



HOUSE OF LORDS

Library Note

Debate on 25 October: Looked-after Children

This Library Note provides background reading for the debate to be held on Thursday 25 October:

“the standards of service for looked-after children and, in particular, the Government’s response to changes in residential childcare in the light of recent child protection failures”

It considers recent analysis of the standards of service received by looked-after children and what measures have been undertaken to improve these standards. It also considers what inadequacies might be identified in the provision of care for looked-after children in residential settings following the prosecution of members of an organised gang based in Rochdale which targeted children in care homes.

Edward Scott
22 October 2012
LLN 2012/036

House of Lords Library Notes are compiled for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords and their personal staff, to provide impartial, politically balanced briefing on subjects likely to be of interest to Members of the Lords. Authors are available to discuss the contents of the Notes with the Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

Any comments on Library Notes should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to brocklehursta@parliament.uk.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Looked-After Children in the UK	1
3. Government Policy Since 1945	1
4. Care Homes in England	2
5. Sexual Exploitation of Looked-After Children.....	3
6. Recent Cases of Localised Grooming of Children	5
7. Government Response to the Convictions in the Rochdale Case.....	6
8. Parliamentary Scrutiny	7
9. Joint Inquiry into Children Who Go Missing from Care	8
10. Press Reaction	9
11. Reaction from Campaign Groups and Charities.....	10

1. Introduction

This Library Note considers recent analysis of the standards of service received by looked-after children and what measures have been undertaken to improve these standards. It also considers what inadequacies might be identified in the provision of care for looked-after children in residential settings following the prosecution of members of an organised gang based in Rochdale which targeted children in care homes.

2. Looked-After Children in the UK

The terms 'looked-after children' and 'children in care' include children placed by a local authority with family members, foster carers or in a residential care home. They also include those placed in care through a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or by a voluntary agreement with the child's parents under section 20 of the Act. The terms can also be used to refer to children entered into police protection and those involved in the youth justice system.

Statistics on children who are looked after by local authorities in England are provided by the House of Commons Library in their publication *Children in Care in England: Statistics* (May 2012, [SN4470](#)). This briefing states that in the year ending 31 March 2011, a total of 65,520 children were looked after by local authorities in England (p 2). The majority of these children, 74 percent, were in foster care placements. The House of Commons Library briefing also includes data on the outcomes for children in care.

3. Government Policy Since 1945

A series of Acts passed since the Second World War have given greater oversight of care services for children to local authorities. Major reform of the care system for children was prompted in 1945 by the death of a child, Dennis O'Neill, following his abuse and neglect at a foster home. The Children Act 1948, enacted following the recommendation of the Curtis Report, placed a duty on local authorities to care for those in need and to provide oversight of care services.

Further Acts were passed in the following decades, including the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, which authorised local authorities to spend money in order to prevent children being moved into care, and the Children Act 1975, which introduced measures to make it easier for children to be adopted.

The Children Act 1989 established the legal framework in which the modern care system now operates. The aim of the Act was to put the emphasis on the family as being the best means of looking after children and to create a care system which was primarily a service for parents (Department for Education, [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations—Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review](#), March 2010, p 2).

In the 1990s, a series of child abuse scandals in residential homes in England and Wales led to enquiries carried out by Sir William Utting (1997) and Sir Ronald Waterhouse (2000). Following the failings identified in care services by these reports, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 was passed. This Act replaced the Adoption Act 1976 and put a greater emphasis on adoption as a route out of care.

A series of measures implemented in the late 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century have increased the duty of care required of local authorities to looked-after children. The 1998 Quality Protects Programme included measures to monitor and

prevent the excessive movement of children between care placements. It also introduced the concept of 'corporate parenting', that the local authority had a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that parents should provide for their own children. Further Acts, including the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children Act 2004, increased further the number of duties on local authorities to improve care standards for looked-after children.

A more detailed chronology of the development of the care system up to 2009 is provided in the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee report, [Looked-after Children](#) (March 2009, Session 2008–09, HC 111).

The current Government stated in March 2011 in their response to the Committee's *Looked-after Children* report ([Looked-after Children: Further Government Response to the Third Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2008–09](#), Fifth Special Report of Session 2010–11, HC 924) that they agreed with its conclusion that the outcomes and experiences of young people in care who have been looked after remained poor (p 1). One of the measures that the Government has undertaken to improve care for looked-after children was to commission a review conducted by Professor Eileen Munro. The aim of the review was to identify how to enable professionals to make the best judgments they could to protect vulnerable children. The review produced its [final report](#) in May 2011.

Sonia Jackson in her article '[Looking After Children Away From Home, Past and Present](#)' (Chase, Simon and Jackson (eds), *In Care and After: a Positive Perspective*, 2006, pp 9–25) identified a tension which runs throughout the history of child care between "the aim of protecting children and young people from ill treatment and undesirable influences and the ideal of family preservation and reunification" (p 16). She argued that the Acts passed following the Second World War have broadly followed a pattern of repeatedly changing the balance between these two competing aims.

A Demos report, commissioned by Barnardo's, [In Loco Parentis](#) (2010), also identified a pendulum movement in the history of the care system between the 'preventative' approach, which sees the purpose of care as supporting families and enabling children to remain with or return to their birth parents, and the 'permanency' approach in which the purpose of care should be to safeguard children and provide them with permanency beyond the birth family. These two approaches have both focused on the need to minimise a child's exposure to the care system. The report argued that instead of pursuing this pendulum shift, public care should be used proactively to provide early support before a family reached crisis point. It also recommended that while permanent care should be found at an early stage for those children who cannot be returned to their families, the system should also provide stability for children for whom a permanent approach is not the solution (p 10).

4. Care Homes in England

As at 31 March 2012, there were 2,074 registered children's homes in England offering 11,765 places and 16 secure children's homes, providing 281 places. Of these homes, 36 percent provided places for between one and three children, 31 percent provided places for four or five children, and 33 percent could accommodate six or more children (Ofsted's submission to the Children's Commissioner, [Emerging Findings of the Inquiry Into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups](#), July 2012, p 25).

The BBC News website has reported that, according to Ofsted figures, the English region with the largest number of children's homes was the North West:

Children's Homes by English Region		
Area	Homes	Secure Homes
North West	514	3
West Midlands	335	0
South East	268	3
South West	210	2
Yorkshire and Humber	186	2
East Midlands	165	2
East of England	159	2
London	130	0
North East	107	2
TOTAL	2,074	16

Source: BBC News website, '[Care Home Reforms Aim to Halt Child Sex Abuse](#)', (3 July 2012)

In his response to a written question on the placement of significant numbers of looked-after children in East Kent, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Lord Hill of Oareford, stated that the Government were considering urgent measures to address the disproportionate placement of looked-after children in homes concentrated in particular parts of the country (HL *Hansard*, 16 July 2012, col [WA3](#)).

The Barnardo's report *In Loco Parentis* identified that one of the factors necessary for the care system to work in a positive way for children was the need for stability during care. This was identified as an effective means of preventing these children from growing up in a disruptive environment and to ensure that they experienced continuity in their schooling. There is recent evidence that some children in care are experiencing increased disruption to their living arrangements. Ofsted's [Children's Care Monitor 2011](#) (February 2012), the report of its annual survey of children in care, found that while most children had experienced just one change of placement in their life in care so far, the experience of a minority who changed placements a great deal had increased the average number of placements for children in care to five. This was an increase on the average for the last three years, which had been four placements.

Although some children interviewed said that a change of placement had been beneficial for them, this was not always the case:

... some of the children we help through our individual children's casework tell us that they are told they are being moved to a new placement when they do not think this is the best thing for them. This is sometimes because of the cost of their placement, or because their placement was not planned to be for a long time even though it has worked out well for them.

(p 45)

5. Sexual Exploitation of Looked-After Children

A series of reports published in the last two years has found that the extent of child sexual exploitation is wider than generally accepted to be the case. Tim Loughton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, in his evidence to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, stated that cases of abuse were "coming from any part of the country... from all different communities and different social sets as

well” (Uncorrected transcript of oral evidence to be published as [HC 182–ii](#), session 2012–13). However, it has also been identified that looked-after children are at a higher risk of abuse than other children.

Barnardo’s, in their report [Puppet on a String: the Urgent Need to Cut Children Free from Sexual Exploitation](#) (January 2011), stated that looked-after children were more at risk from sexual exploitation:

We also know that some groups of young people are more vulnerable to targeting by the perpetrators of sexual exploitation. These include children living in care, particularly residential care, those who are excluded from mainstream school and those who misuse drugs and alcohol. Barnardo’s is concerned that these children are increasingly being targeted by abusers who are developing more sophisticated grooming techniques.

(p 7)

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), in their 2011 report [Out of Mind, Out of Sight: Breaking Down the Barriers to Understanding Child Sexual Exploitation](#), stated that a disproportionate number of sexually exploited young people were looked after by the local authority, before or during exploitation. In the submissions they received from professionals working with the victims of child sexual abuse they found offenders were often reported to have deliberately exploited the vulnerabilities of their victims, such as disengagement from their families or family difficulties, detachment from services, or challenging or criminal behaviour (p 11).

In October 2011 the University of Bedfordshire published ‘[What’s going on to Safeguard Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation? How Local Partnerships Respond to Child Sexual Exploitation](#)’. The research looked at the implementation of the previous Government’s *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation* statutory guidance. This guidance was published in 2009 following the recommendations made by Lord Laming in [The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report](#) (March 2009). The University of Bedfordshire found that only a quarter of Local Safeguarding Children Boards in England were implementing this guidance. The report also identified that there was a high number of young people who were vulnerable to sexual exploitation while accommodated in residential care:

Qualitative evidence and previous research show that, unless specifically trained and managed to prevent child sexual exploitation, residential units can increase a young person’s vulnerability to abuse.

(p 6)

In November 2011 the Government published their [Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan](#), a plan to coordinate the work of national and local government, the police and local care providers. The *Action Plan* stated that it is a commonly held myth that child sexual exploitation only happens to children who are in care, in the same way that it was a myth that it only happened to those who come from a ‘bad’ family, or are of a particular race or religion. However, the *Action Plan* referred to the findings of Barnardo’s, the University of Bedfordshire and the CEOP to assert that looked-after children are at a particular risk.

6. Recent Cases of Localised Grooming of Children

On 8 May 2012, nine men were convicted for their part in a network centred around Rochdale, which was responsible for the sexual exploitation of children. Following the convictions Greater Manchester Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and Rochdale Social Services apologised for the failings which enabled these abuses to take place. One feature of this case was that the gang had targeted vulnerable children, many of whom were in care homes.

The characteristics of the exploitation which was conducted by this group conformed to the definition of 'localised grooming' provided by the CEOP in their report *Out of Mind, Out of Sight*:

'Localised grooming' is a form of sexual exploitation—previously referred to as 'on street grooming' in the media—where children have been groomed and sexually exploited by an offender, having initially met in a location outside their home. This location is usually in public, such as a park, cinema, on the street or at a friend's house. Offenders often act together, establishing a relationship with a child or children before sexually exploiting them. Some victims of 'street grooming' may believe that the offender is in fact an older 'boyfriend'; these victims introduce their peers to the offender group who might then go on to be sexually exploited as well. Abuse may occur at a number of locations within a region and on several occasions. 'Localised grooming' was the term used by CEOP in the intelligence requests issued to police forces and other service agencies in order to define the data we wished to receive.

(p 7)

The Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board published in September 2012 its own [review](#) of the response by agencies of Rochdale Borough Council to cases of child sexual exploitation. The review found that, while some organisations were consistently supportive in their response, there had been no co-ordinated response by agencies. This had led to repeated missed opportunities to prevent abuse from happening. Another reason given for these failings was the deficient training of front-line staff. For example, agencies such as Early Break, the young people's drug and alcohol advisory service, and the Crisis Intervention Team, which provided one-to-one advice to vulnerable young people in respect of their sexual health, both provided support to the children affected:

However, for those children who came into contact with children's social care, it often appeared that 'no further action' would be taken. Case files state that the children were often considered to be 'making their own choices' and to be 'engaging in consensual sexual activity'. The poor response by children's social care to cases where children were at risk of sexual exploitation was aggravated by the fact that professionals did not make consistent reference to the procedures for dealing with vulnerable young people or to guidance about working with young people engaging in underage sexual activity.

(p 9)

Following the broadcast of the ITV documentary '[Exposure, the Other Side of Jimmy Savile](#)' on 3 October 2012, a number of allegations of child sexual exploitation by the late television presenter have been made. The allegations include that Savile abused looked-after children: '[Jimmy Savile 'abused girl, 12, in Leeds care home](#)', BBC News website, 12 October 2012; and '[Jimmy Savile linked with Haut de la Garenne children's home scandal](#)', *Guardian* website, 9 October 2012. On 19 October 2012 Scotland Yard

launched a criminal investigation. The NSPCC have referred to the police 136 calls received by their helpline which directly related to allegations of abuse by Savile. Peter Watt, head of the NSPCC's helpline, has stated "it's now looking possible that Jimmy Savile was one the most prolific sex offenders the NSPCC has ever come across" (['Jimmy Savile child abuse inquiry—136 calls referred to police'](#), 19 October 2012).

7. Government Response to the Convictions in the Rochdale Case

Following the convictions, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, published a statement outlining the actions being taking by the Government to combat child sexual exploitation. This included the publication of new guidance for front-line practitioners on what to do if they suspected that a child was being sexually exploited, and the bringing forward of urgent inspections by Ofsted on a number of homes where information received suggested concerns about the sexual exploitation of residents. The Secretary of State also announced the publication of a progress report on the implementation of the [Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan](#) launched in November 2011 (HC *Hansard*, 3 July 2012, [45–6WS](#)).

On the same day as the statement from the Secretary of State, an emergency report was published by the Children's Commissioner for England following a request from the Secretary of State. This outlined the findings so far in the inquiry into child sexual exploitation by gangs and groups, with a specific focus on the issue of children in care. The accelerated report, [Emerging Findings of the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups](#) (July 2012), was published nine months into a two year long inquiry. It stated that, although the full data analysis was not yet complete, according to the findings they had made so far, they believed that the sexual exploitation of children was widespread. The report stated that while the majority of children who are sexually exploited are living in their family home, a disproportionate number of victims are living in care homes. Of the submissions to the inquiry which specifically provided data on individual children's care status, 21 percent of children identified as being sexually exploited were in the care system. This compared to a figure of 20 percent previously published by the University of Bedfordshire and 35 percent from the CEOP (pp 3 and 13). The Children's Commissioner stated that more detailed information on the groups at risk from sexual exploitation would be published in later reports.

The Children's Commissioner's report stated that children in care were particularly vulnerable as "children may be in care as a result of child sexual exploitation or may be vulnerable to child sexual exploitation due to histories of intra-familial abuse and neglect which resulted in their care placement". They may also be vulnerable as a result of multiple placement breakdowns "reducing children and young people's ability to feel loved or form close relationships".

The Children's Commissioner's report also identified that there had been recommendations from across the literature on children's residential care for "more consistent support and training for staff working in children's residential care":

The benefits of reflective practice, both with foster carers and those working in residential care are routinely considered by researchers who, above all else, place the quality of the relationships between staff and children as the most effective tool for keeping children safe from harm.

(p 8)

8. Parliamentary Scrutiny

In June 2012, the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into localised child grooming. In his evidence to the Committee on 3 July 2012, the then Minister Tim Loughton responded to some of the questions about the failure to provide a proper standard of care for looked-after children. He stated, when asked who was at fault given the extent of child exploitation, that:

... the awareness of this problem among the public, but also among professionals, whose duty it is to be able to take measures to avoid it and to deal with it, was remarkably low... that is why I brought together a whole range of interested parties from the police, from children's organisations, from Children's Services Departments, from five Government Departments, to work on what then became the Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan in November last year.

When asked about the cost of providing services for children in care, Mr Loughton stated that the bill for children in care overall was 'about £2.8 billion and of that £1 billion, thereabouts, is being spent on looking after up to 5,000 children who will be in residential children's homes within a year'. On the issue of value for money, Mr Loughton stated:

The point I also want to make is I do not want to tar all residential homes with the same brush, and a lot of those homes are providing very specialist services to children with very severe disabilities or very severe behavioural problems, who are not physically capable of getting involved in some of the problems we are talking about here. But there are a great many of them for whom we are paying a not inconsiderable amount of money for whom I do not think we are getting value for money, but more importantly, I do not think they are nearly as safe as they need to be.

Mr Loughton also stated that one of the priorities for the Government should be to improve training for the workforce in residential care:

There is no one single bullet but we need to raise awareness across all sorts of professionals and make sure the appropriate training is there and in terms of residential home workers, again one of the things we are flagging up today and one of the task and finish working groups we are setting up is about the quality of children's residential homes and inevitably the quality and the skillset of the people working within those homes, and the skills of those people. There are some very good ones, some very dedicated ones, but if you are working in an equivalent home in the Continent you would need a graduate level qualification. You don't need such qualification to work in a home here and that is something we are looking at very closely.

He concluded that the Government was not at present getting value for money in the care homes system:

It is a pretty shambolic system anyway because there is a lot of spot purchasing that goes on, a lot of these kids end up in children's homes as a sort of last resort rather than being put through a more advanced and early planning system, which it needs to be.

I do not know whether we need to take more children into care or fewer children into care, or that we need to have more in children's homes or fewer. What I do know is we need to have the right children in the most appropriate settings and

that is not happening at the moment, which is what our work announced today is intended to get to the bottom of and use a large amount of public money rather more efficiently but, more importantly, rather more effectively to make those children safer.

(Uncorrected transcript of oral evidence to be published as [HC 182-ii](#), session 2012–13)

9. Joint Inquiry into Children Who Go Missing from Care

In June 2012, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the APPG for Looked-after Children and Care Leavers published the [report](#) of their joint inquiry into children who go missing from care. The report argued that the Government was under-reporting the number of children going missing from care. While the official figure for 2011 was 930, the report argues that, according to police data, an estimated 10,000 individual children went missing. The report cited that this high number was symptomatic of a care system which was far from being fit for purpose and in need of an urgent rethink.

The then Minister Tim Loughton, in his evidence to the Home Affairs Committee on 3 July 2012, argued that both these figures for the number of children who go missing were unreliable and that both over-report the number. He stated that this was a matter being investigated by his Department (Uncorrected transcript of oral evidence to be published as [HC 182-ii](#), session 2012–13).

The joint report was also critical of the way in which many working in the care system had failed to protect children in care:

Professionals are failing some children by not picking up the signs of abuse or exploitation. The Inquiry heard that some professionals perceive these children as ‘troublesome’, ‘promiscuous’, ‘criminals’ or indeed ‘slags who knew what they were getting themselves into’ rather than extremely vulnerable young people in need of support.

(APPG for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the APPG for Looked-after Children and Care Leavers, ‘Report from the Joint Enquiry into Children who go Missing from Care’, June 2012, pp 9–10)

The report stated that there had also been failures of placement planning. They cited evidence from Elise Noblet, Senior Project Worker at the Children’s Society that ‘often children are placed in care settings because there is a bed there rather than due to proper care planning’. They also cited evidence from Jonathan Stanley, Principal Partner for the National Centre for English Residential Child Care, who told the inquiry that placement decisions were not always made by a child’s social worker but could come instead from commissioning colleagues in the local authority. The report made the following recommendation concerning the placement of children:

Planning placements for vulnerable young children must be centred on that child’s needs, not based on what is cheapest or most easily available.

(pp 15–16)

10. Press Reaction

Press coverage has looked at the circumstances which led to the abuses, such as those which took place in the North West of England. One aspect the papers have focused upon has been the failure of care homes to adequately protect children in their care.

The *Times*, which reported widely on the issue of localised grooming in the North West of England prior to cases coming to court, characterised the exploitation of children that had taken place as both widespread and 'normalised'. The paper's editorial of 9 May 2012, entitled 'Failing in Our Duty', argued that a failure to protect vulnerable children in care homes meant that the regulation and management of such homes needed to be reviewed. The *Times* also argued that the calibre of staff in care homes needed to be improved. However, the paper also argued that the failures were not just organisational. The paper cites a 'failure of imagination' leading those in authority to identify the children affected as beyond help, individuals for whom little could be done. The paper also argues that the unwillingness to identify the network of criminals in this particular case as Asian men meant that work could not be conducted within the Asian community to prevent this abuse from happening.

Jane Martinson, writing in the *Guardian*, argued that, although the Chief Crown Prosecutor for the North West, Nazir Afzal, has identified Asian men as being disproportionately responsible for on-street grooming, a focus on the race element of this crime was misleading. The focus should instead be on the fact that vulnerable young people were being targeted: 'rather than being preyed on because they are white, these girls were victims because they were seen as weak and vulnerable'. Ms Martinson argued that accepted expectations of who were the victims of child sexual exploitation need to be changed, and that one of the reasons for the failure to believe the victims of these crimes was, because of their troubled background, they did not conform to expectations of victimhood (['Why the Rochdale 'Grooming Trial' Wasn't about Race'](#), *Guardian* website, 9 May 2012).

The *Times* in the course of its own investigations and interviews identified one factor which it argued might have prevented the staff at care homes from stopping the abuse from taking place:

Children's home staff often feel powerless because they are not permitted to lock doors to prevent teenagers from answering a summons from suspected abusers. Physical restraint can only be used 'to prevent injury', the definition of which does not, apparently, include the psychological injury sustained through sexual exploitation.

('Children's Homes Powerless to Protect the Vulnerable from Predatory Attack', *Times* website, 9 May 2012.)

The issue of whether those working in care homes have sufficient powers to prevent abuse has been considered by the Office of the Children's Commissioner as part of their inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups:

Careful consideration was given to the question of whether residential care staff should be given increased powers of restraint and deprivation of liberty, better to protect children at risk of or actually being sexually exploited. Of the 41 submissions, three requested that such increased powers should be recommended. A further four submissions asked for greater clarity on the issue, and nine stated unequivocally that there should be no increase in powers of either restraint or the restriction of liberty. The remainder did not comment on this

issue. All those in the first group were private home providers. Those in the latter two groups came from all other sectors, including some private home provider representatives.

[\(Emerging Findings of the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, July 2012, p 9\)](#)

11. Reaction from Campaign Groups and Charities

On 10 May 2012, Barnardo's published comments from the organisation's Chief Executive, Anne Marie Carrie, in which she described the nature of the risk to looked-after children from sexual exploitation:

Our services have heard countless stories of men waiting outside care homes to befriend these unwitting children, some as young as twelve, desperate for love. Men attract them with flashy cars, gifts and feigned kindness, waiting for the child to fall in love with them before abusing them on a scale which is incomprehensible to most, but sadly very real.

Rates of sexual exploitation of those in care varies depending on the type of care placement they are in, with the risks being far higher for those in residential care compared to foster care.

And for those young people who are placed by their local authority, often due to financial constraints, in bed and breakfast accommodation with other vulnerable adults and ex-prisoners the risks can be extraordinarily high.

Barnardo's also stated that they were piloting a scheme with the Department for Education to offer 'alternative, safe accommodation for victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking, with specially trained and highly supported foster carers' (['Specialist Foster Carers Needed for Sexually Exploited Children'](#), Barnardo's website).

The Children's Society, following the publication of the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board's review, published the following comments from Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of The Children's Society:

There are, of course, some really good examples of police forces and local councils tackling this problem, and we know the government takes this issue extremely seriously. Yet worryingly the thousands of young people we work with are still telling us about the appalling attitudes they encounter from some professionals.

There must be a sea change in attitudes to young people in certain sections of the police and social services. They need to stop viewing vulnerable teenage girls as 'promiscuous' or children that go missing from home or care as 'street wise'. There should be absolutely no question that a person under the age of sexual consent who suffers grooming or sexual abuse is a victim, whatever the circumstances.

[\('Concerning the Review of Young People's Sexual Abuse in Rochdale'](#), Children's Society website, 27 September 2012)

