

Home Affairs

Oral evidence: [Policing for the Future](#), HC 515

Tuesday, 13 March 2018

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on Tuesday, 13 March 2018.

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Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); Rehman Chishti; Stephen Doughty; Kirstene Hair; Sarah Jones; Douglas Ross; Naz Shah; John Woodcock.

Questions 311 - 383

Witnesses

I: Dr Helen Beckett, The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, University of Bedfordshire; Cassandra Harrison, Director, Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse; Elaine McConnell, Chief Executive Officer, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation; and Adam Pemberton, Corporate Director of Strategy and Performance, Barnardo's.

II: Chief Constable Simon Bailey, Lead for Child Protection, National Police Chiefs Council; Will Kerr, Director of Vulnerabilities, National Crime Agency; and Chief Inspector Ronnie Egan, District Commander, Chelmsford and Maldon District Policing Area, Essex Police.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Helen Beckett, Cassandra Harrison, Elaine McConnell and Adam Pemberton

Q311 **Chair:** In this inquiry into the future of policing we want to look at policing of some very serious crimes with some very vulnerable witnesses. Can I begin by asking each of the panel to introduce themselves? Can I thank you for your patience and the delayed start to this session? Can you introduce yourselves and the area that you work on around child sexual exploitation and abuse?

Adam Pemberton: Hello, I am Adam Pemberton. I am the Corporate Director of Strategy and Performance at Barnardo's. Barnardo's works with victims of child sexual exploitation across the UK. Areas of particular interest for us and for this conversation are particularly around harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people towards other children.

Elaine McConnell: I am Elaine McConnell, the Chief Executive of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. We are a child protection charity working with families and professionals to keep children safe from child sexual abuse. We run the Stop It Now helpline for anybody concerned about their own sexual thoughts or behaviour or the thoughts and behaviour of another adult or child. Our primary interest is in prevention. We are also interested in deterrence and instruction.

Cassandra Harrison: Hello, I am Cassandra Harrison. I am the Director of the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. While you will be aware that child sexual abuse has had a very high profile in recent years, there are still many fundamental questions that we do not know the answers to: how many children experience child sexual abuse, how can we best prevent it and how can we help those children to recover when it does happen. The centre was launched in February last year. It is funded by the Home Office and our role is to help identify and bridge some of those gaps in evidence and knowledge.

Dr Beckett: Good afternoon, I am Helen Beckett. I am Director of a specialist research centre on child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire. We do research on child sexual exploitation and other forms of sexual abuse, with a particular but not exclusive focus on adolescents. I am particularly interested in bringing to you today the voices of children and young people about what police are doing well and what police need to do better, because a lot of our research is hearing directly from them and also drawing on a programme of work we have been doing working with the police about improving how they respond to these issues.

Q312 **Chair:** We obviously want to ask you a range of questions about this, but



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can I begin by asking on a topical issue first? The most recent reports on the press this week have been around Telford and around real concerns that cases over many years were not fully investigated and were not fully looked at. Do any of you have any particular views on the Telford case and on, in particular, what needs to be done now? I will just say, on the all the questions that we will ask you, do not feel obliged to respond to every individual question. You may have views on different ones.

Cassandra Harrison: What we have read in the press about Telford is of course really concerning to people but if I might reflect that we know child sexual abuse happens across the country. On the scale and prevalence of child sexual abuse, we published a report last year that analysed existing administrative and prevalence data and showed significant gaps and weaknesses in that data. The prevalence surveys that we do have suggest that around 15% of girls and 5% of boys experience child sexual abuse. However, because each of those studies only happened once, and they asked different questions of different groups of people, it is very difficult to make comparisons and to track trends over time.

We know that police data—child sexual abuse offences recorded by the police—have increased significantly, tripling in the three years to 2016-17. However, that agency data is very limited and it only shows us what is known to the police. It also cannot tell us whether the scale of abuse is increasing or whether that is due to increased willingness of people to come forward and agencies' increasing ability to identify it.

There are significant limitations to the data that we have about the scale of child sexual abuse in this country, from both the administrative data side and the prevalence side. That means that we are making decisions in a fog, frankly, where some aspects come to light and come to the surface at certain times but we struggle to see the whole of the problem.

Dr Beckett: I would concur with what Cassie has said on the absence of data really meaning that we cannot grasp what this problem is that we are trying to deal with. Picking up particularly on Telford at the weekend—and again, to concur that what has happened there is of deep concern—I guess my anxiety in doing research across the UK and also beyond the UK is an anxiety that we are being driven by where is getting the profile. I do a lot of training across the UK and we do research across the UK, and I am yet to find a place that does not have an issue with child sexual exploitation or any other form of child sexual abuse, so I am slightly anxious about a media-driven response about where is getting a profile and that we investigate just those areas, because we are missing and failing children in all the other areas where we know this is happening as well.

I think also, picking up on the data, we very much find what we are looking for. There has been a particular media profile, particularly around child sexual exploitation, which means that we are often only looking for exploitation that is being perpetrated by groups. There is nothing in our



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definitions of child sexual abuse and exploitation that says it has to be by a group and it is no less harmful to a child when perpetrated by an individual. Our anxiety is that what we do not know and what we do not look at because we are being driven by what is getting the public profile is failing other children and young people and inadvertently suggesting that what they are experiencing is not as important to us and we are not looking out for their abuse in the same way as we are in the cases that get our attention.

Adam Pemberton: I would echo what has been said. Those responsible for what is happening in Telford must be held account for the failings. I think it really illustrates the dreadful trauma that has been suffered by the victims and the need for a child-centred approach to dealing with allegations. I am sure we will come on to that more, but in many ways it illustrates a lot of things we will want to talk about today.

Elaine McConnell: I would echo that what happened in Telford is dreadful. What has happened in Rotherham and other places is equally dreadful. We know the scale of historic abuse is enormous. We also know that the current cases going through the court system are blocking up the court system. A decision for you is where you tackle this. Do you tackle the historic, do you tackle what is going on today or do you invest in prevention and stopping the victims of tomorrow? That is not a decision for me.

Q313 **Kirstene Hair:** What do you think is the impact of the internet and the extent that has had on the nature of child sexual abuse and exploitation over specifically the period of the last decade?

Elaine McConnell: There has been the explosion of the internet and it makes it very accessible. It is very affordable. Because people think they are anonymous, they will behave online in a way they would not in the real world. I think what we are seeing is people particularly accessing illegal images of children at a younger and younger age and then that impacting on how they behave online, starting with adult pornography and then going into more extreme images online.

Q314 **Kirstene Hair:** I think 50% of offenders viewing indecent images online will then go on to commit contact offences.

Elaine McConnell: I do not think we have a definite percentage around that.

Cassandra Harrison: My understanding of the research that has been carried out is that it is reasonably contested but it also depends on whether you look at offences that have actually been committed, before or after another offence, or whether you ask people about undetected offences. When you ask people about undetected offences that have not been through the criminal justice system, you find that the overlap is much higher.



I would add to Elaine's points that the internet has created new mechanisms for child sexual abuse to be committed, from targeting to contacting children, and we have seen a significant rise in the number of child sexual abuse image offences recorded by the police increasing fourfold in three years. It is also really important that we do not think of online abuse and offline abuse as completely distinct and separate things because the reality is much more complex than that. Given how integral the internet and social media is to all of our everyday lives, it will be present in many abuse cases that we might think of as traditionally offline—for example, institutional abuse or interfamilial abuse. In those cases the internet can still be used as a mechanism for control and fear and threat over children, so we need to be careful about creating false distinctions when for children it is all very integrated and one and the same and part of their experience.

Adam Pemberton: I would agree with that as well. Online is a mechanism; it is not a separate thing. It is used as part of a continuum and we need to recognise that. Barnardo's has long called for child safety features by default. We are particularly concerned now about things like apps and websites that allow live broadcasting or that show geolocation, and image sharing and the grooming of boys through gaming sites as well. It will keep changing. It has changed over 10 years and it will keep changing. Therefore, that is part of the challenge, I think, in terms of the police response, to keep pace with that change and to be able to respond to how to investigate and how to prevent this kind of offending in the future.

Q315 **Kirstene Hair:** What proportion of children—and I know you mentioned that you did not want to stick to specific statistics too much, but just roughly the proportion of children—do you believe will become victims of CSEA before they turn 16? How confident can researchers be about the accuracy of these statistics, based on what you have just said?

Cassandra Harrison: The best data that we do have is from agency data. Data that is known to the police and children's services obviously only looks at what is known. We know that in the vast majority of child sexual abuse incidents, children do not verbally tell when it happens. If they ever do, they do it when they are adults. The Crime Survey for England and Wales recently found nearly three-quarters of people who had experienced sexual abuse did not tell anyone at the time, so we know that what is in agency data hides a lot of other abuse that is unknown.

Prevalence surveys enable us to ask questions of a general sample of the population. They also pick up experiences that are not necessarily known to the criminal justice or other professional systems. The best estimates we have on that, as I have mentioned, is around 15% of girls and 5% of boys will experience child sexual abuse. A lot of people would say that is an underestimate. It depends on what kinds of questions you ask and in what kind of context. What we really need in order to get better data and



to clear the fog that we have, to enable us to make better decisions, is to improve the administrative data. The centre is doing work with a number of local areas and different agencies to help improve the consistency and quality of that recording. We also really do need a national prevalence survey that is carried out repeatedly over time so we can track trends.

Q316 Kirstene Hair: To add to that point, I believe one in three do not come forward. You mentioned a number will not come forward until adulthood. Do you think there is more that can be done in the space around that in order to get those people to feel confident to come forward?

Dr Beckett: If I can add to that point about the prevalence data, even a self-report survey is dependent upon a child or young person understanding that what they have experienced is sexual abuse. We know that, because of our failure to educate appropriately around that, many do not. Particularly in the last few years one of the patterns we are seeing is a rise in peer-on-peer abuse—not an adult perpetrating sexual abuse against a child, but a child perpetrating against another child or a young person against another young person. You mentioned the statistics there that a third do not tell; the equivalent statistic is 83% for when that perpetration is by a peer. A third do not tell when it is by an adult, from Lorraine Radford's study. That goes up to 83% when it is by a peer, so we are less likely to know about that.

Personally, in my own research experience over the last 15 or 20 years, I have sat across the room and interviewed young people who think they are describing sex to me and they are actually describing rape and sexual assault. That is from someone who has perpetrated it, but does not understand it to be so because they have not had appropriate relationship and sex education. I am delighted we are making progress on that front, which is critical. It is also from people who are experiencing it and do not realise that is not the norm and is not what you just put up with, growing up. Those people are not going to tell us about their experiences if they do not understand what sexual abuse is, or they think they deserve no better than what they have actually experienced.

In terms of what we can do to improve young people coming forward, I definitely think we have seen some progress in this regard. As I said, we have been working with the police. We had funding to work with them and have definitely improved things around the understanding of this. Certainly I see real improvement in specialisms. Where I want to see us looking now is frontline policing. If your first encounter is bad, you will go no further, you will turn back and you will not engage with the system. We need a trauma-informed approach. Recently I was training in a place, which I will not name, about not making judgments on young people. We had a particular issue in how we judge and respond to adolescents in a way we would not to a younger child that we see in all the serious case reviews. We have all heard the language—"putting themselves at risk", "prostituting themselves"; it goes on and on. We are training about this and we are being told that would not happen now. Then someone comes



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in this morning and said, "I have just taken a call from a frontline officer where they said, 'She said she has been raped but she is not acting like she has been raped'". What does, "acting like she has been raped" mean? This is what we need to build on. I do not want to undermine the progress there has been in aspects of policing but we need to build on that and we need to get to the frontline. We need to inform that there is no such thing as an ideal victim. Just because someone does not act in the way we think they will act when they have been sexually assaulted does not undermine what has happened to them.

I know there was a reference that Operation Midland may come up, and the whole thing of whether we start from a position of belief. I am very anxious about stepping back from a position of belief. I see the arguments and why that is. If you were starting from nowhere, that is okay, but to retract from a position of belief for a child—for the public statement to go out saying, "Well, we used to say we believe you and now we do not"—no matter what kind of legal and logistical reasons for doing that, what children and young people are going to hear, and I can tell you this from working with them, is: "Well, yeah, but we don't believe you." "You may say, 'We'll take you seriously,' and this that and the other, but you used to say you believe and now you're saying you don't believe." For me, I think there are ways to reconcile the legal and logistical challenges about still maintaining independence of an investigation. However, young people repeatedly tell us they have to feel believed, they have to feel respected in coming forward, and have to believe they will be taken seriously because there are so many cases that show us they were not. Bad news travels very quickly. We have so many examples of one young person having a bad experience and nobody else in their friendship group will then come forward because of it. We have to really make it easier for young people to come forward and to believe we will treat them with respect and belief.

Q317 **Kirstene Hair:** To pick up on that point, contact offenders are even more likely to have experienced childhood difficulties, including sexual abuse. Therefore, do you think that those who then go on to commit sexual abuse themselves probably did not get enough support at the time they were going through it or, indeed, did not even come forward?

Dr Beckett: Could I defer to you, because this is more your area of expertise.

Elaine McConnell: Some people who go on to contact offend have had a lot of trauma in their childhood, not everybody has. It would be lovely if there was one type of sex offender but that is not the case. There is a whole range of people who will go on to offend either online, contact offending, or with fantasies. There is a whole range of people. It is not as simplistic as that.

Dr Beckett: I would add the importance of making sure the appropriate support is there at the time to minimise the chance of that happening.



Elaine McConnell: Absolutely. Where there has been multiple trauma you would expect more abuse to happen. In families where there are very few sexual boundaries, then somebody is more likely to go on to show harmful sexual behaviour.

Q318 **Kirstene Hair:** In terms of characteristics of the perpetrators of CSEA, do you believe there is a significant difference in the characteristics and motivations of offenders who operate alone as opposed to those who form part of an organised group?

Cassandra Harrison: This comes back to an issue, again, around the lack of data we have. Unfortunately, we know very little currently about people who commit child sexual abuse in this country. The criminal justice data is lacking in terms of a basic demographic profile for perpetrators and victims and also in terms of contextual information—for example, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, whether there is an online element of contact abuse and whether crimes have multiple perpetrators or are committed against multiple victims. One of the demographic characteristics that is routinely collected is gender, so we know the vast majority of perpetrators are male. We also know that they are most likely to be known to their victims.

The challenge in answering your question is threefold. One is that we lack that basic characteristic information and therefore the ability to pull that out. Even if we had that, the lack of contextual information is important. It is very hard to disaggregate those different characteristics or to do analysis based on patterns of offending when we cannot extract information about the context in which those crimes are happening. For example, we might know there has been a rape or sexual activity with a child, but it is the contextual information that will quite often enable us to answer those kinds of questions. We also have inconsistency in the use of terminology and definitions. For example, you might ask a question about the difference between online or offline; online captures a lot of different experiences. I am sorry to have to come back to data yet again, but it is improving that basic administrative data. As I have mentioned, we are doing some work on that. Again, prevalence studies over time will enable us to help fill some of those gaps.

Q319 **Kirstene Hair:** At the moment you cannot say that there is any significant difference in the characteristics between group and individual offending, because that data is not currently available?

Dr Beckett: What I would say is that some of my team have undertaken research looking at young people who perpetrate or display harmful sexual behaviour alone versus in groups—Carlene Firmin and her team. That is showing there are differences among young people who display harmful sexual behaviour on their own versus those who offend in groups. However, we cannot replicate that out on a wider basis. The general literature on multiple-perpetrator rape against adults would also suggest there are differences in those who rape alone and with others. It is certainly something worth looking at.



Elaine McConnell: From our experience we find people who go on to contact offend also are looking at online images of children; some are in networks and some are not. People who access online images of children do not always go on to contact offend. Some of those, again, will be in isolation and some will look for networks online. You have a continuum of offender.

Q320 **Kirstene Hair:** To finish that, do you believe the growth in online CSE and the distribution of indecent images are resulting in a different or more diverse group of individuals committing these offences, or do you think it has made it easier for the same groups of people to keep reoffending?

Elaine McConnell: Twenty-five years ago almost everybody we dealt with was a contact offender, now they make up 4% of the people we deal with. Forty-seven percent of calls we receive to our helpline are from people concerned about their own online behaviour. Certainly what they tell us is they are accessing porn at a younger and younger age and becoming increasingly desensitised. Often there may be an issue in their lives that is difficult, they start looking at more extreme images online and end up getting into a situation where they wonder themselves, "How did I get here?" We run psychoeducational groups with these people who have been arrested and we will give them the tools they need to try to stop that behaviour and to stop it now. Somebody whose primary enduring interest is in children and who are predatory are not likely to phone our helpline for help. It is about this continuum.

Q321 **Chair:** The 4% figure you quoted, it was 4% of the people who contact your helpline—

Elaine McConnell: Now are contact sex offenders. When we started—there was no internet 25 years—everybody was a contact offender but now a relatively small number coming through to us are contact offenders. Last year we took 4,500 calls from people concerned about their own behaviour online.

Q322 **Chair:** It is a self-selecting group that is calling as well?

Elaine McConnell: Yes. There were another 2,655 who could not get through. Our concern is that it is the online offender who has been arrested who is on the phone hitting redial, and the person who is the contact offender, who gets the courage to pick up the phone and dial once, is getting squeezed out of our service. We are seeing that number go down. We think it is because they are being squeezed by the volume of internet offenders coming through.

Q323 **Stephen Doughty:** I want to pick up on a point you made earlier, Helen, about the equal geographic distribution of these things. There is a danger because of the high-profile cases we see—whether it is Rotherham, or specifics around the church or the football case, whatever it might be—that people have become very, very fixated on certain geographies and certain institutions and therefore might miss the fact that there is familial



abuse and so on. Do you think that has caused a problematic effect, both among public awareness and among public forces that, "This could not happen. This does not really go on here. We are not in a city. We are not in a particular area. We are not working with these organisations"? Do you think that is a problem at all?

Dr Beckett: Yes, but one that is being tackled, I would say. There have been those assumptions. We encourage police to have problem profiles. We encourage them to have data from other agencies. In terms of what people think to give in that information, they think about group cases, organised crime groups and so on. The problem then being that only that partial data is feeding into what we think our problem profile is. Our problem profile is what determines what we are doing about this.

We do a lot of training and work around problem profiling and looking at all of the different forms. I certainly see a receptiveness and openness to that message of realising, "Yes, we may have initially been thinking this but by doing that there is the inadvertent problem that we miss all of these other cases".

Q324 **Stephen Doughty:** That is a universally positive response across all constabularies?

Dr Beckett: I cannot speak to that, in that I have not trained in every single constabulary. However, I would say—with caveats, in that there are resource challenges about what data they can capture and what they are getting from people—that there is certainly a conceptual openness to recognising all of these different forms. I am sure it is nothing new for me to say, as everybody says, that there is only so much we can do. We do not have the resources.

Elaine McConnell: Children are abused within the home, within the family, schools and church; often places they feel very safe. The more we demonise these people the harder it is to stop them among your friends and family because that is probably where they are. There is something about having a less emotive conversation about this and a more practical conversation to say, "Actually every adult is responsible for this. It is in your own friendship group and your own extended social sphere that this is happening." If you are expecting it to be the monster, you are missing what is right in front of you.

Adam Pemberton: I am going to make a slightly different point, which is about the diversity of victims of exploitation. A couple of years ago we did some research looking at hidden cohorts of groups who are victims. The report was called "It's Not on the Radar", which is the LGBTQ, BME communities, children with learning disabilities, boys and young men. It is very important not to get stuck into stereotypical views.

Q325 **Stephen Doughty:** Following on from what you have all said, do you think then that police forces do have equally equivalent specialist skills and capabilities to deal with that equal geographic and institutional



distribution of the type of threat we see?

Dr Beckett: I would see variation and that would be one of the other main points I would be striving for. I absolutely see progress, and I see pockets of progress, but I see variation. I do not just see variation geographically. I see variation within forces, depending on who is taking something forward or who your first encounter is with.

Q326 **Stephen Doughty:** At an individual level or in particular types of officers who respond to things?

Dr Beckett: Both, potentially. Again, I am saying this from what young people tell us and from training. I am not saying I have been to every place in the country, so please caveat what I am saying in terms of that. I see variation. I would love to see more examples of the good practice that I have seen, which are making the world of difference for victims coming forward, replicated. There are more avenues and more scope for better sharing of practice of what works and does not work across different forces. We have recently produced a piece of work on models of policing in responding to child sexual exploitation. It looked across nine different forces and there were four different models being used, with pros and cons of each of those. There are lots of areas trying different things. What we do not have is the rollout of learning from each other of what works and does not work.

Q327 **Stephen Doughty:** Who would you say, off the top of your head, have the two or three examples of best practice? You do not have to go into the details, but which forces are getting it really right?

Dr Beckett: I am not going to name forces because, again, there are pockets. Some are doing bits of it right and others are doing bits of it better. I do not have enough evidence to name a particular force.

Chair: If you could send us any examples of individual areas or individual examples of good practice on other things.

Stephen Doughty: Even anonymised.

Dr Beckett: I will be very happy to do that. There are good examples of investing in relationships with victims and witnesses to keep them involved and so on. I will be very happy to send that after.

Adam Pemberton: There is something about professional curiosity and looking beyond the labels when you are talking about capability. Not jumping to conclusions about things is critically important. There is bit of a sense that child protection policing is not seen as high a status as other roles within police forces. That may be changing, but the sense of giving real priority to that as an area of policing is critical.

Q328 **Stephen Doughty:** My last comment: where there is that professional curiosity and where there is the good practice, do you ever find police officers individually or forces coming to you saying, "We would love to do this, we would love to roll this out further. We want to do this the right



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way, but we cannot because we do not have the financial or other resources”?

Adam Pemberton: Yes, we do.

Elaine McConnell: What I hear the police saying is that they cannot arrest their way out of this because the scale of illegal images online is so enormous. There is a very big role for all of us to play around prevention—Stop It Now—and disruption. We target people online. We send them messages saying, “You are on the cusp of offending.” We have had 5,000 people come through to our website rather than go on to offend. Of course, then there is always the conversation to be had about diversion.

Q329 **Sarah Jones:** That leads on to my question quite nicely. I want to look at the outcomes for when people do come forward. Forces in 2017 arrested 2,980 individuals but the police recorded at least 28,000 child sex offences in the year ending March 2017. There is obviously a huge difference between the two, and that does not include possession of indecent images of children. What does that tell us about the effectiveness of policing?

Cassandra Harrison: We know that around 24% of those offences lead to charge or summons. We also know from the data that the main reason why the other percentage does not go forward is evidential challenges and difficulties, even when a suspect has been identified. It is really important to reflect that the police, of course, have a role in pursuing those justice outcomes but also a role in public protection. In many of the other cases, although it may not have reached a justice outcome, the police may have played a really important role in safeguarding children. That will not be reflected in the data necessarily.

Dr Beckett: If I could add to that, this is a bigger issue beyond the police. It is a bigger criminal justice issue. It is about, again, good examples of the CPS being involved at an early stage to advise what is needed to get to the evidential threshold—I am totally going off track, but it needs to be said—and it is also a problem with our adversarial criminal justice system, which is an absolute shocker for children and young people to go through, and our reliance on children and young people to take a case forward. We really need to be using more third-party material and protecting children and young people from going through what is a re-traumatising and re-abusive experience in our current criminal justice system.

Q330 **Sarah Jones:** You said 24%—presumably that is of the 2,900—lead to a charge or summons. What percentage lead to custodial sentences, do you know?

Cassandra Harrison: I do not know that off the top of my head but I am happy to send you the information afterwards.

Sarah Jones: Presumably it is smaller.



Cassandra Harrison: Yes.

Q331 **Sarah Jones:** Elaine, you mentioned alternatives to policing. To quote Chief Constable Simon Bailey, he said last year: "Police forces need to look at alternatives to conviction for individuals viewing indecent images of children". Can you expand on that?

Elaine McConnell: There is a conversation to be had about how to best use resource. Everybody is finite; it is about good stewardship. With any kind of offending you will be looking at the risk, the likelihood, the impact, the imminence and protective factors around that person, and then making the decision whether it is the right decision to go through the criminal justice system or whether it could be dealt with in an alternative way. A lot of people who are convicted of indecent images of children, who are assessed as low risk, will go through the criminal justice system and very little is going to happen with them about rehabilitation when they get out the other side. The question could be asked whether you should invest in that or whether you should do something about rehabilitation upfront. I know he mentioned conditional cautioning, where if you breached you would have the same consequences of breaching a community sentence—you are in front of a judge, you are still on the sex offender register and you still come up on a DBS. It is about stewardship of resources and where you think that is best spent.

Sarah Jones: I will be interested in others' views on that as well.

Adam Pemberton: It is clear that no offence should not be investigated because behind every CSE image there is a victim. At the same time, things like sexual harm prevention orders can be used as a vital tool to help disrupt offending behaviour. It is about using all of the tools at our disposal.

Elaine McConnell: It is not about going easy on sex offenders, it is about clearing space so those who are victims of rape and serious harm get through the court system at a reasonable pace and they get justice.

Q332 **Chair:** Is what you are doing accepting the narrow envelope of resources that is currently available for this kind of abuse and crime? There are 10 times as many arrests for criminal damage every month as there are for online child abuse. Is there not a bigger question about whether the policing and criminal justice system is focusing on the historic volume crimes that we have always dealt with, rather than the new volume crimes that have important implications for children and their future?

Elaine McConnell: If you are talking about criminal damage and some of the crimes like that, again, I would use the same test: what is the risk versus the imminence versus the harm and what are the protective factors around that person? If the person is a prolific offender and it is criminal damage, absolutely they should go right through the criminal justice system. That is a judgment that the police should at least have a conversation about, whether they should be taking those decisions.



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Q333 **Chair:** That argument is, “We have to deal with the most serious cases and so on.” My question is, that might be a rational judgment for you within a system where a certain amount of resources is fixed, but is that because the level of resources going into this kind of crime is tiny relative to some of the other crimes the police have been historically dealing with over very many years? The issue is that this is a new crime, not that this is a less serious crime than some of the others the police put a lot of resources into.

Cassandra Harrison: First, I do not think a lot of it is a new crime, but clearly we are identifying it in a way we have not done before. Clearly that is placing a huge demand on police forces, which is undeniable. How the police cut their cloth and the direction they are given in doing so is not for me to determine. What I would say is that we do know that, even with the increasing reporting and recording we are seeing, there is a huge amount more out there that is not being identified or reported; it is the tip of the iceberg. I would be concerned about losing the progress we have made so far and also, to Elaine’s point earlier, if we just think about a focus on arresting people once abuse has happened and the crime has occurred. We need to be thinking more upstream about prevention. If that is the limit of our ambition for tackling child sexual abuse then we are not doing very well by children.

Adam Pemberton: I would say the resources have to be there to do things, they have to be there to deal with CSE and to scan for new vulnerabilities. As we said earlier, it keeps changing so you need to be able to look at those new things so police can adapt their tactics and can prevent and disrupt. Those are the activities that need resources to do those three things.

Q334 **Douglas Ross:** The Committee had a very useful visit to the NCA and we looked at the dark web. I was amazed, first, at how easy it was to get into it and, secondly, how it looked like a normal website once you are in there, with a checkout, a trolley and everything. How much more do the Government and law enforcement need to do to deal with this element on the dark web?

Dr Beckett: I am afraid it is not my area of expertise so I am going to pass.

Elaine McConnell: I have limited knowledge around the dark web.

Q335 **Douglas Ross:** If you are uncomfortable talking about the dark web, they also mentioned websites that are not part of the dark web, which I think was Backpage. I understand Backpage is not on the dark web. You do not have to know how to get into the dark web to get to that, but there are still cases of young women being put there as 18 and services offered when they are clearly underage and are being exploited. One girl had been prostituted 10 times before the law enforcement agencies were able to find her, but she was freely advertised on a website that is not in the dark web. Is there enough being done by law enforcement and the



Government to deal with that?

Cassandra Harrison: The internet is integral to all of society and is borderless. As such everyone has a role to play in keeping children safe. A useful way of thinking about it is thinking about the kind of expectations and principles we have in the offline world and how we would apply to those to the online world. For example, we do not let children spend time in sex shops, we do not let them play with toys that have not passed rigorous safety standards, and we do not let them spend time unsupervised with people we have not checked and vetted. The question is how do we apply some of those principles and create safe online spaces for children. As with the offline world, it is likely to be a combination of legislation and regulation, corporate responsibility and consumer expectation, which will get us to that point.

Adam Pemberton: It is not an area where I have specific expertise either but I agree with that, it has to be a shared endeavour.

Q336 **Douglas Ross:** It is a concern to me that you four very experienced people are almost reticent about looking into this. That's part of the problem. If we are not raising our concerns about this—if none of you say, "We have great expertise in it"—that element of what we are looking at will build up, because people will see that as a vulnerability in the system and will direct their efforts there.

Dr Beckett: I would say there are other academics who hold the expertise in that area.

Q337 **Douglas Ross:** I know you have covered a variety of issues today and all the questions you have answered very well. However, when we come to this issue, which is the elephant in the room that people do not discuss, there is not much coming back from you. While there are other experts, this should be right across the board. This is something we should be looking at. I was really worried when I saw how easy it was to get onto the dark web. It was two clicks of a mouse. You can search it on Google and that gets you into the dark web.

Adam Pemberton: That is why I think it has to be shared endeavour. Tech companies have to take more responsibility for their part in it.

Q338 **Douglas Ross:** That was my question. Are the Government and law enforcement agencies doing enough? Is your answer that really you do not know?

Elaine McConnell: We are looking to launch on the dark web because we think some people are not accessing our site because they think that perhaps law enforcement might be looking at our site and who is coming to us. People might feel more secure to access it on the dark web. It is something we are exploring at the moment. We do not know what response we will get, which is why we are slow to be drawn.



Cassandra Harrison: If I could come back to your question, I outlined a number of levers I think we have collectively to address some of these questions. I outlined three. If we think that corporate social responsibility is not sufficient and is not doing the job, then we need to think about what other levers do exist; for example, legislation and regulation.

Q339 **Naz Shah:** A few questions from me, more around the preventative stuff. Elaine, you talked about whether the Government are doing enough preventative work. If you had a wish list, what would you like to see the Government doing?

Elaine McConnell: I would like to see a cross-Government working party that very much included health and education because they are quite often missing from the conversations we are having. I do wonder if the UK is ready for a national media campaign to say help is available. We get people coming through to us and they say, "We wish we knew you were here." I do not know if the British public is ready for that. It has to go right through. It is upskilling parents; it is education. It is working with young people, because young people are the first people to know that a friend of theirs is in trouble. Where do you go? It is not going to be the adult who knows. It is how you empower those people and make them resilient so they know where to go for help. It is making workplaces safe. It is right through every aspect. It is taking the prevention framework and thinking about what we can do on a primary level and on a secondary level and then, after the event, how we make sure this does not happen again. It is working with all the different groups and within situations.

Dr Beckett: From a child and young person's perspective, we used to say, "We would never use the term CSE, child sexual exploitation, with a child because it did not mean anything." The problem is now mis-messaging around what these things are. Young people will say, "You're going to ask me if I'm being sexually exploited." It has become bandied about. We are not educating from zero. We are having to dispel harmful myths that have come about, about who perpetrates offences, who is potentially a victim and how this might happen. What we need to do is educate children and young people about the harm that is out there. I do not care if it is called child sexual exploitation or we call it child sexual abuse. In fact, I argue that "child sexual exploitation", while having made a really helpful contribution in raising awareness, is now an unhelpful differentiation because actually it is abuse. Children experience so many different forms of abuse, and there are so many different forms even within CSE that hold more in common with ones that we do not say are CSE. I think our labels and terminology are getting in the way of our ability to protect children and young people. I would suggest we need to be taking a step back and thinking about what is sexual abuse, what is harmful for children, and getting rid of these siloed approaches to different forms of harm.



What we really need to bear in mind when we are thinking about educating children and young people about risk, educating people who care for children and young people about risk, is making sure we do not make them think it is their responsibility. That is my worry about some of the educative work we do with children and young people—that inadvertently what we say to them is, “If you do not stop it, if you do not recognise it or if you do not come to us for help, then it is somehow your responsibility.” Let us be very clear about this: when child sexual abuse happens, the blame lies with the perpetrator, not the child, irrespective of the circumstances. That, for me, is also the public messaging we need to get out there, about what is unacceptable behaviour and where responsibility lies. If I may caveat that with saying that if the perpetrator is under 18, that needs a different response to those who are perpetrating as adults against children.

Q340 Naz Shah: Dr Beckett, leading on from that, you talked earlier about what we do not know. Last time we had this inquiry we called for more research into the perpetrators and, in particular, in relation to grooming. Would you support that call for more research by the Government?

Dr Beckett: I would. I am guessing you are going to come in as actually they are doing some research on perpetrators. The thing I would call for is research about what we do not yet know. I know when we are out with children and young people—and our particular area of expertise is research with children and young people—they are telling us about stuff that is not getting to the police, is not getting to social care and is not being picked up by schools. I absolutely do think we need the research that you are commissioning, and Cassie can tell you about that. However, I still think we only have part of the picture. We need to get out there. We need to talk to children and young people. We need to hear from them what is going in their lives. That is about doing that right. It is not about asking about sexual abuse or CSE, it is just talking to them about their experiences. For example, in gang-associated sexual violence research that we did, we talked about sex and relationships. The vast majority of what we learnt about—as I alluded to earlier—was not being described as sexual violence or abuse, it was being described as the norm of sex and relationships. We have to find an appropriate way to engage children and young people to actually open our parameters beyond what we, as professionals, think is going on, to looking at the lived reality of children and young people’s experiences.

Q341 Naz Shah: Before we come back to you, Cassandra, when you talk about how we need to do more to support victims, what more do we need to be doing to support victims? One of the experiences I had in Bradford when we did some work on this issue, following the Kellerabbey Investigation, was that we did not have our overall statutory services working together, particularly CAMs, supporting victims around their trauma and their mental health issues. There was not that wraparound care. I am pleased to say the police CSE group in Bradford has had its joint targeted area inspection and has come out really, really well. However, we have lots of



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work to do on that. How do we support victims to be able to come out of that and then to rebuild their lives?

Dr Beckett: It is really interesting that you are talking about mental health and wellbeing. I have been at a meeting today. We are doing a piece of research with young people about mental health and wellbeing needs after experiencing sexual abuse in adolescence. We do not know, because we do not ask them about what it is. We focus on risk assessing. We focus on getting them out of the immediate danger. We do not focus on that longer-term recovery. You hit the nail on the head with what you are talking about there, which is about partnership. It is about different people playing the right roles. It is not the role of police to provide therapeutic support.

Where the police can help is with the anxiety that services have in giving pre-trial therapy. Although a child and young person has a right to pre-trial therapy, in research we have done we are finding out they are not getting it—either nobody has told them they deserve it or are entitled to it, or a service is anxious about what it can or cannot do. There are practical things—I know this is a policing inquiry—police can do to help that.

However, the police cannot do the wraparound support, cannot do all of the support for children and young people without partner agencies coming in and doing the right thing.

One of the things I see that causes me anxiety is within a multi-agency setting, where police say it has not hit an evidential threshold and therefore are not taking it forward, is other services then thinking, “We do not need to do anything about this”. Just because it does not hit an evidential threshold does not mean the child does not need what all of those other services can give them to deal with what has happened.

Q342 **Naz Shah:** When I started talking about sexual abuse and exploitation 20 years ago, we were particularly talking about the barriers for BME children because of the issue of honour. If they are vulnerable, they have added barriers to access support. Is there work being done to support victims to be able to speak about their narratives?

Dr Beckett: Limited. Again, there are some examples of it being done.

Adam Pemberton: Some of the tools are already there. It is about keeping children informed in line with the Victims’ Code. It is pre-trial therapy. It is achieving the best evidence interview process. It is special measures applications. There are tools there that are not just about the police; they are about the criminal justice process. It is about using them much more effectively to support victims through the process. There are a range of things that I do not think are fully exploited—that is not the right word—to make sure victims are supported.

I will cycle back to your question about prevention and one very specific thing that I think is really important. The Government’s consultation on



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the guidance for compulsory relationship and sex education in England has closed recently. That is an absolutely fundamental way of making sure that children and young people are getting education at the right stage as they grow older about what a healthy relationship is and how to keep themselves safe. From our perspective it is an absolutely critical way of addressing some of the prevention points you raised earlier.

Q343 Chair: Two quick final questions. The focus of our report is mainly around policing. I am interested in your perspective on the overall partnerships between organisations in different areas, all of which may come across evidence potentially of abuse or of exploitation. On a scale of nought to 10, how well do you think in general those partnerships are working? Ten is the best you think organisations are capable of given existing practice and zero is, in terms of real experience, the worst cases we have seen. On a nought to 10, where do you think most partnerships are?

Adam Pemberton: On a spectrum between nought and seven, I would say the best are not better than a seven.

Elaine McConnell: Some relationships are very good, particularly our relationship with the police, because obviously we report a lot to police. We find it very, very difficult to engage other people, such as health and DfE. Therefore zero to nine or 10.

Cassandra Harrison: I would say it is difficult because of the significant variability. You could not give a scale of nought to seven or 10 across the whole picture. We know multi-agency working is incredibly important in tackling child protection and child sexual abuse specifically. We often see that it comes up in serious case reviews as a challenge. Partnership needs to work at both a leadership and an operational level—shared leadership tackling the problem, and also on an operational level with having the right kind of processes, protocols and working relationships in place.

If I may come back again to data, it underpins so much of what we do. If we are in this fog of information, how we can really determine what best action should be taken, and how do we measure response? Making sure that local areas have a shared understanding of the picture of what is happening, based on evidence and data, will really help.

Q344 Chair: Would you put the majority of local partnerships at five, above five, or below five?

Cassandra Harrison: I am not in a position to make that judgment.

Dr Beckett: The researcher in me hates giving an easy answer on that. I would say somewhere around the middle. I would agree, I definitely do not think anywhere has it right.

Q345 Chair: Thinking about those partnerships, I am going to ask you one quick final question. Which institution or agency are you most worried about and think could do far more compared to where it currently is? It



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could be the police or it could be one of the other organisations.

Dr Beckett: Could I briefly add a point to the last one? For example, they are better at responding to CSE but, again, the bits they are better at responding to are the bits there has been the public profile on. It is about saying, "We do this bit well, but is every child or young person who is vulnerable and experiencing harm getting the same response?"

Chair: We need to move on to the other panel, I am going to ask you to identify one organisation. We probably do not have time to elaborate.

Dr Beckett: I would love to see education engage more.

Cassandra Harrison: I suspect many people in different areas would name different agencies in their different areas. However, yes, I think schools have a really important part to play as well.

Elaine McConnell: For me, probably health. Can I just make a little plea? If anyone wants to come and see prevention in action, you have an open invitation to come and see the Stop It Now helpline. We do not just listen, we give advice and we work with people.

Adam Pemberton: I would say health, particularly around mental health and wellbeing services. They are absolutely critical.

Chair: Thank you very much. Can I thank you all for your evidence and for your patience as well this afternoon? Thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Chief Constable Simon Bailey, Will Kerr and Chief Inspector Ronnie Egan

Q346 **Chair:** Can I welcome our third panel today, and can I thank you for your patience in waiting to give evidence? We very much appreciate your time.

Could I ask you to introduce yourselves and also to start by telling us whether you think the issues around child sexual exploitation and abuse have become worse over the last few years or whether we are simply detecting more of it, and how far you think it is each of those?

Will Kerr: Good afternoon. My name is Will Kerr. I am the Director of Vulnerabilities for the National Crime Agency. That includes, inter alia, responsibility for CEOP Command, the child exploitation and online protection command. I am also responsible for organised immigration crime, modern slavery, human trafficking and a few other bits around the edges.

To answer your question, bluntly and quickly, yes, it is worse both in scale and volume, and worse in nature and the risk factors associated



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with child sexual exploitation and abuse. There are three principal reasons for that: global technology, the opportunities and the international networks of offenders. Livestreaming has been talked about earlier on. I will be delighted to go into some more detail about the risk factors later on about livestreaming. Secondly, it is harder to catch offenders. The amount of anonymisation, destruction and encryption software that is available to offenders now simply did not exist two years ago, let alone 20 years ago. Thirdly, victims behave differently. I have two teenage boys. They are socialised and sexualised online. The age at which they get access to the internet is fundamentally lower, and lowering all the time by generation. Thirty-six per cent of all recorded indecent imagery of children, according to police records, is what is described as self-generated indecent imagery. We need to be careful that we do not criminalise it at the same time we are trying to address it.

I will finish because I know you want to keep the comments brief at the beginning, but the bit that frustrates me the most in this space—and I will be delighted to go into it in some detail—is that there is far too much preventable demand in this space. There are thousands of children being unnecessarily exploited and abused in the United Kingdom at the moment because the tech sector has a significant responsibility and the ability to stop far more of that at source. Thank you.

Chief Inspector Egan: Good afternoon, Ronnie Egan, Chief Inspector from Essex Police. My area of responsibility currently is district policing, Chelmsford and Maldon. However, I am here to speak today in terms of the impact on Essex Police also. In addition to what Mr Kerr said, I would also like to articulate the significant demand at a local level we are faced with in terms of gang exploitation. We are starting to see a crossover more recently, not only with sexual exploitation but more widely with criminal exploitation of children. The two do crossover quite closely now. At a local policing level, accepting the online issue we are faced with, it is also the street gang exploitation of children as well.

Chief Constable Bailey: Good afternoon, I am Simon Bailey. I am the Chief Constable of Norfolk and I am the National Police Chiefs Council lead for child protection and abuse investigations.

I would only seek to add a couple of pieces to what Will has already said. There is no doubt that as a country we are having to come to terms with the failings of the past—so, non-recent reports of sexual abuse, and the numbers still coming into Operation Hydrant are 125 a month. There are now getting towards 6,000 victims within our database and only 4,500 alleged offenders. That is placing a significant demand across policing. We are then having to contend with what unfortunately almost gets overlooked: that the greatest amount of abuse is still within the interfamilial environment. That still accounts for two-thirds of all abuse. We absolutely now have to come to terms with the fact that the threat that is posed by technology is creating a completely new threat. That threat is changing all the time. Just in the period of the last six to 12



months we have seen the threat change for children. My greatest frustration, to reiterate what Will has said, is that so much of this abuse is preventable. It is the responsibility of the tech companies that are providing the platforms that are allowing people to abuse. I am regularly asked, "Are there now more people with a sexual interest in children than there were 20 or 30 years ago?" I do not believe that is the case. I simply believe that technology has now opened up an array of opportunities that were simply never ever afforded to would-be offenders before.

Q347 Chair: We would like to pursue each of those issues with you. Can I briefly ask you the same topical question I asked of the previous panel? You will have obviously seen the report around Telford and the media reports of investigations not having looked far enough into the number of potential perpetrators and so on. Do you have any reflections on what more you think needs to be done in the case of the Telford issues that have been raised?

Chief Constable Bailey: In preparation for the panel I spoke to Chief Constable Bangham yesterday. He has provided me a highlight brief on the circumstances and history of Telford. He has briefed me upon Operation Chalice, the number of arrests that were made during the course of operation and the number of convictions that were secured. I think they recognise they have one particular case that is ongoing at this moment in time where a victim has come forward on a number of occasions. They are now looking into those circumstances, so that is ongoing.

Telford and the particular model of abuse we are now reading about in a particular newspaper we have seen replicated on numerous occasions in Rotherham, Rochdale, Oldham, Bristol and Oxford. It is but one type of child sexual exploitation. It is the model that gets a disproportionate amount of media coverage. I do have to say that my concern around this is that we are not asking the really difficult questions that come out of this particular model of abuse: what culturally drives this and what culturally permits the type of abuse we are seeing in that particular offending model? The coverage that is now being afforded to Telford shines another spotlight on something that we already know is there. We have to start asking ourselves those really difficult questions of why is this form of abuse happening in that particular format that we are seeing, and have seen across the country.

Q348 Chair: What more do you think needs to be done in terms of the Telford case? The Independent Child Abuse Review has said it will look at some of the historic abuse. Do you think there are further police investigations on top of what is currently underway that now should happen in those cases? Do you believe the local has sufficient resources, given it is a small force, in order to be able to do so?

Chief Constable Bailey: They are specifically looking at the one concern that is now recent. Having spoken to Anthony Bangham yesterday, what he is saying is that there was a thorough investigation, going back to



2009, I believe it was. There is nothing new in what we are now seeing in the paper. There is one particular case they are looking at. However, when you see what is being written by the local chief executive and listen to what the chief constable is saying, they would turn around and say the problem that was there in the non-recent past is not in existence in Telford at this moment in time. Certainly these matters were raised 18 months or two years ago. We did a lot of work around that time through our regional CSE co-ordinator and analyst and we could not find anything that was disproportionate in Telford. I believe there was just one standout element in the statistics. Forgive me, I cannot remember specifically what that is. There were some concerns but it certainly did not come up as being the area of greatest risk.

Q349 Naz Shah: A couple of questions, first of all to Mr Bailey. You were talking about the research and the need to understand why that model of abuse is pertinent. Would you support the call this Select Committee made in its previous inquiry for research into the actual perpetrators by the Government?

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes, we absolutely need to look into it. Certainly David Spicer, QC, in his observations of Operation Sanctuary in the north-east, made it very clear we need to understand a lot more than we currently do.

Q350 Naz Shah: The number of child sexual offences recorded by the police has increased exponentially over the last decade. To what extent are police-recorded crime figures now capturing the full picture of child sexual exploitation and abuse in England and Wales?

Chief Constable Bailey: We know we are not capturing the full picture. We know the Office of the Children's Commissioner undertook a really significant study around prevalence. We understand there are statistics around that. The report very clearly said only one in eight cases are coming to the attention of the police. There is no doubt that there is far greater victim confidence, I believe, to come forward. We are doing more work than we have ever, ever done in the online space. The fact we are arresting getting on towards 450 men every month and safeguarding almost 700 children every month demonstrates the real intent around this. The fact is we have to accept there are still far more children, I believe, who still have yet to have the confidence and courage to come forward. We are seeing a number of victims that are now coming forward and reporting non-recent abuse, and we are starting to understand why they did not come forward. However, I cannot help but think there will still be a generation of children that still are ashamed, have been told they will not be believed, and are still not coming forward. I genuinely think we are still only seeing the tip of the iceberg.

Q351 Naz Shah: Earlier on you talked about two-thirds of child abuse being interfamilial abuse.

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes.



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Naz Shah: My next question is: roughly what proportion of child sexual abuse cases now have an online element, and what has been the impact of this on the forces and on the NCO?

Chief Constable Bailey: I cannot apply a percentage to it. I know that the NSPCC has applied a percentage of around 10%. I think that is a significant underestimate simply because of the complexity of analysing what I would describe as clean data. Of course, one of the challenges around online abuse is that it covers an absolute myriad of offending.

In terms of forces' response, every force in the country unequivocally—because I chair the quarterly Pursue Board—is targeting those offenders who pose the highest risk. That is leading us to that really significant volume in terms of the numbers of offenders being arrested and the numbers of children being safeguarded.

All I would say is that—again, I want to reiterate this point—while I am very proud of what has been achieved in terms of those arrests and the number of children being safeguarded, it is masking the bigger picture. My concern is that because of the fact that we are arresting so many people and we are safeguarding so many children, we are not raising up, flagging, and putting the focus on the disruption strategies that should be put in place around building resilience in children to make sure they feel able to resist people who are coming online to groom them and to understand the risks of taking self-generated sexualised images. We should be putting pressure on the tech companies to prevent the abuse happening in the first place. I genuinely believe that so much of this is preventable. While it is great to talk about that significant response, it is masking the bigger issue.

When you now look at the statistics that are coming out from the Canadian law enforcement agencies around the use of their Project Arachnid, which is going out and hunting for images, it is identifying 80,000 unique images of indecent imagery every month. We have seen a 700% increase in the number of referrals that are coming in to the NCA in the last four or five years and 1,000 referrals every month are coming into policing. Policing is responding and dealing with those referrals. I monitor that information every quarter. However, the fact is those numbers keep on growing and growing and growing. That takes me to the point that has already been raised: that we cannot arrest our way out of this. I know Will will have some really significant and pertinent points around that very question.

Will Kerr: If I can just add a couple of points of flavour, if it helps the Committee, on what Simon has already addressed, it is increasingly difficult to neatly disaggregate—both in terms of the operational impact and the traumatic impact on victims, but also just in pure crime stats—online and offline offending. Very often, and increasingly with livestreaming, the lines have become blurred. For livestreaming, you can have three or four different types of offences being committed at once, both the making and the sharing and the distribution of indecent images



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of children or the live abuse of children. You have contact offending, because a child has been abused, very often in countries like the Philippines or Thailand or Cambodia. You have contact abuse by proxy, by an offender who might be sitting in a town in the United Kingdom and paying for that terrible service.

One of the examples we gave in the written response to the Committee, when you were kind enough to come across and spend a bit of time with CEOP, was the case of Derek Hutton, who was convicted and got 10 years in September last year. He was operating on a website called Movie Star Planet, which co-operated fully with us, I have to say, during this investigation. He had created 407 user accounts. He was just constantly trawling the internet to try to find exploitable young children on a website that is specifically created for young girls to dress up and act as their favourite pop stars and movie stars.

The scale and the volume of opportunities available now, the changing nature of the crime, particularly around livestreaming offences, where people with a paedophilic interest in children in the United Kingdom can now create and order live-time contact abuse of a child, can designate the ethnicity, the age, what they want the child to wear. Very often that contact abuse is taking place in impoverished countries. This is a completely different type of abuse and we need to get better at making sure we can disrupt it. There are ways the tech companies can assist us to do that.

Q352 Naz Shah: You were listening to the evidence, although it was a very different inquiry, in terms of YouTube. Do you think it is about time we changed the law with tech companies to fine them when they are not doing as much as you would like them to do?

Will Kerr: What you change the law to is a matter for legislators. If you are asking my professional opinion, yes, of course I think we should make it a lot more difficult for this type of offending to take place. There are three or four simple things that we could ask the companies all to engage in that would make it a lot more difficult for offenders to use the same technology that masks and hides their behaviours and makes it more difficult for law enforcement to catch them. You use that same technology, facilitate it, and are enabled by those companies to catch them and prevent the offending in the first place. That is where I think our point of focus should be at the moment. That is where I think three or four simple things would make a massive difference to us being able to protect collectively thousands of children across the United Kingdom.

Q353 Chair: Can you just give us an example?

Will Kerr: Yes, of course, I would very happily do so. Pre-filtering or pre-screening content before it is either uploaded or downloaded from the internet, so being able to have screening servers that have all the individual photo hashes, so in other words, a photo DNA of individual indecent images of children that is on a screening server, that if the



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screening server recognises those hashes, the material cannot be uploaded in the first place, nor can it be downloaded from hosting servers. We also have, we know, through developing—

Q354 **Chair:** That could be done in real time?

Will Kerr: Absolutely, and if it is not a known indecent image of a child, if it is a first-generation image the screening server has not seen before, we know what we can do. There are developing forms of artificial intelligence that can designate the key factors of those photographs that relate to indecent images of children and then tell us about it so we can safeguard. That is the first.

Secondly, we might want to develop a system, because as a father of a 13-year-old child who spends far too much of his time on Xbox Live, I want to know there is some sort of officially-approved Kitemark on the corner, where the sites that my child is on, I know they have signed up to some basic functions: secure-by-design responsibility to proactively search their sites, use algorithms to try to identify adults trying to engage in grooming offences with children and to stop it, and a proactive duty to engage with law enforcement, a proactive duty to make sure that some of the anonymising tools don't get access to their services, so somebody looking to download material from their sites cannot use VPN—virtual proxy networks—because people are trying to anonymise their identity. Why?

Then thirdly, wouldn't it be lovely if we could see a certain percentage of the R&D budgets of a lot of these companies, a lot of this technology that is facilitating offenders in terms of being able to encrypt and anonymise their activity, being used to try to do all the things I have just talked about as well? If the four or five biggest companies committed 5% or 10% of their R&D budgets to be used in prevention as opposed to pursuit, I think we would see a massive difference in this space.

Q355 **Chair:** That is really helpful. Chief Constable Bailey, do you want to add anything just while we are on the subject of what tech companies should do?

Chief Constable Bailey: All I would say is that you might imagine that Will and I talk about this all the time. We rarely talk about, sadly, anything else. I would only add one thing. If that was to be achieved, it would give us the space and the capacity to then start targeting those people who are the sophisticated users of technology—those individuals who hide their identity; the Matthew Falders of this world; those people who are committing the very, very worst forms of abuse, notwithstanding that all abuse is horrific, but there are scales. It would give us the time and the space to do that. Everything that Will has said I absolutely endorse.

Q356 **Naz Shah:** Considering the large number of individuals known to be viewing indecent images of children online, should forces prioritise recent



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allegations of child sexual abuse over historical ones, particularly when the alleged perpetrator is deceased?

Chief Constable Bailey: This is a really complex area. What I would say, if I could use my own force as an example—and I believe this is broadly being replicated across policing—is that chief constables across the country have created police online investigation teams or safeguarding children online teams. Those teams are predominantly dealing with the grooming threat and the viewing of indecent imagery threat. We have all added and put in additional resources to be able to cope with the demand that we are identifying and to cope with the demand that is being created from the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in the United States, which is sent to CEOP, who then disseminate to us. We are dealing with those and I am ensuring that the police service is responding to those referrals. The management information that is recorded every quarter demonstrates how effectively we are doing that.

There is then of course this really significant increase in reports of non-recent abuse. Unfortunately, the media's focus on allegations of non-recent abuse is focused upon a number of very, very high-profile cases. I think it would surprise most people probably in the room to know that in December and January just gone, 38 individuals were convicted at Crown Court for non-recent allegations of serious sexual abuse against children. Those cases simply do not hit the national newspapers. What we are seeing is cases every week come to Crown Court and people being convicted. It is only two or three weeks ago that we saw all those victims of Barry Bennell, who came out there and who were able to then talk about the relief at now seeing Barry Bennell convicted of their horrific abuse.

I know there is then another significant issue around, "Why do you invest time investigating allegations against alleged deceased offenders?" Please can I assure you that the investigations that we conduct against alleged deceased offenders should always be proportionate? I can provide you with instances where cases are reported, investigated and pretty much shut down within a couple of weeks, but of course there are more high-profile cases, where more money is invested. Ultimately, we have to make a decision on what is deemed to be proportionate. We have to look at all the salient facts and we have to get that balance right. I broadly believe that chief constables—every day, every week, every month—are getting that balance and that mix right. We are in the management of managing risk every single day.

In Wiltshire at this moment in time, I would think it would be absolutely reasonable that child protection investigations against non-recent alleged offenders are probably treading water, while assets are devoted to assisting with the terrorist attack. That is what the police service does, but please can I reassure you that reports of online abuse are being dealt



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with? I think those really significant numbers for arrests of just viewing indecent imagery alone demonstrate that.

We are then of course balancing the demand around non-recent reports and of course the interfamilial reports that we get, the peer-on-peer abuse reports that we get and the serious and organised crime effort that is going into group-based offending as well, because there are a significant number of operations that are targeting that particular form of abuse as well.

Q357 Chair: Chief Inspector Egan, do you have a view on that issue about the balance that Naz Shah asked about?

Chief Inspector Egan: Absolutely, yes. I support Mr Bailey's view, and obviously Essex have taken the same approach as Norfolk in terms of the prioritisation. We have a police online investigation team that will deal with the majority of the online referrals via CEOP or via other methods, albeit a number of other investigations do sit with local policing teams that involve indecent images as well. But it is a really fine balance in the prioritisation of that risk. Essex has prioritised child sexual exploitation and abuse. The chief has made it very clear that is our position, which is only right, but there are other daily issues that will crop up that have to take priority over other issues well. It is a tight balance every day, but we try to do our best, recognising there is always a victim at the heart of these investigations.

Q358 Naz Shah: Talking about organised crime, coming back to you, Mr Bailey, in particular, is there a national strategy around organised crime, CSE and county lines particularly? Do we have a police profile, a problem profile, in relation to that?

Chief Constable Bailey: The problem profile is now in existence. A lot of commitment is now being put into the work around county lines. As for some of the most recent analysis, it will not come as any great surprise to you at all that we are seeing significant crossovers between those children who are the subject of CSE, those children that are subjects of modern-day slavery and human trafficking, there is that overlap and there is that mix. We are now looking at how we co-ordinate our response to the threat of county lines, recognising the CSE thread running through that. We are working very closely with the NCA again, and the NCA will play an absolutely pivotal role in this. We will be taking both a national, regional and local response. We will be developing strategies across the prevent, the pursue, the protect and the prepare elements as well. All of that work is currently ongoing, being led by DAC and the Metropolitan Police Force.

Q359 Naz Shah: Do we have a national strategy on that?

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes, we do.

Q360 Naz Shah: Where do you see your problem in understanding the problem with all of that?



Chief Constable Bailey: Sorry, where do I see the—

Naz Shah: Where do you see the problem in understanding that problem of county lines, organised crime?

Will Kerr: Yes, a really important question at the moment. If I could perhaps make three quick points to help this discussion on county lines. County lines is a really good example of how we need to be careful not to over-label a problem and then miss the broader point. I think sometimes within the law enforcement and the public sector there is a tendency to label a problem, then we put in a bit of money to deal with just that problem and we come up with performance metrics that only deal with that problem. We miss the broader organised exploitation of vulnerable people, the line right across organised immigration crime, modern slavery, CSEA and a range of other violence offences involving children. We have seen this a lot around county lines, because very often we have conflated two things that we need to disaggregate a wee bit better: how the person has ended up being vulnerable in the first place and then the criminal exploitation.

Very often in county lines there are three broad key pockets in the United Kingdom at the moment, around London, sort of Birmingham and the West Midlands, and then up in the north-east or the north-west. We see that very often the victims are looked-after children, where you get a lot of displaced demand across parts of the public sector as well, as opposed to trying to identify why that looked-after child is vulnerable in the first place and then looking at the criminal exploitation of that vulnerable child, as opposed to trying to conflate it all into one and then deal with it as a single issue. It is not that straightforward. County lines are an issue that as a label sums up lots and lots of problems right across organised exploitation and vulnerable people at the moment, but the problem of itself needs to be disaggregated.

Q361 **Sarah Jones:** Just a couple of questions about training. Research published last year found that 60% of UK police officers have investigated some form of online CSE, even though most had received no specialist training. Are police officers receiving enough support and training to deal with the—

Chief Constable Bailey: There is a comprehensive package of training that is being rolled out by the College of Policing. By March of next year, we should have trained 10,000 frontline police officers. There is obviously a lot of training that is also taking place within forces as well, so forces have been putting together their own training packages. I think though, Ms Jones, it goes to the point that Dr Beckett raised. The police service, I believe, has come a long way in the last three or four years, but there is still more to be done.

I am not saying it is perfect by any stretch of the imagination at this moment in time—far from it—but there is a lot of investment that is going into the culture of dealing with vulnerability, a real focus upon the broad



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spectrum of vulnerability. I believe every call-handling centre in UK policing now is applying the THRIVE model of triaging calls, so every call we base upon threat, harm, risk, investigations, vulnerability and enforcement—sorry, engagement. Everybody is applying that principle. More and more officers are being trained, more and more officers are being deployed into this space, but there is still work to be done.

I found it disappointing when Dr Beckett was at training session last week and somebody walks in and declares, "They are not showing the signs of being a rape victim." I am sorry, that is incredibly disappointing, but there are 120,000 police officers. The investment is being made into that training. Can everybody get that training soon enough? No, of course they cannot, but—

Q362 **Sarah Jones:** How many are trained at the moment? What kind of numbers?

Chief Constable Bailey: I do not think it would be possible for me to say, because chief constables have been rolling out their own training. Within my own organisation, we have done training around domestic abuse, around rape, around modern-day slavery, around CSE, around CSA, conferences being held on an almost monthly basis. An awful lot has been put into this. However, can I sit here and say to you that everybody gets this? I can't at the moment in time. It would just be unrealistic.

Chief Inspector Egan: Just to support that, in addition to the training that Mr Bailey is talking about, Essex have rolled out a comprehensive programme of public protection awareness, which covers all the strands of public protection, which obviously includes this vital area. There is also cyber-crime training, which is led by the College of Policing. In addition, all of our investigators that deal with serious sexual crime are being trained alongside CPS colleagues, the Crown Prosecution Service, to understand some of the wider implications of going through the whole criminal justice system. We are trying to get on the same page as our CPS colleagues as well, which I think is key in this area, especially with the recent disclosure issues that are now coming to the fore in the press as well.

Q363 **Sarah Jones:** That is exactly what I was going to ask you about, those disclosure issues, and just particularly dealing with the growth in digital evidence in some of these cases. What more can we do to address that? A question to any of you.

Will Kerr: I can start with giving a sense of scale. Some of this is just a function of volume. The principal piece of legislation around disclosure, the Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996, was never designed with the scale of digital evidence in mind that we see now. A contemporary smartphone holds around about 128 gigabytes of data. That equates to—just to give you a physical illustration of that—12,800 boxes full of paper. It is the same weight as a Boeing 757. The system just isn't designed to cope with that range of digital evidence, so



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absolutely, of course we have to make sure that the system is capable of dealing consistently with the statutory disclosure obligations on it.

There have been some clear failings recently, but I think it is important to update and refresh the legislation to keep pace with the fact that everybody lives their lives digitally online now and the disclosure regime needs to reflect that.

Q364 **Sarah Jones:** Just a couple of questions to you. One of your predecessors, Jim Gamble, said recently that the Government are not investing enough in online safety, and he told the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse that the NCA chooses to spend only £14.5 million of its £450 million budget on CSEA. What is your reaction to those claims?

Will Kerr: First of all, Jim has done fantastic work in this space. He is a colleague of mine in Northern Ireland and I know how much of his time and effort and commitment he gave to CEOP, when he was running CEOP. I think his challenge is always done with the best of intent, but just to give you a sense of the out-workings of that, the figure that was talked about, the £14.6 million for the CEOP budget within the NCA, is just a very small bespoke bit of the budget. It relates to that ring-fenced budget that is just the full-time staff, which now number over 300 people in CEOP, whereas when the NCA took over CEOP in 2013, it was about 125 people. There has been a very significant investment over the last number of years. Those figures do not include the rates to the rest of the NCA, which is the reason it was brought under that bigger law enforcement family, so the rates for the other 1,000 investigators that we surge out to do bespoke CSEA operations, the comms data and all the sort of technical enablers we need as well, but I will let the figures speak for themselves.

We did a report that was sent back to the Committee. We talked about the number of industry referrals eight years ago—4,500 a year. It was over 82,000 in the last calendar year, but more importantly, the number of children safeguarded during that period has risen per year by 1,600, the number of disruptions are significantly up, and the number of people taken to court and convicted is significantly up. That is the bit that matters the most to us. Of course we can always put more resource into this area. Something that is as important as this is that we need to be constantly challenging ourselves about whether that proportionate investment is right. Jim is right to challenge the system, but my point is—and I go back to what all three of us have been saying from the outset—we can prevent far more of this at source. On the important question that Mr Ross raised earlier on, we need to be recalibrating our efforts to deal with the capabilities that we need to hunt the likes of Matthew Falder online. That was a four-year complex investigation—massive scale, worldwide reach. That is where the bigger risk factors are and that is where the system needs to start shining its light on.

Q365 **Sarah Jones:** One more question, just on budgets, the stats that the



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NCA have given us show that the vast majority of incoming online CSE cases are then sent out to local police forces. Do you think that balance is right? Do you think more should be centralised?

Will Kerr: It is about 10% to 15% of cases that we get would be disseminated out to police forces, but just to try to give you a sense of how that works, the NCA acts like a bit of a national bureau at the moment. Most of the cases come in through a charity called the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, based in North America. What happens is we triage all those cases, but those are intelligence reports that have come in. They need a lot addressed. Some might not be criminal offences. Half of those relate to what are called informationals, where it relates to adult pornography or it relates to anime or something that just is not a criminal offence.

Then by the time we go through a number of those stages, only a small proportion of those end up at criminal offences, where we can, through the IP address, resolve it to a specific individual to prosecute them. A small number of those happen to be the case. We have, I think as of two days ago, 370 live investigations that the NCA are leading in this space, but not all of those 82,000 referrals are going to end up with specific criminal investigations.

Q366 **Chair:** Roughly, of that 82,000 that come in, in terms of our focus on the work of the police, you clearly then have a task of work to sort through those cases and work out how many cases that then translates into. From that 82,000, how many individual cases of abuse or exploitation does that then mean that you then have to follow up or not follow up?

Will Kerr: Yes, absolutely. I think probably the best figure is the arrest figures, which show over the last couple of years how many people were arrested.

Q367 **Chair:** Not necessarily, because there could be a whole load of cases in between that then just drop out. There is the arrest figures at this end, there is then the number of intelligence reports that you have coming at this end. What I am interested in is the bit in the middle. How many individual cases do you think that 82,000 translates into? Then I have further questions about how many of them then get translated out to forces, how many of them get investigated and how many of them result in an arrest.

Will Kerr: Absolutely. I can start on this and then hand over to Simon, who might be able to add a bit of flavour to this. When we wrote back, after you were kind enough to come across and visit us in the last number of months, we gave a very detailed breakdown of the number of cases that came in, because it is not just industry referrals; it is reports from members of the public looking into the Click CEOP site. There are a range of other reports that come in from international law enforcement agencies. All three of those areas have been increasing quite exponentially over the last number of years.



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To give you a brief description of the process, that middle process that you have just described and asked the question about, what we do when all of those cases come in initially is grade them. There are three basic grades: is there a risk to the life of the child? We put a door in very quickly, we go and protect the child. That is what of course is most important to us. Is there evidence of ongoing serious sexual activity against the child? That is grade 2. Grade 3, where there is no evidence of current offending, those will be geo-located and most of those cases are pushed immediately out to forces, because the risk factor will be low and police forces will have their own intelligence databases that tell us if they need to act immediately.

The numbers in terms of the pursue data, I will hand over to Simon and then I will put a bit of flavour at the end.

Chief Constable Bailey: I believe I am right in saying that on average a month we are receiving in policing 1,000 of those referrals from Will's team. At this moment in time in Norfolk, I have about 35 cases outstanding. Now, that is cases that are being worked on, warrants that are being waited to be executed, but we will—

Chair: Sorry, just say that figure again. Sorry, what did you say?

Chief Constable Bailey: Thirty-five cases at this moment in time will be waiting, so they are currently in intelligence development stages, doing background checks, doing safeguarding checks, warrants that have been sworn, waiting to be acted upon. We are doing two or three warrants every week.

Q368 **Chair:** Just let me get the sense of scale. You have 82,000 reports come in: 12,000 a year—if you say it is about 1,000 a month—are then referred on to police forces?

Will Kerr: Yes, roughly that would be—

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes, that is about right.

Q369 **Chair:** The remaining 70,000, is that like just duplicate intelligence or non-child cases?

Will Kerr: Some. About half of those figures will be what we call informationals. It is a terrible description, but effectively, yes, there is no criminal offence, it is adult-based or it is anime or there are a range of other factors why the companies have sent them to us. The rest of cases, getting from that 82,000 down to the 70,000, those that are not disseminated out to police forces, there will be a lot of work done on those to try to resolve the IP address. In other words, can we put a device in the hand of an individual to criminally investigate them and see if they had downloaded the image or they possess it on their machine? That sounds very straightforward. In investigative terms, it absolutely is not. There will be lots of layers of attrition within that.



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I am at the bounds of my technical knowledge here around IP addresses, but effectively, the companies that give us the detail around an internet protocol address, some will give us detail that deals with their wi-fi bandwidth, so there will be lots of different IP addresses in there. Then when we go out to hit the house, sometimes it will be multiple-occupancy housing, so if it relates to that whole wi-fi band, we cannot put a device with an internet protocol address in the specific individual hands.

But on top of the police figures, the fact that we have 370 live investigations within the NCA at the moment that deal with the higher-risk end of those offences—so, the transnational child sex offenders and those that have a connection across multiple police forces in the United Kingdom—gives you a sense of that attrition rate from more or lesser. It is not a complete comparator, but from the 70,000 cases that are not disseminated out to forces and what we currently have running, if that helps.

Q370 Chair: What I think would be really useful is if you were able to put together almost a sense of the flow diagram, so you have the 82,000 intelligence reports, and of those, how many duplicate information, not relevant and so on; how many of them you are just not able to resolve, and that may get back to the heart of some of the co-operation from the tech companies or what else you need; how many of them you then keep in CEOP or in the NCA to investigate centrally; and then the number that are passed on to forces. It would just be useful to know in terms of the attrition issues where they are getting stuck and why, which of them are legitimate reasons, because they are duplicate cases, which of them are problems in terms of other organisations stopping you and which of them become resource and priority issues in terms of the pressures on policing. Given that our starting point in this inquiry was looking at what the new pressures on policing are that you then need to respond to, that would be extremely helpful.

Will Kerr: We will absolutely do that.

Q371 Chair: Just to follow on, you have 1,000 a month, or the 12,000 a year, that then arrive with police forces, and that then currently translates into around 400 arrests a month—is that right?

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes, but there are other sources that we will use to identify those. On average, there are 438 arrests that are taking place every month and in the region of 700 children every month being safeguarded.

Q372 Chair: That will include not just the intelligence that is coming from the NCA and the referrals from the NCA; that will also include the local referrals or other—

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes, there are other systems.

Q373 Chair: Of course. What would be quite useful, again in terms of that information plan, would be to then add in those figures—so, the figures



that you are getting in terms of local referrals—so that we can understand that.

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes. Can I just say that 438 is the latest figure? That goes up every quarter, simply because of the volumes of referrals that are coming into policing that we are having to deal with, which is resulting then in arrests being made.

Q374 **Chair:** I have raised this with you before, but that number of arrests still seems very small compared to the arrests for other kinds of offences. If you look at the arrests for theft, if you look at arrests for criminal damage and so on, there are 10 times as many arrests for criminal damage.

Chief Constable Bailey: Two points. I know I drew an awful lot of adverse criticism for that article in *The Times*. That article was very much based upon my real frustration and concerns that we are simply letting victims down, because I now have victims waiting to get into Crown Court for two, two and a half years. I have victims that are simply disengaging because they are so disenchanted with the criminal justice system. When you look at the amount of Crown Court time with contested trials, it is now, I believe, in the region of 50% plus that are contested trials around sex cases, so it is taking longer to get decisions to charge, because the CPS are having to deal with such volumes. It is taking longer for trials to come to fruition and I am seeing victims not getting the service that I believe that they deserve.

To go to the heart of your point around, “You are still arresting drink-drivers, people for shoplifting and criminal damage,” they are just being dealt with within the general flow of every day. Ronnie and my colleagues are going out on duty; there will be x number of police officers in Norwich this morning, or Chelmsford this morning, who will go and deal with reports of a drink-drive or a criminal damage or a theft. Those numbers would be out there simply to be able to respond to the demand that is coming in. Those cases can be dealt with incredibly quickly. A warrant for somebody involving the viewing of indecent imagery, there is likely to be between five or six officers are likely to go that address, we will be seizing multiple devices. There are all the safeguarding issues and concerns that come to the fore. You could spend a whole day just dealing with one job. There is a world of difference, Chair, between a straightforward theft from shops, a drink-driver or criminal damage in comparison to these really complex cases. When you look at the complexity of these, just to give you an example: the number of suicides that we have associated with this activity; the risk assessment that we are having to undertake around the alleged offender; the impact that is then having on the wife, the partner, the children, which cannot be underestimated; the demand that it is placing upon us and the complexity in comparison to the cases that you refer to. Simply, they are polar extremes.

Q375 **Chair:** But it goes to the heart of our questions when we started this



inquiry: that crime is changing and the kinds of crimes that you are now having to deal with are more complex and also more resource intensive.

Chief Constable Bailey: Yes, but again, can I say, go back into Norwich 20 years ago, you would be having, on average, 100 burglaries a month. Now those figures are a tiny, tiny percentage of that. Norwich in one month went down to 12 burglaries. You look at theft of motor vehicle, theft from motor vehicle, the crime has changed. What we have seen is your acquisitive crime, your serious acquisitive crime, it changed. We now see a far greater volume in terms of that exploitation and vulnerability, so detectives that were originally investigating your thefts, your burglaries, that type of crime, now have been diverted into child protection teams, into online teams to be able to deal with that threat.

Chair: Apologies, Sarah, I interrupted you, I think, and you wanted to complete your question.

Q376 **Sarah Jones:** Yes, just one more question. You might not have an answer, but CEOP's head of safeguarding said recently that online CSEA offenders are becoming more sophisticated. Where do you think future trends in offending behaviour are going and what can be done now to guard against that?

Will Kerr: Yes, it is deeply worrying. I suppose it goes back to Mr Ross's original question. Matthew Falder is a good example. He was a Cambridge academic. He was convicted there and got 32 years a number of weeks ago, but he perfectly illustrated just the risk factors and the international and truly global scale of offenders who can operate in the dark web with levels of encryption that it took us four years to catch him. We had to develop our own capabilities to catch him. As well, we led a taskforce of a number of different international law enforcement agencies, 15 UK police forces and had support from GCHQ and a range of other partners and assets, and it still took us four years to catch him. Matthew Falder is not a unique offender. He is one of many thousands of people who occupy a genre of offending. His was called hurtcore, where it wasn't just the abuse he wanted to engage in; he wanted to cause the maximum humiliation and degradation and abuse to his victim at the same time. We know of at least 300 victims worldwide that he had contacted, 45 on the actual indictment form.

The fact that most of the offending, most of the imagery is on the open web, of course there is a volume of demand that we can deal with in different ways. I will not rehearse what I have said before about our engagement with the tech sector, but that very high-risk type of offending, as experienced and illustrated on the dark web by Matthew Falder, is where policing needs to recalibrate its efforts and accelerate its investment and capabilities that allow us to keep ahead of these people. It is not only a one-off investment that is going to work. Every three, four months now we are having to look at the capabilities we have to keep up with these very, very technically sophisticated offenders, who are



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constantly, constantly trying to stay ahead of our attempts to catch them.

It is a deeply worrying space, but it is one in which I do not think we have put enough effort or thought. I mean the system as a whole, not just law enforcement, because we have been consumed by a capacity issue of dealing with that volume demand that we think is preventable. More importantly, it is going to stop lots of young children becoming exploited and abused. That is the more important factor.

Chief Constable Bailey: A really good example is the Periscope app, in that children are now taking the Periscope app, they will put it on in the bedroom and they will livestream what they are doing after school. It then just becomes an incredible opportunity for people that have a sexual interest in children to go into their feed and to groom them. Now, we had not seen that six to 12 months ago, but children now have access to all these different types of livestreaming apps, and then all of a sudden the threat has changed. That is why we are playing a game of catch-up all the time. We are having to look at new and emerging threats, we are having to adjust our capability and capacity to be able to deal with it, because we recognise that it is just not static.

Chief Inspector Egan: I obviously support what has been said there, but with regard to the children using those apps, it is trying to educate the parents. My local officers that will be dealing with the victims and obviously looking for the perpetrators and working with partners to work through the strategy, it is trying to get engagement from the parents or their guardians, accepting a number of victims are in care, but there are a number of victims that aren't, especially on the online space. I know it came up in the academics' panel, but education is going to be a key part of how we move forward. Schools in my area are doing a lot. We have a forum where this information is shared. I think there is a lot more to try to get parents to understand the risks that their children are facing by their online tech awareness, which is obviously a lot better than we were at their age.

Q377 **Douglas Ross:** I apologise, Mr Kerr, I did not see you in the Public Gallery when I was asking my questions to the first panel. I probably did not put it across as well as I could have done in terms of one of the examples you gave us when we visited the NCA, so I want to come back to that. The dark web seems to be far too easy to get into. When we were shown, it was just a couple of clicks, you were in there, and it does just look like your Amazon or whatever. Does the Government or law enforcement need to do more to make it more difficult to access or is that sometimes a problem, if you make it more difficult to access, it is then also more difficult to police?

Also the other point I was trying to get across was that it is not just about the dark web, because I was trying to remember that—I think it was Backpage you had mentioned, which is not dark web, because they advertise all these other things. Is that correct?



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Will Kerr: Yes. Vivastreet was that particular one.

Douglas Ross: So there are examples of websites anyone could come across without even entering the dark web that are advertising these services. What more do you do, dark web and these other websites?

Will Kerr: It is a real challenge, not least around the dark web, because it is not illegal per se of course to go on to the dark web, but you have to question why somebody is wanting to hide their activities and hide the services and material they are trying to download and the way they can do that. There are very specific and specialist search engines that will give you access on to the dark web. There have been a range—

Q378 **Douglas Ross:** Although we were shown just Google, you could type “dark web” into Google.

Will Kerr: It is certainly not difficult to find at all. We are interested in the offending that the dark web facilitates, and there is a lot of it. We should be worried about it. It is a higher-risk level of offending, where they have international communities of offenders, like Matthew Falder and others, who are actively sharing paedophile manuals, actively sharing techniques and tactics to groom children online, who move between the dark web and the open web. What Falder was doing was he was going on the pro-anorexia websites to target vulnerable young girls, he was going on to Gumtree and targeting young girls who were advertising dog-walking and babysitting services and then grooming them over a period of a month. Then he got one indecent photograph of one of them, then exploiting and blackmailing them over a protracted period of time and getting them to do a series of increasingly sickening things and sickening abuse.

The point I am clumsily trying to get to is that it needs a joined-up strategy that deals with both. I do not think we can neatly disaggregate criminal activity in the dark web from what is happening on the open web, and the ability of those offenders to move between the two very easily is where law enforcement needs to accelerate its capabilities to keep up with those people—so, to have good enough intelligence to understand the range of offending on the dark web, but to have good enough capabilities to be able to keep up with them. The relationship that the NCA has developed—you will understand I will not talk about it in too much detail in an open forum—with GCHQ has been critical in our understanding of what is going on in the dark web and what we can realistically do to try to disrupt the threat posed by criminals who use the dark web to facilitate their activity.

Q379 **Douglas Ross:** I am just going to pose this. I was concerned with the previous panel—and I did recognise they were experts and they had given us really good evidence and I commend them for that—if I just read out their titles or who they were representing: the International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking; the Director of the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse; the CEO of



the Lucy Faithfull Foundation; and the Corporation Director of Strategy and Performance, Barnardo's. They had a real reticence and were unwilling to comment on this, because they believe it is a law enforcement issue, but does that not get to the root of the problem, that if we just think this is a policing issue and other people involved in this despicable act do not really—*[Interruption.]* Your image will be caught on the camera behind, Mr Kerr. *[Laughter.]* I am really not trying to be critical of our previous panel, but I am just trying to see, how do we widen out the knowledge of the dark web, the knowledge of what is happening online, to ensure that, whether people are experts or not, we realise the problems that are associated with this and we do not just say, "That is a law enforcement issue, police or NCA can deal with it"?

Will Kerr: I think the three of us were nodding vigorously when you were making that comment. Can I say very quickly, it goes to the heart of the Chair's question about the future responsibilities in policing, particularly around this space of the relationship between preventing vulnerability in other parts of the public sector and then dealing effectively with the criminal exploitation when it happens. It is perfectly illustrated by this point. We have a strategy to deal with serious and organised crime that is based around the four Ps, of which pursue is only one part. What we have done is we have put far too much of the responsibility on the system as a whole, not least around this exponential increase in indecent imagery of children, into the pursuit space. We have not put enough cross-sectoral thought into how we prevent and protect our children in the first place.

This problem is not going to get any better any time soon. Simon quoted at the beginning the Canadian work that talks about 80,000 unique new images that we are finding every single month. This is a tide that is just going to continue to come in, so it needs a fundamentally different preventative approach, how we engage with the education and health and social sector to protect. CEOP are now having to start developing education packages for three to four-year-olds, from four to seven-year-olds, because that is the type of age-appropriate education that we are having to develop. That should not be done just by policing or law enforcement. It is something that needs a far wider joined-up cross-Government strategy.

Q380 **Douglas Ross:** Elaine McConnell said in the previous panel—and it has also reportedly been said by CEOP's Head of Safeguarding—that you cannot arrest your way out of online sexual exploitation and abuse. What are the alternatives to arrest that you would deem to be appropriate for individuals possessing indecent images?

Will Kerr: Simon has touched on this, and we will add some more detail. I think the point they were trying to make, though, was that we should not place all the responsibility in that one P, pursue, in what should be a full-system response, including prevent and prepare, but I think Simon can give you a more detailed response.



Chief Constable Bailey: I think, Mr Ross, the circumstances under which I made those comments, it was absolutely based around that frustration I previously talked about at witnesses being let down, my real frustration that so much of this is preventable, and also looking at the facts as they are presented as of today: 23% of men—and it is almost exclusively men—that view indecent imagery of children receive a custodial sentence; 77% receive some other form of sanction. There is no rehabilitation involved anywhere, so they go to prison and there is no rehabilitation whatsoever for people that view indecent imagery. What are we doing? It feels like Will and I are just on this wheel, that we are arresting 438 men every month, and that is just for viewing indecent imagery. We are processing them and 77% receive nothing more than a suspended sentence or some form of community service order. There is no rehabilitation at all.

All the time our resources are tied up dealing with that volume, which could be absolutely preventable, and is preventable, through the things that Will described earlier in the session around the Kitemarked sites, around technology, taking images down and preventing them being uploaded. It gives us the time and the space to start targeting those people that are using the dark web and are anonymising their work. My passion around this is trying to do my level best to protect as many children as possible. At this moment in time, I genuinely feel on occasions it is just like King Canute. The fact is, when you just look at those referrals, you look at the numbers just increasing and increasing and you just look at it, and you just think so much of this is preventable. The people that are causing untold damage, who have a level of sophistication about the work that they are doing, are not being targeted in the way that they should be being targeted.

Now, my thrust was we need to have a debate, and I was proposing some alternatives, because less than a third are getting a custodial sentence. There is no rehabilitation. We need, as law enforcement, to be given the time and the space to target those individuals that you cannot block and you cannot prevent from doing it because they are so sophisticated, and we take the volume out. That was the thrust of my argument.

Q381 **Douglas Ross:** But how do you get over the problems that you have encountered in terms of the reaction to these comments and the public perception that you are not going soft on these issues?

Chief Constable Bailey: I am absolutely not going soft and I genuinely—

Douglas Ross: No, and I am not accusing you of that. I am saying there has been and there will be a public perception that if you do not lock these people up and throw away the key, we are going soft on them. This is an issue that affects families for generations. If the message then gets out, “Even law enforcement are not treating this as seriously as they could,” it causes a bigger problem. People just don’t bother reporting



these things if they do not think ultimately there is going to be great sanctions at the end. How do you overcome that public perception?

Chief Constable Bailey: I think we need to keep banging the drum around how much of this is preventable. It goes to those three asks that Will outlined at the start of this session, in terms of what I think the technology companies can do. But also I think it comes down to the point I was trying to raise in that article. There needs to be some form of debate, and it might be around language. I think the word "caution" implies that you are just getting nothing more than a slap on the wrist. A conditional caution can have significant conditions attached to it, and if they are not adhered to, then you go back before the Crown Court.

But ultimately those people, we should be trying to put some form of rehabilitation in place. They should be being forced to attend a course, which they would probably pay for, so they could address their offending behaviour, because when you interview these offenders, they do not see themselves victimising the victim who has had the image taken. They just see it as, "Well, I'm not doing any harm." They are doing untold harm, but they do not understand it. There is a group of offenders out there as well that do not understand they are committing a criminal offence. When you look at the most prolific offending block viewing indecent imagery, it is the 18 to 24-year-olds, because they do not understand the law.

Forgive me, I do not want to get on my soapbox here, so I will turn it down a bit. So much of this is preventable, but at this moment in time the system is failing, because so many people do not have to confront their offending behaviour. They receive no real sanction, in my eyes, whatsoever. It probably comes down to some form of language. Conditional cautions might not be the best language, but if there was some form of supervision order put in place, whereby they still become a registered sex offender, they still have to attend some form of rehabilitation course and they still have to confront their offending, then we might start to deal with the volume end, but only if we fail to take it out in the first place, because so much of this is preventable.

Q382 **Douglas Ross:** Finally, if I can, Chair, what response did you get from victims? Did any victims get in touch and say that your suggestions, what you were floating, were harmful towards them?

Chief Constable Bailey: I think there was some correspondence that came into my Police and Crime Commissioner's office, one of whom was a victim. I went and saw that victim and I explained what I was trying to do. But you see, if you were to leave here and go and stand on Westminster Bridge and ask 100 people what happens to 100 men caught for viewing indecent imagery of children, I think the vast majority would turn around and say, "They go to prison, don't they?" I am sorry, no, they don't: 23% go to prison. The vast majority do not receive a custodial sentence. I understand the desire that all paedophiles should be



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locked up and the key should be thrown away for life from a lot of people, from the general public, but that is not the real world.

Q383 **Chair:** We are obviously going to need to wrap up, because we have a series of Divisions now, which is an occupational hazard for Members of Parliament. I wanted to thank you for the evidence that you have given us and for the patience that you have shown as well. There will be a series of things with further information that would be very helpful to us, both in terms of some of the data and some of the information. I think on some of the points, Chief Constable Bailey, that you were referring to at the end, the issue is a concern about cases not being investigated or cases not being pursued through the criminal justice system. I think that is the concern. You are making a slightly different point here.

Chief Constable Bailey: I am making a very different point, yes.

Chair: That would be very helpful to clarify. It would also be useful to know the final question that I was going to ask you all, which was that if you were starting from here and you were designing a police force now, given these sorts of challenges that you face, I think you would design it in a very different way to the force that you have inherited, built up to deal with all kinds of very different crimes. It would be very useful to have your reflections on what that new approach would be. We heard, when we were taking evidence on online fraud, views about a very different model of policing if you were starting from scratch now, in terms of the relationship between the central and local and other forms. It would be very useful to have your written reflections on that. I am sorry, we do not have time for any further issues. Thank you very much.