



# JDiBrief – Crime

## Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation: IMPLEMENTING RESPONSES (4 of 5)

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The behaviour involved in community-based child sexual exploitation (CSE) has in all likelihood been around for generations. The major change in recent years has been in the responses to the crime, rather than the crime itself. Once viewed as child prostitution and/or 'promiscuous and street-wise' children going missing, this is now treated as a serious offence. Consequently, public agencies are under growing pressure to deal with the issues involved. Police forces are increasingly initiating proactive investigations into community-based CSE. At a time of resource constraints it is important to act in a targeted and effective manner.

**NATIONAL SCOPING STUDY:** Faced with mounting concern around community-based CSE, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) launched a major nationwide investigation in 2011. While this study went a long way to redress the major knowledge gaps around the prevalence and nature of the crime, the data it drew upon were patchy and inconsistent. Based on responses from police, children's services and the third sector, over 2000 potential suspects and almost as many victims were identified. Many of the offenders have never been formally identified, let alone charged or prosecuted. Almost one in three was operating as part of a group. While this is currently the best national picture available, a clear definition of the crime's parameters needs to be agreed across agencies to improve the consistency of data collection for future studies.

**NEW APPROACHES:** Government guidance on CSE is yet to be sufficiently implemented across the UK. Nonetheless, a number of innovative and effective initiatives have been implemented in individual areas. Examples include:

- Creation of new units to deal with complex sex crimes;
- Co-located multi-agency teams, including police, children's services & third sector;
- Better dissemination of information between forces and across agencies;
- Successful use of covert strategies to improve evidence collection;
- Increased attention to situational crime prevention, such as hotspot mapping;
- Improved training for police, especially child protection officers and front-line officers dealing with missing children;
- Centralised 'best practice' resources;
- A government action plan and active parliamentary involvement.

**KEY PLAYERS:** Many different statutory and non-statutory agencies can contribute to successfully tackling this complex crime and its far-reaching implications. The key players here include:

### Law Enforcement

- Police, especially public protection & child abuse investigation teams
- Specialist law enforcement
- Youth Offending Service
- Crown Prosecution Service

### Health

- Sexual health centres
- School nurses
- Hospitals

### Social Services

- Social workers
- Care homes
- Local Safeguarding Children Boards

### Education

- Teachers
- Counsellors
- Administration (truancy records etc.)

### Third Sector

- Collectives e.g. National Working Group
- Large charities e.g. Barnardo's, Children's Society & NSPCC
- Local agencies e.g. Safe and Sound Derby

### Parents

- Parents & carers
- CROP - parental support group