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Suffering in silence:
Children and unreported crime

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APPG for Victims
and Witnesses of Crime

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THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION
2013

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a Scoping Inquiry into the hidden victimisation of children and young people, undertaken on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Victims and Witnesses of Crime. The Inquiry was commissioned in response to findings from the most recent Crime Survey for England and Wales which indicates that less than one-fifth of children and young people who experience theft or violent crime report this to the police. The charity Victim Support, who provides the secretariat to the APPG, undertook research for the Inquiry in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire. Evidence was gathered in four ways:

- a short review of existing literature;
- an analysis of relevant data sources including the Crime Survey for England and Wales;
- a rapid call for evidence from charities, service providers, statutory bodies and campaigners; and
- three focus groups with children and young people.

Findings

1. Children and young people experience much higher rates of crime than police data suggests

- Research shows significant levels of crime and victimisation amongst children and young people. Approximately one-third of 11–17 year olds, for example, report experiencing physical violence within the last year. One-quarter of 11–24 year olds say they experienced some form of abuse or neglect during childhood (Radford et al 2011).

- Evidence indicates that children and young people are at higher risk than adults of experiencing certain forms of crime. Females aged 16 to 19 years, for example, are the age group at highest risk of being a victim of a sexual offence (MoJ et al 2013)

- Existing vulnerabilities, such as a long-standing illness or disability, appear to significantly compound children and young people's vulnerability to crime.

- The majority of crimes against children and young people are not reported to the police. Only 13% of violent offences and 15% of thefts are reported by young victims (ONS 2014a). Similarly, retrospective accounts of childhood sexual abuse show only 5–13% of victims reported this to an adult at the time.

- Whilst existing data offers pertinent insights, determining accurate prevalence levels of children and young people's victimisation remains challenging due to variable approaches to collecting and categorising data.

2. Children and young people don't always know what constitutes crime and how to report this

- Many children and young people do not realise that what they have experienced constitutes a crime or other form of victimisation requiring support and redress. This is particularly true where forms of criminal behaviour have been normalised within a peer group or a community, or when grooming by another individual is a factor.

- Children and young people don't always know how to report experiences of victimisation. Teachers are the professionals they are most likely to tell but they, and other professionals, often lack confidence about how to recognise and respond to reports of children's victimisation.

3. The context in which victimisation occurs affects the likelihood of reporting

• The fact that much of children and young people's victimisation occurs in contexts, such as school, where perpetrators are known to the victim significantly reduces the likelihood of a victim choosing to report crime.

4. Children and young people fear repercussions of reporting

• Children and young people identify a range of risks associated with reporting crime including reputational damage, implications for their family or fears of significant physical reprisal.

• Unwritten group 'rules' in certain social contexts de-legitimise the idea of reporting crime to authorities and in some instances, threats or blackmail by perpetrators exert a significant silencing power over children and young people's likelihood of reporting crime.

5. Children and young people may blame themselves for victimisation

• Many children and young people falsely assume responsibility for their experiences of harm and victimisation. Where children and young people feel in any way responsible for their victimisation they are unlikely to report these experiences or seek support.

• Professionals can also be guilty of reinforcing damaging messages around responsibility to victims through their reactions to disclosure or use of language.

6. Negative perceptions of the police can deter reporting of crime

• Many children and young people have little confidence that the criminal justice system will deliver justice and protect victims.

• Children and young people's attitudes towards the police are often characterised by feelings of mistrust and fear. Many believe that the police treat them more negatively than they do adults and anticipate that their direct contact with the police is likely to be characterised by a lack of respect, suspicion or discrimination.

Recommendations

• **The Department for Education** should ensure that crime and victimisation are incorporated into the curriculum in every educational setting. This should be delivered by trained practitioners and part of a whole-school approach to safeguarding and child protection.

• **The College of Policing and other relevant professional bodies** should ensure that police and other professionals working with children and young people are trained and supported to identify and respond appropriately to signs of victimisation and help victims seek redress and justice.

• **The Home Office and Ministry of Justice** should coordinate and oversee the collection of comparable police data and self-reports on experiences of crime. This data must differentiate children and young people from adults and cover all types of crime.

• **Further research is required** to provide a deeper understanding the reasons why children and young people do not report the majority of crimes perpetrated against them to the police.

1: Introduction

This report presents the findings of a time-limited Scoping Inquiry into the hidden victimisation of children and young people, undertaken on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

The Inquiry was commissioned in response to findings from the most recent Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) that indicates that less than one fifth of children and young people who experience theft or violent crime are reporting these to the police (ONS 2014a).[1] The APPG sought to establish whether similar patterns of non-reporting exist in relation to other forms of crime and victimisation in childhood and the potential reasons for this.

The Inquiry was undertaken by Victim Support, in partnership with researchers from The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire (UOB). The work took place over a one month period in November 2014.

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1. The data, drawn from the 10–15 year old module in the CSEW shows that only 13% of those who experience violent offences and 15% of those who experience theft reported these experiences to the police (ONS 2014a)

Recognising the limitations of the short-term nature of the work, the Inquiry sought to capture information on three main things:

• The recorded levels of crime and victimisation experienced by children and young people in England and Wales;

• Potential forms and levels of unreported crime and victimisation; and

• Reasons for non-reporting of such experiences.

Four short work-streams were undertaken in order to collate relevant information. These were:

• A short review of relevant published UK literature;

• A review of existing statistical data on children's and young people's experiences of crime and reporting patterns of the same;

• Three focus groups with 26 young people, to ascertain their views on these issues (see Appendix 1); and

A rapid call for evidence to statutory agencies, victim service providers, charities and campaigners (see Appendix 1).

The first three work packages were undertaken by researchers from UOB. The fourth strand was undertaken by Victim Support, as Secretariat to the APPG. This report incorporates the findings of all four strands of work, presented in three key sections:

• Levels of crime and victimisation experienced by children and young people;

• Barriers to reporting; and

• Priority areas for change.

2. Prevalence of crime and victimisation experienced by children and young people

2.1. Introduction

The various work-streams undertaken as part of this Inquiry all clearly reveal that children and young people can experience significant levels of crime and victimisation during their childhood and adolescence. This can take many varied forms including physical assaults, sexual violence, neglect, bullying and theft. These experiences are variably being perpetrated by adults and peers, on an individual and group basis, in schools, communities, family homes or online. Their impact differs according to a range of factors including the nature and severity of the harm, the individual biographies of the victim and perpetrator, the physical and social contexts within which the harm occurs, the duration of the victimisation and prior experiences of harm. What unites many of these variably experienced incidents of harm, however, is the fact that they are rarely being reported to the police or other statutory authorities, with a consequent lost opportunity for intervention, protection and redress.

Before considering the range of potential reasons for this, this section of the report provides an overview of some of the different forms of crime and victimisation being experienced by children and young people. What follows is in no way a comprehensive account of all forms of victimisation in childhood; that is beyond the remit and resourcing of this time-limited Inquiry. What it does, however, provide is insight into:

• Some of the different forms that victimisation in childhood can take;

• The challenges associated with attempts to determine prevalence levels;

• The differing levels of crime and victimisation captured by 'official statistics' and other data sources; and

• Patterns of reporting/non-reporting and consequent potential levels of hidden victimisation.

It is important to highlight the many challenges that exist in collating statistical information about crime and victimisation and the need to interpret cited statistics in light of this. As the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Home Office and Office for National Statistics (ONS) observe in their overview of sexual offending, providing a statistical overview of crime and victimisation *"presents a number of challenges, not least that the available information comes from different sources that do not necessarily cover the same period, the same people (victims or offenders) or the same offences"* (MoJ et al 2013:4).

It is also important to highlight that the statistical information presented below has been categorised according to the thematic headings under which it has been published. These categories are not mutually exclusive, both in terms of the statistical counts and the potential – indeed likelihood – of multiple experiences of victimisation for some children and young people.

2.2 Homicide

Police-recorded homicide figures report that there were a total of 67 child homicides in England and Wales in 2012/13. However, as Jutte et al (2014:20) observe, *"these figures only include cases where there is sufficient evidence to suspect that a homicide has taken place. Studies have indicated that the number of child deaths where abuse or neglect is suspected as a factor is higher than shown in [these] figures."*

2.3 Abuse and neglect

Police statistics record 7,997 cases of 'cruelty to children/young persons'[2] in England and Wales in 2013/14 (ONS 2014c). Department for Education statistics for the same year indicate that 397,600 children in England were statutorily defined as 'children in need', with 'abuse or neglect'[3] noted as the primary need in almost half (47%) of these cases. Section 47 Enquiries were undertaken for 142,500 cases, on the basis that reasonable cause existed to suspect a child was suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Child protection plans were subsequently initiated for 59,800 children in England in 2013/14, an increase of 13.5% on the previous year (DfE 2014).

Although varying in their particular estimations, self-report surveys and other research studies within the UK repeatedly indicate that children and young people are experiencing much higher levels of abuse and neglect than that recorded in official police or social care statistics. Radford et al (2013),

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2. Defined as where a parent or carer 'wilfully assaults, neglects, abandons or exposes a child under 16 in a manner likely to cause them 'unnecessary suffering or injury to health' (Jutte et al 2014).

3. The term abuse is taken to encompass physical, sexual and emotional forms.

for example, observe that the child maltreatment[4] rates observed in their 2011 study were 7 to 17 times greater than those substantiated cases recorded by the child protection systems cited above, indicating significant rates of hidden victimisation. Their study, involving over 4000 children and young adults found that approximately 1 in 4 young people aged 11 to 24 had experienced some form of abuse or neglect at some stage in their childhood.[5] One-third of 11–17 year olds said they had experienced physical violence within the last year, with only slightly lower proportions (32%) reporting experiences of emotional abuse within the same time frame (See Table 1 in Appendix 2).

2.4 Sexual offending

Police statistics reveal increasing numbers of recorded sexual offences against children, with a total of 23,772 recorded offences against children under sixteen years of age in England and Wales in 2013/14; an 27% increase on the previous year (see Table 2 in Appendix 2).[6] It is difficult to ascertain the levels of recorded sexual offences against 16 and 17 year olds, due to the way in which statistics are published. With the exception of familial sexual offences, abuse of a position of trust and abuse of a child through prostitution or pornography (for which a total of 975 offences were recorded against under 18s in 2013/14), most sexual offending against children in the 16/17 year age range is subsumed within general adult sexual offending statistics that cover 16 to 59 year olds. These statistics show:

• 12,299 offences of rape of a female aged 16 or over;

• 17,380 offences of sexual assault on a female aged 13 or over;

• 662 offences of rape of a male aged 16 or over;

• 1961 offences of sexual assault on a male aged 13 or over; and

• 6402 offences of exposure and voyeurism (ONS 2014c).

Although not differentiated within these statistics, ONS statistical analysis identifies that females aged 16 to 19 years is the age group at highest risk of being a victim of a sexual offence (8.2%), with risk of victimisation decreasing with age (MoJ et al 2013).

Whilst specific prevalence rates vary by study, research repeatedly suggests that children and young people experience significantly greater levels of sexual violence and abuse than that recorded in police statistics. Some illustrative statistics from these studies suggest that:

• One in five (19%) 18–24 year old females have experienced contact sexual victimisation in childhood (Radford et al 2013);

• There were 73,900 victims of sexual offending under the age of sixteen in England and Wales in 2012/13 (Jutte et al 2014);

• One in nine sixteen year olds has experience of an adult trying to sexually groom them. One in fifteen has been given substances and then taken advantage of sexually when under the influence (Beckett and Schubotz 2014);

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4. Defined as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power (Radford et al 2011).

5. 22% of 11–17 year olds and 25% of 18–24 year olds. The comparable rate for under 11s is 9%.

6. These figures relate to number of recorded sexual offences, not number of victims or perpetrators.

• Over one-quarter (29%) of 16–18 year old girls have been subjected to unwanted sexual touching in school (EVAW Coalition 2010).

2.5 Intimate partner violence

Recent studies have highlighted patterns and levels of violence in young people's intimate relationships, that mirror those previously associated with only the adult domain. The most frequently cited of these is Barter et al's (2009a) research into teenager partner violence, which found that of the 13 to 17 year olds included in the study:

• One quarter of girls and 18% of boys had experienced some form of physical violence within their relationship – females were more likely to report this to be a pattern of behaviour as opposed to a one-off incident;

• Three-quarters of girls, and half of boys, had experienced emotional violence from their partner; and

• 31% of girls, and 16% of boys, had experienced sexual violence within these relationships (Barter et al 2009a).

More recent statistics from the CSEW show a continued pattern of intimate partner violence in adolescence, with 1 in 7 females and 1 in 20 males aged 16/17 years reporting experience of domestic abuse (ONS 2012).

2.6 Bullying

According to the UK Household Longitudinal Study, around 1 in 8 children (12%) aged 10 to 15 in the UK reported being frequently bullied at school (either physically, in other ways, or both), in the six months prior to interview during 2011–12. Boys are slightly more likely to be bullied physically, with 6% reporting frequent physical bullying, compared with 4% of girls. (ONS 2014d). Children and young people are also increasingly experiencing bullying online, with 35% of 11–17 year olds reporting experiencing cyber-bullying in 2014, more than double the rate recorded one year prior (McAfee 2014).

2.7 Other forms of online harm

According to a recent OFCOM report, the proportions of children exposed to online harm is growing year by year, with most recent statistics revealing that one in five children have seen online content that they found 'worrying, nasty or offensive'. The NSPCC similarly reports that 28% of children aged 11 to 16 with a social networking profile have experienced something upsetting on it in the last year (cited in Jutte et al 2014).

There has been much discourse around 'sexting' in recent years. A Childline survey in 2013 found that 3 out of 5 young people aged 13–18 years have been asked to send a sexual image or video of themselves and 2 out of 5 have done so. It is important to note that the harm that can be associated with this goes far beyond the immediate and intended distribution. By way of illustration, 1 in 5 child abuse images reported to CEOP in 2012 were self-generated images, but the vast majority of these (88%) had been taken from their original location and uploaded somewhere else (cited in Jutte et al 2014).

2.8 Violence, Theft and Crime against the Person

The main source of prevalence data around children and young people's experiences of violence, theft and crime against the person is the 10–15 year old module in the CSEW, the 2013/14 version of which was completed by 2902 children of this age (ONS 2014e).

Almost one in eight (12.1%) respondents to the CSEW said they had experienced one or more forms of the types of crime covered in the survey – violence, theft and/or crime against personal property – in the preceding year (ONS 2014a).[7]

One in fifteen (6.5%) respondents reported experience of a violent offence,[8] with four out of five (78%) such incidents resulting in some form of injury[9] and one in five (21%) resulting in the victim receiving some form of medical attention (ONS 2014a). One in sixteen (6.2%) respondents reported experience of theft, most commonly theft of mobile phones, clothing, cash and bicycles or bicycle parts (ONS 2014a).

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7. Unless otherwise stated CSEW figures are based on preferred measures, which exclude minor offences between children and family members that would legally be defined as crimes but not normally treated as criminal matters (ONS 2014e)

8. 45% experienced assault with minor injury, 22nd experienced assault without injury, 19% experienced wounding and 14% experienced robbery.

9. 69% resulted in minor bruising or a black eye, 58% in scratches/marks on skin; 33% in severe bruising/cuts.
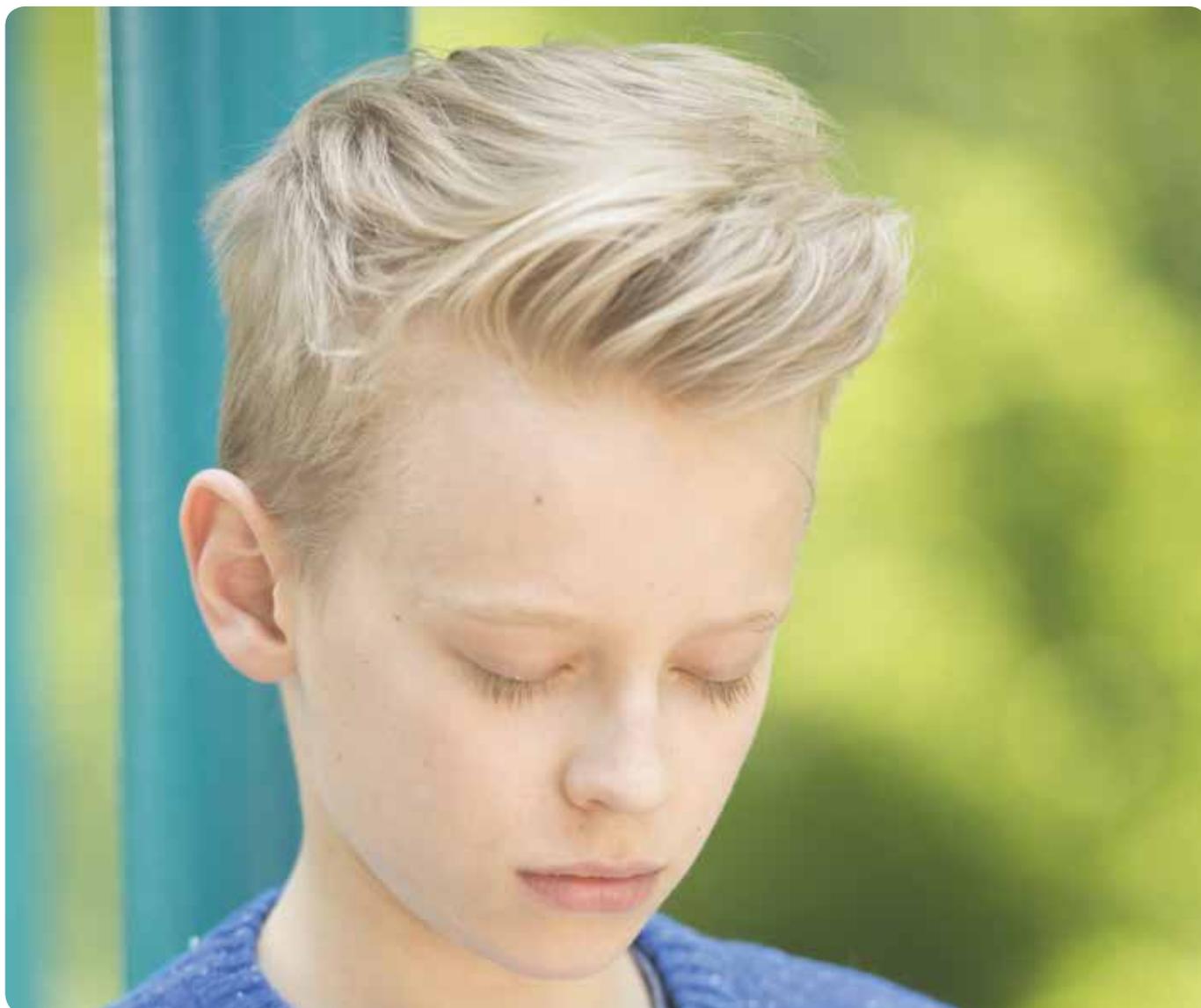
Extrapolating from the responses provided, the CSEW estimates that a total of 810,000 violent or property related crimes were experienced by children aged 10–15 years in England and Wales in 2013/14.[10] Over half (55%; n=445,000) of these crimes are categorised as violent, with just over-two thirds (67%) of these resulting in some form of injury to the victim (ONS 2014a).

The CSEW data observes a number of patterns within young people's self-reported experiences of violent or property related offences in the last few years. These include the fact that:

• Most incidents of violence or theft occur in and around schools;

• 9 out of 10 incidents occur in daylight hours;

• Most incidents are perpetrated by a single offender (64% of violent incidents and 74% of thefts); and

• Violent incidents are more likely to be perpetrated by multiple offenders than thefts (21% of violent incidents involved four or more offenders compared to 6% of thefts) (ONS 2013, 2014a).

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10. Calculated from incidence rate (per 1000 children) and population estimates; rounded to the nearest 1000.

Considering the patterns of young people most affected by such incidents of crime, the ONS data shows:

• Higher overall prevalence rates amongst males (13.7% compared to 10.5% of females in 2013/14), although the significant gender differences previously observed specifically in relation to violent crime are levelling out;

• Increasing prevalence rates with age for girls, and decreasing prevalence rates with age for boys (within the 11–15 year old age range);

• Higher rates of crime experienced by 'white' young people compared to their 'non-white' peers, particularly notably in relation to their self-reported experiences of violent crime (7.2% .v. 3.6% in 2013/14);

• Higher rates of victimisation for young people with a long-standing illness or disability (18.9% compared to 11.5% of those who identify no such illness or disability in 2013/14); and

• Substantially higher prevalence rates amongst young people who have been bullied in the last year – in 2013/14, 31.6% of these young people reported experience of crime, compared to 7.8% of their peers who had not been bullied in the same time period ONS 2013, 2014a, 2014f).

2.9 Patterns of reporting and non-reporting

The data presented above clearly highlights significant differences in the levels of crime and victimisation recorded in official crime and social care statistics, and that captured in self-report surveys and other research studies. This is to be expected given that:

• Only those incidents reported to the police or other statutory authorities will be captured in official statistics; and

• Most children and young people who experience crime and victimisation will not disclose these experiences to the authorities.

A number of studies have tried to quantify the relationship between experiencing and reporting crime. With reference to experiences of physical violence and theft, the CSEW reveals that only 13% of violent offences and 15% of thefts that would be considered a crime in law are being reported by young victims, indicating significant levels of physical and theft-based victimisation not being notified to the authorities (ONS 2014a).

Research also consistently shows that most children and young people who experience sexual violence or abuse don't report these experiences to (or have them recognised by) those in authority. London et al (2008), for example, observe that retrospective accounts of childhood sexual abuse show only 5–13% of those who experienced such abuse reported this to an adult or anyone in authority at the time. Radford et al (2011) note that likelihood of reporting sexual violence decreases significantly if perpetrated with a peer, with 83% of those who experienced sexual violence from a peer not telling anyone compared to 34% of those assaulted by an adult. More recently, Beckett et al (2013) found that only 1 in 12 young people felt that someone of their age would be likely to report, or talk about, experiences of sexual violence or exploitation. Where they did choose to tell someone about their experiences, this would most often be to a peer rather than anyone in a position of authority.

Allnock and Miller (2013) similarly note in their study of child sexual abuse, that three-quarters of initial disclosures were to informal recipients, most often mothers or friends.

As noted above, only a minority of young people report their experiences of crime and victimisation to those in authority. Whilst some of those who do report, do so directly to the police, or have a parent/carer do this on their behalf, others tell a teacher or someone else they already know in a position of authority. Teachers and other professionals, particularly those working in health, may also become aware of crime in the absence of a disclosure, through observance of physical and/or emotional signs and symptoms of victimisation.

The evidence reviewed for this Inquiry identifies a lack of confidence and clarity amongst such professionals as to how to respond to such reports and recognition. Confusion exists as to which incidents reach the threshold of a criminal intervention and what information should be passed onto the police (Shepherd et al 2010; Florence et al 2011). The outcome of this is that incidents of crime and victimisation may be known by statutory services, but not being referred into the criminal justice system. Florence et al (2011), for example, observe that only one quarter to one third of violent incidents (not youth-specific) treated in an emergency department appear in police records. Shepherd et al (2010) similarly observe that 78% of incidents of violence against children responded to in an Emergency Department prompted no action apart from treatment of injuries. This includes cases such as that outlined below:

"Case 1: A young teenager was allegedly attacked by 15 other school children and sustained right facial bruising in an incident at a local public swimming bath. The child was reportedly punched and kicked to the head and abdomen. ED attendance did not, according to the medical records, prompt reporting either to the child's school adjacent to the swimming pool, the local authority or to the police. Two weeks later the teenager was assaulted by three others and sustained a fractured clavicle. Again, no documented enquiries, discussions or referrals took place" (Shepherd et al 2010:126).

Research evidence and submissions to the Inquiry suggest that similar patterns can be observed in school responses to violent incidents and other crimes. West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre, for example, highlight experience of young people reporting crime to a teacher *"and the teacher has minimised the crime, or excused the behaviour of the offender"*. It is critical that responses such as these are addressed in order to ensure that where children and young people take the brave step to share their experiences of crime and victimisation with someone that this is appropriately responded to. To fail to do so will give children and young people the message that (a) what they have experienced is acceptable and unimportant and (b) services are not able or willing to support and protect them. Both messages act as clear disincentives to reporting.

As noted above, studies repeatedly show peers are the most frequent source of support for children and young people who share their experiences of victimisation with another (Barter et al 2009a; Beckett et al 2013; ONS 2014). Yet, as explored in section three below, children and young people's misunderstanding of what constitutes crime and victimisation and where responsibility for this lies, coupled with lack of confidence in statutory services' ability to support young victims of crime, also present significant challenges in terms of ensuring that victims of crime receive appropriate support and redress.

3. Reasons why children and young people may not report crime and victimisation

3.1 Introduction

Although there is a limited body of UK literature specifically focusing on children and young people's reporting patterns around crime, a rapid review of related literature reveals a myriad of reasons why the children and young people included in these various studies did not, or would not, report experiences of crime and victimisation. The issues raised in these studies, though drawn from small samples in some cases, closely parallel those highlighted by respondents to the rapid call for evidence and, in many cases, the issues raised directly by young people in the three focus groups undertaken as part of the Inquiry.

The barriers to reporting identified across all of these work-streams are explored here within the following thematic framework of inter-related influencing factors:

• Understanding of what constitutes crime and victimisation and how to report this;

• The context in which the crime or victimisation occurs;

• Risks associated with reporting;

• Perceptions of victimhood; and

• Perceptions and experiences of the police.

3.2 Understanding of what constitutes crime and victimisation and how to report this

The existing body of literature highlights that one of the reasons children and young people may not report experiences of crime and victimisation to statutory authorities, or indeed more informal sources of support, is that they may not realise that what they are experiencing constitutes a crime or some other form of victimisation requiring support and redress.

This is starkly illustrated in the CSEW data, which observes that only half (52%) of the theft incidents and only one-quarter (26%) of the violent crime incidents reported by 11–15 year old respondents (all of which would be defined as a crime in law) were perceived as a crime by the young person who experienced them. The remainder were perceived to be 'wrong but not a crime' (37% of violent incidents and 27% of thefts) or 'just something that happens' (37% of violent incidents and 21% of thefts). Interestingly, half of all violent incidents experienced by respondents were perceived by the victim to be part of a series of bullying (ONS 2014a).

Responses to the call for evidence clearly support the premise that many children and young people may not recognise the crime they are experiencing, further noting that many (and/or others reporting on their behalf) often only see victimisation in retrospect, as opposed to at the time the harm occurred.

Some of the young people who participated in the focus groups also raised confusion around the boundaries between legal and illegal behaviours. There was a particular lack of clarity voiced about around the complexities associated with peer-on-peer forms of harm including the sharing of sexual content via phones or other online platforms and the point at which bullying (both online and offline) might become a criminal offence. One group of young people specifically discussed the difficulties they faced in differentiating between 'banter' and 'bullying'. They explained how abusive behaviour within an online or school environment was often described as 'banter' by perpetrators as a means of normalising or minimising the offence and reducing the likelihood of them reporting it.

The particular complexities associated with identifying peer-on-peer criminality and harm have been identified and explored in a number of different research studies in recent years. Phippen (2012), for example, highlights the challenges young people face in identifying illegality within the context of sexting between peers. He observes:

"There seemed to be little awareness of the legalities of sexting. One girl mentioned she knew someone who was constantly being asked by a boy to send him images of herself. When asked what her friend did about it, she looked confused and asked what could she do about it?" (Phippen 2012:16).

Considering sexual violence more generally, Beckett et al (2013) observe that the vast majority of incidents of peer-on-peer sexual violence described to them by young people (including many incidents of rape and other serious sexual assaults) were articulated, not as crime, harm or victimisation, but as normal patterns of sexual activity. The authors identify an increasing normalisation of sexual violence in adolescence, in which peer-on-peer sexual offending is becoming

an unquestioned and unchallenged part of some young people's experiences of sex and relationships. This was true both of those perpetrating and experiencing the offending behaviour, highlighting the clear need to better educate children and young people about critical concepts such as choice, control and consent, and the ways in which these can be denied or manipulated in exploitative and abusive settings (Beckett et al 2013; Berelowitz et al 2013; Coy et al 2013; Pearce 2013).

This is not to say that children and young people always recognise criminality at the hands of adults. Studies of sexual exploitation perpetrated by adults consistently identify low levels of recognition of victimisation, despite high levels of experience of the same (Pearce 2009; Beckett 2011). Studies variably attribute this to the individual biography of the child or young person, the effective grooming techniques employed by the perpetrator and/or the fact that this particular form of abuse generally entails receipt of something the child or young person wants or needs (money, drugs, affection etc). As one submission to the call for evidence observes:

"Our work with children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation shows that children are often not able to recognise signs of sexual exploitation and grooming. In cases of child sexual exploitation, very often children and young people believe they are in genuine relationships with the individual who exploits them" (The Children's Society).

Similar issues around lack of recognition of criminality can be seen in studies around exposure to physical and property-related forms of crime and victimisation. Such studies highlight the impact that familiarisation with harm and victimisation, can have on recognition of the same. A Metropolitan Police Authority report on young people, policing and crime, for example, highlights how experiences such as theft of lunch money were seen, not as crime, but as part and parcel of everyday life for children and young people. Noting the likely impact this has on children and young people's propensity to report, the report reflects that *"they did not see this behaviour as criminal and many would be surprised if they were told that it was"* (MPA 2008:21).

Yates (2006) similarly identifies a normalisation of certain types of crime in his ethnographic study of one low-income community. Conceptualising these as 'tolerated illegalities', he observes how familiarity with crime, in particular growing up around it, can in essence 'decriminalise' certain activities in people's minds. Studies of gang-association also identify an informal, but powerful, reclassification in young people's minds of what constitutes harm and victimisation that, alongside other factors such as concurrent offending and group rules, inevitably impacts upon propensity to report (Pitts 2008; Firmin 2011).

Even where children and young people had a sense that what was happening to them wasn't right and they wanted to report this, evidence from the focus groups indicates a lack of knowledge about the most appropriate way to do this. Several young people voiced uncertainty on how to report incidents where they weren't in immediate danger and didn't feel a 999 call was warranted:

From what I've seen young people are fairly confident regarding bigger crimes. If it's someone's house gets broken into, that's definitely a thing for the police whereas if it's like bullying and cyber bulling, it's generally approached as the sort of thing that's dealt with by like schools or heads of year and maybe people aren't quite sure how the police would go about that" (female, group 3).

"You need better education about what actually happens when you report a crime...they tell us these numbers – like 999 and 101 – but they don't tell us actually what happens when you call one of those numbers. What do you have to say? What should you expect?" (female, group 2).

If participants felt unsure about the prospect of telephoning the police to report crime, they expressed even less confidence about actually going to a police station:

"If I went to a police station I wouldn't know where to start, what to say ...it seems like something that you tell your teacher about and they go do it or you tell an adult and they sort it out" (male, group 3).

"The local police station for me isn't ...it's certainly not at the front of my mind about how you would go about doing that – I'm not sure I would feel completely confident about just walking into the police station and, you know, trying to report something" (male, group 3).

3.3 The context within which the crime or victimisation occurs

As alluded to in the commentary above, the context within which a child or young person experiences crime and victimisation can be a significant determining factor in their propensity to report and seek support for the same. Beyond the previously explored pattern of how familiarity with harm in certain contexts can result in desensitisation and consequent decreased capacity to recognise further harm, context is important in terms of:

• The implications of reporting where the crime has been perpetrated in an individual's school or neighbourhood and/or by someone within his/her family, friendship or wider social network; and

• Social norms around the perceived legitimacy of reporting experiences of victimisation.

Research shows that much of the harm children and young people experience occurs within the school environment and other settings within which they regularly socialise. Around three-fifths of the violent or theft incidents reported in the 2012/13 CSEW, for example, took place in or around school, with more theft taking place within the school and more violence taking place in the surrounding environs. Unsurprisingly, given this, perpetrators were often known to victims, with over half of single offender crimes being perpetrated by someone well known to the victim (ONS 2014a, 2014g).

Experiencing crime and victimisation within the school environment (or indeed other social settings in which a child or young person regularly congregates) and/or at the hands of someone known to him/her inevitably holds implications for likelihood of reporting. This is because the victim will repeatedly have to return to the scene of the crime and continue to face those who perpetrated the offence (as most remain within that environment) and other peers who may have witnessed the crime as bystanders. The difficulties of reporting crime committed by those known to the victim were highlighted in a number of the studies reviewed for this report (Owen and Sweeting 2007; Beckett et al 2013). It was also an issue raised by submissions to the call for evidence and a number of young people within the focus groups:

"If you know the person who committed the crime – or even if it's your friend – that can be much harder to report that. You know, if it's a sort of anonymous man on the street took my phone, then that's one thing, but if you know who did it and you actually know them then that's another thing" (male, group 3).

Some of the anxieties young people associated with experiencing crime from a friend or acquaintance related to anticipated negative repercussions of reporting (as explored below). Others however related to issues of loyalty to the perpetrator(s) and a desire to remain within that relationship or the wider friendship network.

Similar complex dynamics of loyalty to the perpetrator, and fear of implications of reporting, can frequently be seen with children and young people who experience crime and abuse within the family environment. In such instances, victims may be acutely aware that the consequences of reporting may mean severe disruption to their family life, including the potential of ending up placed in care (Allnock and Miller 2013; Horvath et al 2014).

In some social contexts, young people's propensity to report can also be strongly influenced by unwritten group/community rules about the acceptability of approaching statutory services around experiences of harm. Traditionally identified in studies of gangs, silencing norms around the unacceptability of 'grassing' or 'snitching' appear to be proliferating across other communities and other groups of children and young people (Yates 2006; Owen and Sweeting 2007; MPA 2008). Barnardo's submission to the call for evidence, for example, stated that one of their services was observing particular patterns around unwritten rules about reporting in some *"BME [black and minority ethnic] communities where issues are dealt with by extended familial communities and also within our estate communities whereby the historic culture is to not engage with the police regardless of an individual's perceived status (either as victim or perpetrator) for fear of being seen as a 'grass' and thus ultimately excluded from the community"*.

Fear of transgressing social rules around non-reporting was also raised as a significant issue in one of the young people's focus groups. The derogatory terms *'snake'* and *'snitch'* were provided as examples of how a young person may be viewed if they chose to report certain crimes to the police:

"If you report to the police you'd be a called a snake by your friends. Nobody wants to be seen as a snake. When you snitch - people try and stitch!" (male, group 1).

Many of the young people's concerns about being called a 'snitch' were associated with the impact on a young person's reputation and peer group standing. As one person explained if you're called a snitch *'your popularity goes down and you lose friends'* (male, group 1). The influence of peer pressure was clearly significant and when asked what could be done about this issue, doubts were expressed that cultures in which young people were routinely labelled as snakes or snitches could easily changed.

3.4 Risks associated with reporting

As highlighted in the section above, children and young people who report experiences of crime and victimisation, where to do so is contrary to the social norms of the group, face significant consequences in terms of social exclusion.

A number of studies have also identified serious physical risk in retaliation for 'grassing' or 'snitching', including experiences of serious physical assault, rape or other sexual harm where a young person has reported to the authorities in defiance of group norms (Yates 2006; Owen and Sweeting 2007; MPA 2008; Firmin 2011; Beckett et al 2013). Such harm has been noted to affect both the young person who broke the rules of engagement, and their siblings or other family members. Interestingly, fear of potential harm to others, is often a more effective silencing mechanism for children and young people, than threats to oneself (MPA 2008; Firmin 2011; Beckett 2011; Beckett et al 2013).

The use of violence, threats or blackmail to discourage reporting by children and young people are by no means reserved to the group settings outlined above. As highlighted in responses to the call for evidence, and illuminated in the young people's focus groups, such techniques can be effectively used by a wide range of perpetrators in a wide range of settings.

Young people in two focus groups highlighted fears about consequences of reporting crime that went beyond reputational damage and impacted on the physical safety of a young person as part of a reprisal:

"Some people don't report crime – because when they've been robbed, some people will actually leave a threat – like report this and I'll have people after you and then it's that fear that drives people not to report crime…I don't think it's too common but it definitely does happen in some circumstances" (male, group 3).

These fears were noted to vary according to the nature of the crime and the victim's relationship to the perpetrator and in one group encompassed specific fears associated with gang-associated crime. These participants described how young people in their schools and communities could be asked to *'hold things'* (hide or store illicit items) for other gang-involved young people and explained that the decision not to disclose to an adult *"can be a life and death situation" (male, group 1).*

Submissions to the call for evidence specifically highlight the silencing power that threats and blackmail can have on children and young people who have experienced sexual exploitation and other forms of sexual abuse. Existing research also shows that fear of further harm and victimisation can be an effective silencing technique, even where no explicit threats or blackmail are made in relation to this.

Studies have shown that risk can actually escalate for some children and young people after reporting experiences of crime to the police or other statutory authorities, particularly where the perpetrator knows that their offending behaviour has been reported and still has access to the victim. Knowledge of this, and a lack of confidence in statutory services' ability to protect them from this (as explored in section 3.6 below), can prove to be a strong barrier to reporting (Owen and Sweeting 2007; Beckett et al 2013). One young woman who participated in a focus group spoke at length of such fears, associated with reporting abuse that occurred in a family environment. She described a scenario in which the risk from an abuser might increase following disclosure of a crime, particularly if a young person wasn't believed over another adult. She questioned both the police's ability to handle such situations sensitively and keep a young person safe:

*"Say you told someone that your mum had beaten you up. You'd go home and you'd be s****ing it for that phone-call.. and you have to deal with the consequences – you might get battered by your mum" (female, group 2).*

Fears around not being believed were also identified as a significant barrier to reporting within submissions to the call for evidence. Drawing on a series of youth engagement events in 2014, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), for example, observed that *"young people said they worried that the police would always take the word of adults, teachers or those in positions of authority"* over that of a child or young person.

Children and young people may also refrain from reporting experiences of crime and victimisation for fear of the police uncovering illegal activity that they themselves might be involved in, whether voluntarily or under duress by others. Similarly, they may cover up experiences of harm and victimisation for fear of their parents/carers finding out that they had lied about where they were or what they were doing at the time when the crime took place (Beckett 2011; Barnardo's 2014).

3.5 Perceptions of victimhood

How children and young people perceive experiences of crime and victimisation – whether when they experience crime themselves or in response to the victimisation of others – is another factor that significantly influences propensity to reporting.

Evidence from all elements of the Inquiry suggest that where children and young people feel in any way responsible or to blame for their experiences of victimisation they are unlikely to report these experiences or seek support. Although responsibility for crime lies firmly with those who perpetrate it, the evidence shows that many children and young people end up falsely assuming responsibility for their experiences of harm and victimisation. This can be because:

• They believe that they did something to contribute to it – such as being out at night; going into the wrong area; how they dressed or having taken alcohol or drugs; and/or

• They believe they failed to do something to prevent it – not telling someone in the build-up to the offence; not leaving when they started to feel uncomfortable; not physically resisting in a sexual assault etc.

 As one young person observed:

"It's just that like if something does happen – you just like play it over and over again in your head – saying 'oh I could have done this differently and maybe it wouldn't have happened' and then you just

find all these faults with yourself… then it makes you more nervous to come forward and just talk to people because you think you've made all these mistakes." (male, group 3).

Writing with reference to young people's experiences of sexual violence within intimate partner relationships, Barter et al (2009b:6) observe the power of self-blame, noting that *"often it was this aspect of the sexual violence, rather than the act itself, which girls said affected them in the long term"*.

Focus group participants also talked about how young people could feel embarrassed or ashamed of being a victim, because of how victimhood is perceived within their social circles. This clearly resonates with Owen and Sweeting's (2007) observation that many young people conflated victimisation with weakness, meaning therefore that being a victim damaged not only an individual's self-respect but also their respect from others:

They might think that people that they're telling will just think that they're just idiots (female, group 2).

"I think it's embarrassing …I just think it's embarrassing …the thought that it's happened to them. It's not really nice going to someone and saying 'I just got robbed' is it." (female, group 2).

These misconceptions around blame and shame that children and young people hold are extremely powerful deterrents to reporting. Unfortunately evidence shows that rather than them being gently challenged, they are often being reinforced by others, both knowingly and unknowingly, through their words and actions or absence of the same. Anticipation of such negative reactions is a strong motivator for keeping one's experiences of victimisation to oneself.

A study of gang-associated sexual violence by Beckett et al (2013), for example, identified clear judgments around deserving and undeserving victims with strong condemnatory attitudes and/ or social isolation being experienced by the latter. This and other studies have also identified how harmful homophobic attitudes and assumptions around power and masculinity, can act as additional barriers to reporting for boys and young men (MPA 2008; Horvath et al 2014). Whilst particularly acute in cases of sexual violence, some of the young people who participated in the focus groups commented on how this impacted on young males' ability to acknowledge experience of crime more generally:

"I was just going to talk about barriers – in terms of reputation – I don't know if it's the same in other people's schools but it's definitely like this in my school – there's quite a sort of macho culture, especially around crime …In terms of mugging, when they talk to each other, no-one ever says 'yes I was mugged', they say things like – 'someone tried to mug me but I ran away' …' someone tried to mug me but I challenged them' – whether or not that's true – it doesn't help reporting of crime" (male, group 3).

 "You don't want people thinking you can't defend yourself" (male, group 2).

Before concluding this section it is important to note that professionals can also be guilty of (inadvertently) reinforcing damaging messages around responsibility to victims through, for example, their reactions to disclosure and their regular use of language such as 'placing themselves at risk' or 'engaging in risk-taking behaviour', phrases frequently used to describe young people affected by sexual violence and abuse. The need to address such attitudes is critical as where young people feel, or are made to feel, in any way complicit in their victimisation this will seriously undermine their sense of their right to support and redress.

3.6 Perceptions and experiences of the police

The issue of children's and young people's perceptions of the police (and in some cases those of other statutory services) was perhaps the most frequently identified barrier to reporting across all strands of the Inquiry. Key issues within this include:

• Opinions of the police;

• Experiences and interactions with the police;

• Perceptions of police attitudes and behaviours towards children and young people; and

• Lack of confidence that the criminal justice system will deliver justice and protect victims.

These factors are, of course, all inter-related and mutually reinforcing in terms of how they impact on a young person's confidence in policing and consequent likelihood to report crime. They are also, of course, differentially experienced by children and young people depending on a range of factors including their age, their background and their exposure – whether through personal experience or that of family or friends – to police and other criminal justice personnel.

Perceptions of the police

The CSEW data reveals considerable variation in young people's perceptions of the police. On the one hand, there is a group of young people who appear to have quite positive opinions and experiences of the police – 55% of respondents (a 7% increase from four years ago) said they had a positive opinion of their local police and 78% of those who had experienced direct contact with the police said they were satisfied with how this had been handled. On the other hand, there is an identifiable minority who are expressly dissatisfied with the police, with one in seven of those with direct contact with the police dissatisfied with how this was handled and one in twenty of the wider sample expressing a negative opinion of their local police (ONS 2014b).

It is interesting to note that children and young people's opinions about the police tend to become less positive with age (ONS 2014b; MPA 2008). CSEW data reveals that 10 year olds are twice as likely to have a positive opinion of their local police as 15 year olds (75% compared to 38%). Similar levels of satisfaction are observable across both genders (ONS 2014b).

Lack of confidence in policing

A number of different surveys and research studies conducted across the country have identified an issue with lack of confidence in policing amongst youth. Only 38% of participants in the 2013 Greater Manchester Police Young People's Police and Crime Study, for example, thought the police were doing a good job in their area. Similarly only 37% said they had confidence in the police in their local area and only 39% felt they could rely on police to be there for them when they needed them (GMP 2013).

Lack of confidence in policing was also a major issue raised in the APPG for Children Inquiry into children and policing conducted in 2013/14:

"The Inquiry heard that children and young people's attitudes towards the police are often characterised by feelings of mistrust and fear…[it] heard that children and young people often profoundly distrust the police and do not believe that they are there to protect them" (APPG for Children 2014: 5–8).

The young people who took part in this Inquiry reiterated these sentiments. Across all of the focus groups, a lack of trust and confidence in the police was identified as one of the biggest barriers to reporting. However trust itself was revealed to be a multi-faceted concept associated with a range of issues. One young person explained it thus:

"A really big issue is trust. You've got to trust that you're going to be taken seriously

– that there'll be a positive outcome – there won't be no repercussions and it'll all get resolved (male, group 1).

As noted in the above quotation, many factors contribute to trust and confidence in policing (or lack thereof) including how you feel you will be treated by the police, the likelihood of a successful prosecution and a belief that you will be adequately protected.

Police treatment of young people

The evidence gathered for this Inquiry strongly suggests that many children and young people believe the police treat them more negatively than they do adults. Whereas 90% of respondents to the CSEW felt that the police were there to help people if they needed them, only 67% felt that the police dealt with things that matter to local young people and only 45% felt that they treated young people the same as adults (ONS 2014b). Similarly low rates of satisfaction with police engagement with youth are replicated in other studies:

- 40% of young people (rising to 64% of those with contact with the police in the last year) stated that they weren't confident that the police could respond to their needs as young people (MPA 2008);

- Only 35% of young people feel that local police listen to young people and only 29% felt that they could rely on police to be there for them when they needed them, stating that "many police officers don't like young people" and "some officers think we're all trouble-makers" (GMP 2013).

Such perceptions are inevitably informed by young people's own interactions with the police and those of others around them. Reflecting on the nature of such interactions, the APPG Inquiry (2014:9) into children and policing observes that:

"Evidence to the inquiry suggests that it is not unusual for children and young people to experience rudeness or aggression in their interactions with the police, with officers displaying what children perceive to be threatening or intimidating behaviour or failing to give information on what they are doing. A number of young people spoke about the frustration of being treated like a criminal by the police when they did not feel they had done anything wrong, and some commented on the pejorative and accusative language the police use towards them".

Many of the young people who participated in this Inquiry echoed these sentiments about how police treated young people. Some also felt that children and young people's experiences of crime were not given due weight, and taken less seriously than crimes against older people:

"People have bad experiences of police – being picked on, harassed ...you hear from friends – their personal experiences" (male, group 1).

"As a young person - they don't really value you" (male, group 1).

"Say if a child rings the police themselves they might not get taken seriously" (female, group 1).

"Police look at you like you're a chav – if you look like a chav they're gonna think you did it" (female, group 2).

Both the focus group evidence and submissions to the call for evidence suggest that certain groups of children and young people may be being treated more negatively by the police than others:

"On the thing of not being believed – I think some people will be believed more than others because young people are sometimes are labelled by people ...they'll be more likely to believe the person whose never been in trouble before, compared to the person whose been labelled as someone who acts up or is seen as someone not to be trusted" (male, group 3).

Some of the young people identified as most likely to have negative engagements with the police, and least likely to receive an appropriate response should they report a crime, are:

- **Young people aged 13/14 and above, particularly young males:** CSEW data reveals that older respondents tended to report more negative engagements with police, with 13–15 year olds four times more likely to say they had been approached by police to 'tell [them] off or ask [them] to move on', than 10–12 year olds (36% .v. 9%). Males were also more likely to experience such an approach than females (33% .v. 15%) (ONS 2014a).

- **Those with offending histories:** A number of research studies indicate that young people with offending histories feel they are treated more negatively by the police than other young people, with a particular issue around failing to recognise them as vulnerable and/or as victims. As illustrated in the quotation below, this issue was also raised by some of the young people who participated in

focus groups. It is a particularly critical one given the evidence base around the relationship between offending and victimisation, including violent levels of the same (Smith 2004; Owen and Sweeting 2007; The Howard League n.d).

"It's their own fault that we don't believe s**t that they say. As soon as a crime happens that we're supposed to be committing, they're all over us but they don't give a s**t if there's a crime against us. ...it's called stereotyping" (female, group 2).

- **Those who have repeated patterns of running away and/or other patterns of non-offending patterns of behaviour that have brought them to the attention of the police:** This issue was raised by a number of submissions to the call for evidence who note common misconceptions about levels of risk for these young people and judgement around what was perceived to be 'risk-taking behaviour'.

- **BME children and young people:** A number of studies have suggested that children and young people from BME communities experience less positive interactions with the police and express lower levels of satisfaction with the service they offer (MPS 2010; ONS 2014b). Particular concerns have been raised about the disproportionate use of stop and search in this regard (The Howard League n.d; APPG Children 2014).

The issue of racism within policing was an issue of concern for the young people who participated in this Inquiry, with discussion around this across all three groups:

"I think there's a lot of stereotyping as well – with black people – a lot of people think about the police, they think about a group of racists" (male, group 2).

"They treat black people differently – if you're a white victim they take you more seriously init" (male, group 2).

While some of these perceptions originated from secondary sources, others were clearly rooted in the direct experiences of members of the focus groups. Even where negative perceptions of the police were based on secondary sources there was a sense that these stories held particular sway and traction over young people's attitudes towards the police. In two of the groups young people also cited the media – both fiction and non-fiction - as informing their perceptions about the police and specifically referred to the influence of Stephen Lawrence case on their thinking:

"If they hear that someone's brother's friends have a dodgy encounter with the police that will take their thoughts on them and things like the Stephen Lawrence thing and various other things by the police that weren't handled so well – it just sort of filters down and changes what you think" (male, group 3).

Where any child or young person has a negative experience of reporting crime or victimisation, or indeed any negative encounter with the police, this has a significant negative impact on propensity to seek support amongst their family, friends and wider social environments. Responding to the call for evidence, Barnardo's highlight that this is a pattern being observed within their services, whereby even one individual's experience of being treated with disbelief or contempt by the police provided powerful disincentives to reporting for other young people within their social networks. Similarly the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria highlighted, in her submission, the strength of peer to peer messages about the police and the need to minimise the chances of these becoming negative. As the Metropolitan Police Authority (2008:4) conclude:

"Young people are extremely concerned about reporting crimes to the police. This concern is exacerbated by how young people are treated by the police...Individual encounters between young people and police officers have a direct bearing on the perceptions that young people have of the police service as a whole. A single negative encounter can result in an overall negative impression of the entire service...Individual positive relationships between young people and police officers can play a crucial role in whether young people are confident to seek support and advice from the police".

Securing justice

Children's and young people's propensity to report crime is also influenced by their confidence (or lack thereof) in satisfactory outcomes. Evidence gathered for this Inquiry shows low levels of prosecutions and even lower levels of convictions for crime against children and young people. It also identifies the many difficulties victims experience in going through criminal justice processes, and the incredibly negative impact this can have on them (APPG Children 2014; Barnardo's 2014; Beckett and

Warrington, forthcoming). An awareness of the difficulties of criminal justice processes, and the low likelihood of satisfactory outcomes, acts as a significant deterrent to reporting for many children and young people:

"I think it's more the concern that they won't act on what you say rather than not believing you – because there was a cyber bullying case involving my friends recently and we talked to the police about it and nothing happened about it – so maybe – you can develop a mistrust from there" (male, group 3).

Several focus group participants shared personal experiences of where they had been dissatisfied with a police response to a crime report. Several examples of the same were provided by the IPCC in their submission to the call for evidence. Examples from both sources related to incidents where police were too slow to attend a scene of crime, where they felt they had failed to gather adequate evidence and statements from victims and witnesses and/or where they had failed to communicate about and provide feedback on cases. These experiences acted as powerful disincentives to reporting further experiences of crime, as indeed did recognition of low detection rates:

"You think nothing will come of it [reporting a crime]" (male, group 1).

"Same for me – I wouldn't tell them because they're not going to get back my phone" (female, group 2).

"Say if you did get your phone stolen – on the tube or the bus – by someone you didn't know – you may just think –well if I did report it what are they going to do about…I don't think anyone saw anything so what's the point in taking people's time up" (female, group 3).

As an aside, it is important to note the wider implications of this lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, in terms of the likelihood of victims of crime, or others who act on their behalf, becoming perpetrators of crime. A number of studies have identified how a lack of confidence in the ability of the criminal justice system to deliver justice, has led some young people to conclude that, if they wanted something done about a crime, they should seek alternative solutions within their own community (Yates 2006; Beckett et al 2013). Alternative methods of 'securing justice' were also mentioned in two of the focus groups conducted as part of the Inquiry. Young people's motivation to take matters into their own hands stemmed, in part, from a belief that they were sometimes better placed to respond directly and with more immediacy than the police. It also stemmed in part from a belief that 'legal justice' did not equate with their personal interpretations of justice:

"Really and truly I don't care if I get called a snitch – but I still wouldn't call the police – say if I got robbed for something very valuable I'm gonna get it back my own way" (male, group1).

3. Conclusion and priority areas for change

The evidence gathered in this time-limited Scoping Inquiry has clearly shown that children and young people in England and Wales are experiencing significant levels of crime and victimisation. In most cases, they are doing so without the support and intervention of statutory services, given that less than one in five incidents of crime and victimisation are being reported.

The Inquiry has identified five inter-related areas that act as barriers to children and young people reporting their experiences of crime and victimisation. These are:

• Understanding of what constitutes crime and victimisation and how to report this;

• The context in which the crime or victimisation occurs;

• Risks associated with reporting;

• Perceptions of victimhood; and

• Perceptions and experiences of the police.

In light of low levels of disclosure by children and young people, identification by professionals becomes particularly significant, yet this is identified as another area requiring significant progress.

Priority areas for change

Whilst recognising that change is required at many different levels, and in many different, ways, the Inquiry identifies the following recommendations as priority areas for starting this process of change.

1. Improving children's knowledge and understanding of crime and victimisation

All children and young people should have access to age appropriate, exemplary education addressing issues of crime and victimisation. Teaching staff and other professionals working with children should be equipped and supported to deliver a curriculum that addresses the identification and reporting of crime, promotes an understanding of children's rights to support and redress following victimisation and supports children to think critically about wider issues of safety, harm, and associated stigma. We recommend that:

• The Department for Education should ensure that:

– Addressing crime and victimisation is part of a whole school approach to safeguarding and wellbeing which includes the compulsory provision of PSHE.

– Education addressing crime and victimisation is available to all children and young people, regardless of the nature of the educational setting in which they're based. It should be part of both the primary and secondary curriculum.

– Teachers and other education providers have access to the relevant resources, support and training to help them deliver this aspect of the curriculum.

– In order to ensure delivery and high standards of provision, this aspect of the curriculum is linked to the education inspection regime.

2. Promoting trust in professionals and organisations involved in safeguarding children and young people

All professionals and organisations responsible for safeguarding children and young people must ensure that all reports of crime and victimisation, irrespective of who they relate to, are responded to with the utmost regard for children's safety and wellbeing. Work must be undertaken to ensure that such practice becomes the anticipated response and clear accountability exists where practice does not meet these standards. It is critical that the police prioritise improving their ability to respond to young people in any context in a way which heightens trust and understanding for their role. This is neither an easy nor short term task but must be prioritised in order to shift engrained beliefs and attitudes which inhibit some children and young people from engaging with them. We therefore recommend that:

• The College of Police ensure that all police are trained on, and receive continuing professional development about, respectful and age-appropriate communication and engagement with children and young people in any context (not just when they are a victim of crime).

• Other professional bodies, covering health, education, social care, youth work and so on, ensure that all staff who are working directly with children and young people are trained and supported to identify signs and respond to disclosures (direct or otherwise) of children's victimisation. Training should include accessing appropriate support for victims and witnesses and channels for reporting crime.

3. Data collection

The process of this Inquiry has highlighted clear gaps in our knowledge around the levels of crime that children and young people experience. It is vital that these gaps are addressed to build a robust evidence base to inform effective future policy and guidance and contribute to challenging the hidden nature of much of children's victimisation. We specifically recommend that:

• The Home Office and Ministry of Justice co-ordinate efforts to ensure that a comprehensive data set is developed on under 18s experiences of crime, and that 'adult' statistics are disaggregated into under and over 18 to facilitate this.

• The CSEW consider expanding the set of offences covered in their 10–15 year old module, to more accurately reflect what evidence shows us children of these ages are experiencing.

We also note the need for further research to provide a robust evidence base for understanding the reasons why children and young people do not report the majority of crimes perpetrated against them, or witnessed by them, to the police and potential means of addressing this.
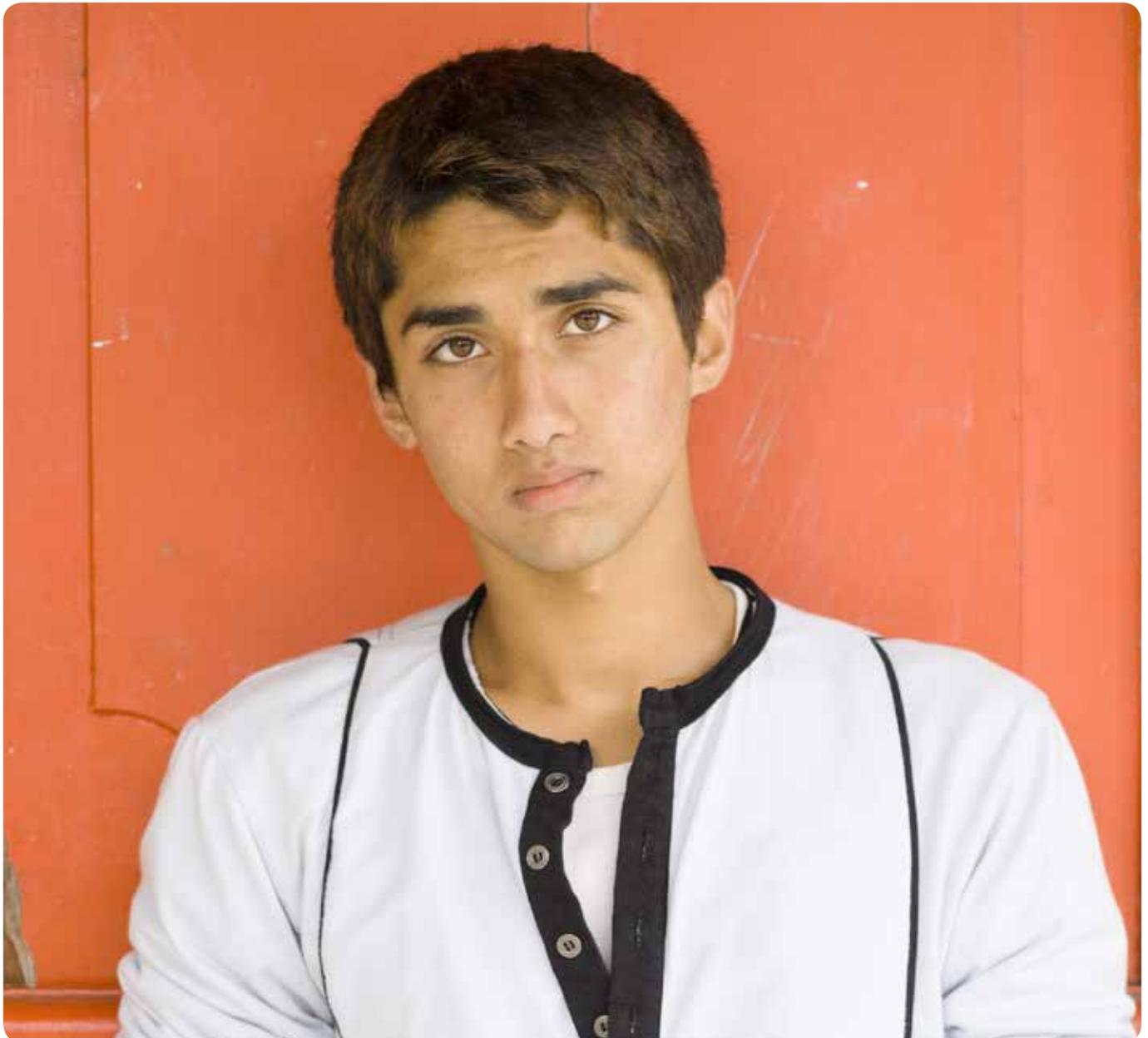
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Appendix 1: Contextual information about call for evidence and focus groups

Focus groups

Three consultation groups took place with young people during November 2014. Given the short timescale for the research, convenience sampling was used to identify groups through both Victim Support and the University of Bedfordshire's existing contacts. This resulted in groups delivered in partnership with three separate organisations: a local estate based youth centre, an Explorer Scout group and city-centre targeted youth provision. Two groups were based in London and one in the East Midlands. In total 26 participants took part aged from 14–19 years. 15 participants were male and 9 female. All groups contained a mixture of young men and young women. Consultation groups did not elicit details of participants' personal experiences of crime but rather sought to explore attitudes towards reporting crime based on hypothetical scenarios. All participants received a voucher for their contributions and will be informed about the outcomes of the inquiry.

Call for Evidence

As part of the Inquiry, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Victims and Witnesses of crime issued a call for evidence to charities and statutory agencies. The terms of reference were specific to the issue of underreporting of crime for when children and young people, 0 – 18 years of age, who have been victims of crime.

The call for evidence requested respondents considered the following questions in their responses:

• What is the extent of hidden crime amongst children and young people and what are the barriers to reporting such crime.

• How many children and young people in your knowledge do not report crimes committed against them to the police?

• Why do young victims not report their experiences to the police?

• What are young people's experiences of reporting and does the police service need to change practice to address this?

• Do young people have any trust in any elements of the CJS or charities working in this area?

• When they do report crime to teachers or parents why does this not progress through the Criminal Justice System?

• How do young people identify what is a crime?

The aim of this section of the inquiry was to draw on the intelligence of service providers who have frontline experience of working with victims of crime within this age group. Many children's charities provide support to children and young people who have not reported their experiences to the police, or progressed through the justice process for varied reasons. Therefore, reflecting on the experience and intelligence of these agencies is essential to gaining an overall picture of the problems that children and young people face when they experience a crime.

The Inquiry heard from a variety of professionals including children's charities, a Police and Crime commissioner, independent researchers and the Independent Police Complaints Commission. Naturally, responses varied dependant on the speciality of the agency, but the Inquiry did attract

feedback on the experiences of children who have been subjected to sexual abuse or exploitation in particular.

Iryna Pona	The Children's Society
Dr Helen Beckett	The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, University of Bedfordshire.
Carron Fox	Barnardos
Vera Baird	Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner
Jemma Price	Children's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, West Mercia (ChISVA)
Mark Hines	Independent Police Complaints Commission
Jonathan Shepherd, CBE FMedSci	Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and Director, Violence Research Group, Cardiff University. Chairman, Violence Prevention Group, Cardiff Partnership.

Appendix 2: Statistical tables

Table 1: 11–17 year olds experiences of maltreatment in a one year period

Maltreatment type	% of 11–17 year olds who report experiencing this in the last year
Sexual abuse	9%
Contact sexual abuse	2%
Physical violence (parent/guardian)	2%
Physical violence (any perpetrator)	36%
Emotional abuse (parent/guardian)	3%
Emotional abuse (any perpetrator)	32%
Overall maltreatment by parent/guardian	6%
Overall maltreatment by adult outside the home	3%
Intimate partner abuse	5%
Exposure to domestic violence	3%

Source: Radford et al 2011, cited in Jutte et al 2014

Table 2: Number of recorded sexual offences 2013/14

Offence	Number of offences
Rape of female under 13	2,833
Rape of male under 13	1,120
Sexual assault on female under 13	5,119
Sexual assault on male under 13	1,651
Sexual activity with a child under 13	2,887
Total under 13	**13,610**
Rape of female under 16	3,396
Rape of male under 16	415
Sexual activity involving a child under 16	5,882
Meeting a child following sexual grooming	469
Total under 16	**23,772**
Incest or familial sexual offence	491
Abuse of a position of trust of a sexual nature	194
Abuse of a child through prostitution or pornography	290
Total under 18	**24,747**

Source: ONS 2014a

www.victimsupport.org.uk