjected to. A comprehensive problem-profile needs to be compiled with oversight of the LSCB and should be shared across all key partners to inform the development of a multi-agency strategy and action plans, commissioning of services and delivery of training and awareness-raising activity to support local professionals.
5. **Effective information-sharing within and between agencies:** Every area should have a cross sector information-sharing protocol which is predicated on the best interests and safeguarding of children and young people. All relevant agencies and services should be signatories; it should clearly state what information should be shared, by whom and the process for doing this.
6. **Supervision, support and training of staff:** Services should invest in the development and support of staff including providing regular supervision and the opportunities for them to reflect on practice. Those professionals who offer direct support to sexually exploited children and young people might require further intensive training and must have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice with a skilled consultant or supervisor.

7. **Evaluation and review:** Evaluations and regular reviews of the effectiveness of the CSE strategy is necessary to ensure services and interventions are achieving their intended outcomes and meeting the child and young person's needs. Children and young people must be directly involved in this process in compliance with Article 12 of the UNCRC. This will ensure that performance is driven continuously by a cycle that leads to improvement.

The *See Me, Hear Me Framework* also details three sets of questions. See Chapter 2, Part B: See Me, Hear Me – a Framework for protecting children from CSE (from page 65 in the Final Report - http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_743) for full information about these headings and questions:

1. **Voice of the Child:** this section brings the voice and experiences of victims of CSE and those at risk to the fore. These questions were compiled and quality assured by a group of young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation. They were emphatic that protection and support can only be effective when these questions are addressed.
2. **Voice of the Professional:** this section attends to the anxieties staff may have and highlights the questions which agencies must ask if they are to meet their responsibilities to care for and support their staff.
3. **Protecting the Child:** this section details some of the questions which agencies need to satisfactorily answer in order to fulfil their statutory responsibilities for keeping all children safe.

Finally, the *See Me, Hear Me Framework* outlines the functions and processes required to form a holistic response to sexual exploitation at a local level (from page 74 of the Final Report). The functions and processes are framed within the suggested structure within which the *See Me, Hear Me Framework* can be implemented. This ranges from accountability and strategic coordination to an end to end approach to intervention and service delivery at the ground level.

The Inquiry Report notes that none of this will work without the commitment of leaders in every relevant agency who are held to account for the implementation of the local CSE strategy and the protection of individual children and young people. It states that this way of working now needs to become standard practice. Some agencies are already delivering a good service – all now need to do the same.

Contact Us

Kensington House, 50-52 Albany Road, Earlsdon, Coventry, CV5 6JU

www.trixonline.co.uk

T: 024 7667 8053

Copyright: The content of this Policy Briefing can be accessed, printed and downloaded in an unaltered form, on a temporary basis, for personal study or reference purposes. However any content printed or downloaded may not be sold, licensed, transferred, copied or reproduced in whole or in part in any manner or in or on any media to any person without the prior written consent of Tri.x.

