

# Alexis Jay Report

## Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997 - 2013

### Summary of Main Findings

**Nobody knows the true scale of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham over the years; the Inquiry's 'conservative estimate' is that around 1,400 children were victims between 1997 and 2013**

Child victims were raped by multiple perpetrators, trafficked to other towns and cities in the north of England, abducted, beaten, and intimidated. There were examples of children who had been doused in petrol and threatened with being set alight, threatened with guns, made to witness brutally violent rapes and threatened they would be next if they told anyone. Girls as young as 11 were raped by large numbers of male perpetrators.

In 2013, the Police received 157 reports concerning child sexual exploitation in the Borough.

In May 2014, the caseload of the specialist CSE team was 51, with more cases held by other teams

The collective failures of political and officer leadership were blatant. From the beginning, there was growing evidence that child sexual exploitation was a serious problem in Rotherham. This came from those working in residential care and from youth workers who knew the young people well.

In just over a third of cases, the children affected were previously known to services.

In the early 2000s, a small group of professionals from key agencies met and monitored a large number of children known to be involved in CSE or at risk, with little help or support from their managers – some of whom continued to think the extent of the problem was being exaggerated. There was an improvement in the management response from 2007, but by 2009 the children's social care service was acutely understaffed and over stretched.

'Seminars for elected members and senior officers in 2004–5 presented the abuse in the most explicit terms. After these events, nobody could say "we didn't know"'

By far the majority of the perpetrators were described as 'Asian' by victims, yet councillors did not engage directly with the Pakistani-heritage community to discuss how best they could jointly address the issue. Several staff described their nervousness about identifying the ethnic origins of perpetrators for fear of being thought racist, and others remembered clear directions from their managers not to do so

In December 2009 the Council's children's safeguarding service was put into intervention after an extremely critical Ofsted report; it was removed from intervention 13 months later

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**Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board and its predecessor body oversaw the development of good inter-agency policies and procedures for CSE, but members of the Board rarely checked whether they were being implemented or were working, and the challenge and scrutiny function of the Safeguarding Board and of the Council were lacking**

There have been many improvements in the last four years, by both the Council and the police, and the Safeguarding Board has improved its response and holds agencies to account.

There are still matters for children's social care to address, and there is not enough long-term support for the child victims.

### **The report's recommendations**

The report made 15 recommendations, some of which are specific to Rotherham with little broader relevance. The following (summarised), although addressing the situation in Rotherham, seem more generally useful:

- Senior managers should ensure that there are up-to-date risk assessments on all children affected by CSE. These should be of consistently high quality and clearly recorded on the child's file.
- Managers should develop a more strategic approach to protecting looked after children who are sexually exploited. This must include the use of out-of-area placements. The Borough should work with other authorities to minimise the risks of sexual exploitation to all children, including those living in placements where they may become exposed to CSE.
- The Council should make every effort to make help reach out to victims of CSE who are not yet in touch with services.
- Wider children's social care, the CSE team and integrated youth and support services should work better together to ensure that children affected by CSE are well supported and offered an appropriate range of preventive services.
- All services should recognise that once a child is affected by CSE, he or she is likely to require support and therapeutic intervention for an extended period of time. Children should not be offered short-term intervention only, and cases should not be closed prematurely. The Safeguarding Board should work with local agencies, including health, to secure the delivery of post-abuse support services.
- There should be more direct and more frequent engagement by the Council and also the Safeguarding Board with women and men from minority ethnic communities on the issue of CSE and other forms of abuse. The Safeguarding Board should address the under-reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse in minority ethnic communities.
- The issue of race should be tackled as an absolute priority if it is a significant factor in the criminal activity of organised child sexual abuse in the Borough.
- We recommend to the Department of Education that the guiding principle on redactions in Serious Case Reviews must be that the welfare of any children involved is paramount.

*The Home Office has said the terms of reference for the independent inquiry chaired by lawyer and Lord Mayor of London Fiona Woolf are yet to be determined – but could include the missing Rotherham files in its remit.*