

Slough Equalities Review

**An independent review of the demographics of the victims
and perpetrators of exploitation**

Stephen Cullen

May 2021

Slough Equalities Review

Introduction

This review was commissioned by the Slough Safeguarding Leaders' Group.

This report follows an independent review of the demographic profile of victims of exploitation, including sexual exploitation, knife crime, county lines and modern slavery.

Author

The review was undertaken by an independent author Stephen Cullen.

Stephen Cullen is a recently retired Assistant Chief Constable with Avon and Somerset Constabulary and was formerly Head of Public Protection and a Senior Investigating Officer in West Mercia Police.

Stephen has no previous connection with Slough.

Acknowledgements

The Independent Author would like to take the opportunity to thank the Slough Safeguarding Partnership, participating agencies and key professionals who contributed to this review. The review could not have been completed without their openness, willingness to support this review and improve for the benefit of the communities of Slough.

Please Note: The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the representatives who took part in the semi-structured interviews and may not reflect the official view of the organisation from which they are associated.

Data quoted within this report is indicative. As referenced within the report the partnership is currently developing their quantitative and qualitative understanding of exploitation and recognise that there are gaps in the data and the contextual narrative presented to the review.

Any specific analysis around the demographics of the victims and perpetrators are highlighted in **bold** within the report.

Particular thanks to the safeguarding partnership team in facilitating meetings with professionals and allowing access to key reference material.

I have observed that professionals in Slough have a great passion and desire to make a positive difference to the lives of the most vulnerable in the borough. There are strong mutually respectful collaborative professional relationships clearly evident.

Terms of Reference

Review Aims

The Slough Strategic Leadership Group's (SLG) aim is to establish if there are any specific demographic groups disproportionately represented as victims or perpetrators of exploitation, using currently available information.

Review Objectives (expressed as Key Lines of Enquiry)

- What is the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators (*that we know about*) of exploitation in Slough?
- Are there any specific demographic groups experiencing specific forms of exploitation?
- Is there any learning for the SLG to inform the holistic exploitation strategy?
- Is there learning about management and front-line practice for the two groups leading on this in Slough, the safeguarding children from exploitation and modern slavery groups.
- Are there any demographic groups disproportionately represented as victims of exploitation in Slough?

Methodology

- Review all demographic data provided by operational managers from partner agencies in Slough in relation to victims and perpetrators of exploitation.
- Review data provided by the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements.
- Review data available to Slough Modern Slavery group.
- Interview operational managers and practitioners in partner agencies to gain insight into their experience to contribute to the review.
- Engage the head teacher in the Pupil Referral Unit to understand front line experience.
- Examine the data provided for the joint strategic need's assessment.
- Carry out a literature search on the national profile, to provide perspective on the situation in Slough.
- Analyse the data with partners.
- Write a report drawing up conclusions using the key lines of enquiry as headings.

Key Stages of the Review

Stage 1 Background research and understanding including reviewing national reports and previous reviews in Slough.

Stage 2 Engagement and semi structured interviews with key professionals from a cross representation of agencies.

Stage 3 Completion of the initial draft review report for consideration by commissioning partners.

Stage 4 Refinements and presentation of final review report.

This is not a comprehensive academic literature review; rather it is an overview designed to draw out principal themes and insights.

I have brought together national and local research and data, with the professional insight and opinion of professionals.

Primarily due to the pandemic this review has been desk based and via the telephone.

The review will:

- Inform the SLG about what is currently known about demographics of victims and perpetrators in Slough.
- Inform the exploitation strategy.
- Support, enhance and inform the safeguarding children from exploitation group and the modern slavery group in relation to management and front line practice issues arising from the review.

Executive Summary

Slough is a culturally diverse town with many different groups and ethnicities residing side by side.

This report follows a review into the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators (*that we know about*) of exploitation in Slough?

It is to the credit to the SLG that they have elected to commission this independent review rather than make assumptions around the demographics that underpin exploitation in Slough.

Within the review I was invited to specifically explore exploitation taking place across the thematic areas of **Child Sexual Exploitation, Knife Crime, County Lines and Modern Slavery**. There is of course significant overlap when examining exploitation across all of these areas.

These areas cut across both the child and young person and adult space and victims of exploitation can be drawn into several crime types at the same time.

Children, young people and vulnerable adults can be either victims or perpetrators, often due to the contextual situation. Although some perpetrators may appear to be willing accomplices in the abuse of others this should be seen in the context of the controls exerted by others.

It is also important to note different types of exploitation can overlap, with those targeted for one form of exploitation at times becoming victims of another. For example, victims of modern slavery may be forced to commit crimes, such as becoming 'runners' in county lines drug supply or committing acquisitive crime.

In researching the national position, it is challenging to draw any definitive evidenced based assessments around the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators of exploitation. These same challenges exist in Slough.

This is due to several complex reasons which are summarised as follows:

- Under reporting in specific areas such as CSE and modern slavery.
- Hidden harm across diverse communities with victims who are often too traumatised to report their exploitation or may not self-identify as victims.
- Victims themselves being involved in criminal activities and therefore being afraid to come forward.
- Victims fearing repercussions, for themselves or their families and friends, if they report exploitation.
- Lack of comprehensive and reliable data.
- Partners interpreting information requirements and data in different ways.
- Over reliance on police data rather than partnership data.
- Agencies not consistently sharing data.

- The data that is captured is not always 'joined up' in order to establish a 'rich picture'.
- Specific gaps and challenges in recording ethnicity and other protected characteristics.
- Unconscious bias or gaps in cultural competence.
- Confidence of professionals to encourage victims and perpetrators to self-define and report exploitation.
- The absence of a strategic threat assessment with a specific focus on the demographics of victims and perpetrators.

Any commentary, data or analysis is therefore based on *what we do know* and has been presented for the purposes of this review.

The review included over 40 semi structured interviews with professionals across a range of agencies. The views and opinions offered are set against the data presented.

The following data sets were analysed:

- 2021 CSE / CCE draft assessment by TVP.
- 2021 CSE data presented to the MACE panel
- 2021 Demographic data presented by Haybrook College
- 2021 School exclusion data
- 2021 Data relating to accommodation
- 2021 Data relating to modern slavery cuckooing
- 2020 Data from SBC Annual Equality & Diversity Report
- 2020 YOT perpetrator demographic
- 2020 Summary of serious violence rapid reviews serious violence
- 2020 Modern Slavery data presented to the partnership
- 2020 National Referral Mechanism data
- 2019 Findings from Operation Flinch – exploitation via car washes
- 2019 Findings from Operation Aidant – exploitation through nail bars.
- 2018 Data from the 'Child Sexual Exploitation. Our current understanding in Slough' report.

When examining the data across these data sets together, in most areas the predominant demographic profile of victims and perpetrators of exploitation is White British. This is also the case with school exclusions.

The exceptions are the more diverse demographic profile of victims of serious violence identified as part of the rapid review process and a higher proportion of victims of child criminal exploitation who are defined as Asian or Asian British Pakistani and White and Black Caribbean.

When reviewing housing and accommodation BAME households continue to be over-represented among housing applicants and homeless households.

However, given the challenges outlined, the limitations of what has been provided and concerns around data quality any in depth interpretation is challenging. Whilst many of the data sets identify a higher proportion of White British victims and perpetrators it is important to acknowledge hidden harm, under reporting and the 'unknowns' when seeking to when interpreting trends / patterns in data.

I was also asked to review any exploitation taking place within specific ethnic, faith or cultural demographic groups.

Several professionals have raised concerns around exploitation across the Roma community. This is in a supportive way with a desire to more closely engage with and support these often-maligned communities.

Given the strength of concern presented by professionals around potential exploitation within the Roma community there is a 'here and now' need to review the current operational strategy and put in place some immediate interventions.

The passion that professionals have in Slough is very evident and contagious.

In carrying out any review, I have identified several learning points for further consideration. However, it is as important to acknowledge the clear strengths around partnership working in Slough. These strengths include:

- Despite the pandemic, multi-agency engagement and participation has been excellent, and the commitment of professionals has been exemplary.
- There is evidence of a collective understanding of threat, harm and risk and positive actions to mitigate it.
- There are some positive examples of engagement with minority communities.
- There are some examples of proactive information and data sharing by partners.
- There is some evidence of agencies linking up information and intelligence on particular groups of children and vulnerable adults and robust discussions about levels of support and intervention required.

There is a collective desire to build upon these strengths and an ethos of continuous professional development

There are several strategic developments which provide an opportunity for SBC to build upon these strengths. These include the repositioning of Children First, the new locality based operating model, the transformation programme and the commissioned work to support the Roma community.

Whilst resetting out of the pandemic presents some challenges and risk, it also presents opportunities for the partnership.

When reviewing the requirements of the SLG this review has highlighted:

- Community and cultural factors are highly relevant to understanding and tackling the demographics of exploitation. Engagement and communication are key.
- Accurate, reliable data and intelligence is critical to truly understanding the demographics of exploitation.
- The insight and experience of front-line professionals is vital in understanding the demographics of exploitation. They are often representative of the voice of the children and young people who may be subject of exploitation.

Whilst there is really good work taking place, if the partnership is truly to understand the demographics around exploitation, it will need to build upon the strengths and require a more sophisticated approach to identifying victims and perpetrators moving forward.

For ease of reference, I detail below the key learning points from this review which are also replicated at **Appendix A**.

Learning Points.

Learning Point 1. Continue to work as a partnership as part of the ‘resetting’ strategy post the pandemic to try and mitigate against the potential for an increase in criminal exploitation, county lines and knife crime and a ‘surge’ in safeguarding referrals as ‘lockdown’ eases.

Learning Point 2. Improve the consistency in how some schools interpret, record and share the data relating to school’s exclusions. A specific focus should be ensuring ethnicity is recorded.

Learning Point 3. TVP to build upon their assessment of CSE and CCE and seek to further explore the demographics of victims and perpetrators.

Learning Point 4. Improve the consistency of carrying out return home interviews, analysis and intelligence sharing across the partnership to reduce the risk of further exploitation.

Learning Point 5. Continue to improve the awareness and understanding of the correlation between modern slavery and exploitation.

Learning Point 6. Continue to improve the awareness modern slavery and the importance of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Learning Point 7. Prioritise the partnership work to develop the collective understanding of and tackle sex work exploitation.

Learning Point 8. Improve the consistency of response to safeguarding alerts involving vulnerable adults.

Learning Point 9. Ahead of the research by Nottingham University, the partnership to review and seek to corroborate these concerns around the Roma community and prioritise an operational strategy built upon engagement, support and intervention.

Learning Point 10. Explore and if necessary, seek to build upon and enhance the level of engagement with the Somali community.

Learning Point 11. Explore and if necessary, seek to improve the level of engagement within some faith schools.

Learning Point 12. Improve the collection, sharing and analysis of data to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploitation.

Learning Point 13. Improve the recording of ethnicity and other protected characteristics to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploitation.

Learning Point 14. Commission a strategic threat assessment and / or problem profile to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploitation.

Learning Point 15. Review the community engagement strategy with diverse socially excluded communities to further understand and mitigate against any potential exploitation.

Learning Point 16. Consider the implementation of a 'hyper local' communication strategy to engage with and support minority communities.

Learning Point 17. Be clearer in communicating a clear coherent strategy to front line professionals in informing their work to tackle exploitation with diverse, evolving communities.

Learning Point 18. Review focus and levels of support around early intervention. and key stage 7 & 8.

Learning Point 19. Review continuous professional development for partnership professionals with a focus on cultural competence and the importance of community intelligence.

Contextual background information

Slough

Slough is a culturally diverse town with many different groups and ethnicities residing side by side.

Due to the proximity of London, Heathrow Airport, the motorway network and other factors, Slough has seen a range of different groups migrate and settle in the borough over time. Historically Pakistani, Somali, African and Eastern European communities have resided in Slough. More recently there has been a re-emerging Roma community in the borough.

The diversity of Slough is reflected in the fact that around 150 different languages are spoken.

A professional offered the view that Slough may be the most diverse borough in the UK after Tower Hamlets in London.

Slough is a deprived area. However, it is also an area that can offer opportunity and employment. However, this may include low skilled work which in itself may lead to exploitation.

Slough's population is very transient which provides an additional challenge for the partnership seeking to protect the most vulnerable.

Slough is also a small borough in comparison to other places and this presents opportunities in terms of community engagement and the partnership developing a rich understanding of exploitation in the area.

Slough Borough Council Annual Equality & Diversity Report 2020

Slough Demographics

Throughout 2019, SBC continued to analyse and make use of demographic and other statistical information on the make-up and life experiences of residents. The data comes largely from the 2011 Census, but also from other primary data sets (ONS population estimates and research, employment statistics, benefit claimants, crime statistics etc).

In 2018, Slough had an estimated population of 149,112. Gender was split almost evenly between men and women, with very slightly more males than females.

Slough's population is significantly younger than the national average, with a median age of 34.8 years (compared to 40.1 years for England as a whole) and a distinctive working age cohort.

In 2018 9.96% of Slough's population were estimated to be over the age of 65. This is estimated to grow to 15.94% by 2041.

16% of children in Slough live in low-income households. Currently, just over 46% of applications for social housing relate to children under the age of 15 years of age, reflecting the high need for family homes including access to outdoor space for residents with dependent children.

Children of the age 15 years or under make up 43% of those living in temporary accommodation (consistent with the council's objectives to support families with young children).

Ethnicity and Nationality

Slough is one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the UK. The last comprehensive national survey of ethnicity remains the 2011 Census.

It is likely that there have been significant changes in Slough's since 2011.

In a research report of 2016, the ONS estimated the following ethnicity profile for Slough residents:

- Asian/Asian British: 43.53% (64,000)
- White British: 29.25% (43,000)
- White Other: 13.61% (20,000)
- Black/Black British: 9.52% (14,000)
- Mixed Race: 2.04% (3,000)
- Other: 2.04% (3,000).

In the same research, the ONS estimated:

- that approximately 86,000 (58.5%) of Slough residents were born in the UK and 61,000 (41.5%) were non-UK born.
- 112,000 (76.2%) were estimated to be British nationals and 35,000 (23.8%) non-British nationals.
- By comparison, across the UK approximately 79.97% were estimated to be White British; 6.35% White Other; 1.62% Mixed Race; 7.20% Asian; 3.15% Black; and 1.72% Other.

Languages

A key consideration for the planning and delivery of local public services is the wide range of languages spoken in Slough. The 2019 school census recorded around 150 languages and dialects spoken in Slough schools. After English, the most popular languages spoken are Urdu, Punjabi and Polish. Whilst many households have at least one member who speaks English as a main language, the 2011 Census revealed that 15.5% of households do not include anyone for whom English is the main language.

Religion and belief

Most Slough residents follow a religion, with the town having one of the lowest recordings nationally of people declaring "no religion" in the 2011 Census. Slough

has the largest proportion of Sikh residents in the country (at 10.6%). Nearly one quarter of residents are Muslim (23.3%), whilst 41.2% of residents are Christian.

Census 2021

The most recent national census took place in March 2021. This survey happens every 10 years and will provide a richer up to date picture of the demographics in Slough.

When examining demographic profiles over time the ethnic group question in the Census has increased from 9 categories in 1991 to 16 categories in 2001, to 18 categories for 2011 to reflect changing and more diverse communities.

The 2021 Census has been further updated with new ethnic group tick boxes included. Significantly, for this report, the 2021 Census includes a specific category for Roma and a write in option for those selecting African to enable a more specific background to be recorded.

It should be noted that Census information can be mapped in 'output areas', which can identify locations of high deprivation.

Census based local authority estimates will be available in March 2022.

The Berkshire Observatory

Looking beyond Slough, the Berkshire Observatory is a data resource for the six Berkshire Local Authorities.

It is essential to understand population size and characteristics in order to effectively plan and deliver services such as education, transport and healthcare. The Berkshire Observatory displays the latest population estimates and projections for Slough and beyond.

Population estimates are produced using a variety of data sources and statistical models, including some statistical disclosure control methods, and small estimates should not be taken to refer to particular individuals. The estimated resident population of an area includes all those people who usually live there, regardless of nationality. Arriving international migrants are included in the usually resident population if they remain in the UK for at least a year.

Strategic Intent

The following reflects the strategic intent of a range of agencies to protect the most vulnerable from exploitation and harm.

National Crime Agency (NCA)

The National Crime Agency (NCA) priorities for 2020 are tackling the high harm, high impact offenders who exploit the vulnerable through modern slavery, human trafficking, people smuggling and child sexual abuse.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is used to assess the current and future healthcare and wellbeing needs of residents. Gathering complimentary and contextual information and other relevant local information from schools, local authority children's and adult's social care and housing, the police, public health, local multi-faith forum are an important part of the scope of the JSNA.

Slough Borough Council (SBC)

SBC are committed to promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children as set out in the statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government 2018). SBC are clear that safeguarding is everyone's business.

Equality and Diversity

SBC has a long commitment to progressing the equalities agenda and they have a strong track record in delivering culturally sensitive, equitable services to an increasingly diverse community. The council seeks to foster an environment in which a person has an equal entitlement to high quality services, employment and opportunities for personal development, regardless of ethnic or racial origin, religion or belief, disability, age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or family circumstance.

Equality is of course much broader than race and ethnicity. It groups all the things which make us different, and can influence our opportunities in life including gender, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity and transgender.

Working for equality of opportunity is at the heart of SBC. This is for both staff and the wide range of services they provide to the community.

In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the council is required to set equality objectives at least every four years. The current objectives were set in 2017 and relate to our workforce, data collection, service delivery (with a specific focus on education, public health and housing), and community cohesion. SBC will be reviewing these to ensure they remain focused on the most important areas for the residents and workforce of Slough.

Representative workforce

In terms of building trust and confidence it is important that all agencies are as representative as of the communities they serve.

SBC have an equality objective which states SBC "will have a representative and inclusive workforce."

SBC seek to achieve this by a range of objectives including developing a well-trained workforce of staff and managers at all levels, who understand and promote dignity at work for all.

Data presented to this review reflect the efforts that SBC have made against this objective.

- 36 % of the workforce are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.
- Around 25% of staff are of Asian or Asian British ethnicity (the largest ethnic group after White/White British).
- 20% of staff have not declared an ethnicity.

Recognising the importance of closing this data gap SBC are actively encouraging staff to complete their ethnicity on a confidential, self –service HR system.

Thames Valley Violent Reduction Strategy / Unit

The Violent Reduction Unit (VRU) takes a public health approach to tackling violence – looking at violence not as isolated incidents or solely a law enforcement problem but instead a preventable consequence of a range of factors such as adverse early life experiences or harmful social or community experiences or influences.

Slough Violence Reduction Taskforce

The Slough Violence Reduction Taskforce coordinates partners within the borough to provide a focused evidenced based response to serious violence and to proactively work to reduce violent crime before it happens, thereby enabling a longer-term sustainable solution.

One of the specific aims of Slough Violent Reduction Strategy is to develop a local understanding of youth violence.

Thames Valley Police (TVP) Strategic Plan 2019 - 20

The Thames Valley Police (TVP) strategic plan identifies protecting the most vulnerable by proactively identifying, understanding and reducing risk and harm as a clear priority.

Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner Police Crime Plan 2017 - 2021

Within the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner Police and Crime Plan preventing the abuse of vulnerable children and tackling modern slavery are identified as key priorities.

Governance arrangements

There are a wide range of strategic and tactical governance arrangements in Slough.

Pan Berkshire Local Safeguarding partnerships

Safeguarding Partnerships in Berkshire have co-operated on common areas of business. The pan Berkshire safeguarding children and adults procedures sub-groups ensure consistency across the county on policy and procedure and provides for local protocols.

The Pan Berkshire Child Exploitation group is a forum for partners to share experience across Berkshire and has produced a screening tool for referrers used throughout the county.

Section 11 audits are also co-ordinated across the County.

Slough Wellbeing Board

The Slough Wellbeing Board has a duty to improve the health and wellbeing for those who live in Slough. The Slough Wellbeing Strategy developed by the Slough Wellbeing Board is based on the needs identified by the JSNA.

Slough Strategic Leadership Group (SLG)

The Slough Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) group is made up of statutory leads for safeguarding adults, safeguarding children and the community safety partnership. (This includes the delivery of the “Safeguarding Partners” function described in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*)

The Terms of Reference of the SLG are as follows:

- Sets priorities for safeguarding and community safety of Slough residents.
- Drives action to deliver cohesively and effectively on the statutory requirements of the safeguarding children’s, safeguarding adults and community safety partnerships.
- Ensures clear lines of responsibility and accountability for safeguarding and community safety business.
- Monitors the effectiveness of the delivery of the priorities including arrangements made to deliver them.
- Identifies challenges to progress in good time so that they can be rectified at the highest level.
- Responds to emerging need, adjusting arrangements to accommodate them when necessary.
- Supports and engages all partner agencies and delegates the tactical and operational elements of these functions through a sub-structure.
- Implements local learning, including from safeguarding practice, safeguarding adults, domestic homicide and other learning reviews.
- Engages with other partnerships, such as the Health and Well Being Board, the Channel panel, the Family Justice Board and Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA’s) to ensure effective and cohesive delivery.

Slough Safeguarding Partnership

The safeguarding partnership is led by the SLG and is made up of a range of functional sub-groups.

Slough Safeguarding Partnership is made up of the key statutory partners who provide a strategic overview of the work of child exploitation in Slough.

The Safeguarding Partnership delivers from the perspective of the *Children Acts 1989, 2004 and 2018* and the *Care Act 2014*, with a clear focus on the voice of the child, young person, vulnerable adult and their families.

The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* also requires a local community safety partnership to work together on crime reduction and fear of crime.

Working together 2018 requires that every local authority, clinical commissioning group and police force must be covered by a local safeguarding arrangement and these must be published. The three local safeguarding partners are:

- East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group: Director of Nursing and Quality
- Thames Valley Police: Slough Borough Commander
- Slough Local Authority; Statutory Directors of Children's Services and Statutory Director of Adult Services,

Each has a shared and equal duty to lead the safeguarding system in Slough.

Up until the 31st of March 2021, the Slough Council's Children's Social Care statutory functions were delegated to the Slough Children's Services Trust. This was primarily due to concerns raised by Ofsted as far back in 2015.

Since then, there have been significant improvements in safeguarding children and integration, reflecting the commitment of professionals and mutually supportive partnership working across the borough over recent years.

The progress made is evidenced by the commentary by Ofsted following an inspection in Slough.

'The partnership between the council and the trust has matured significantly and they now work effectively together. Political leaders now demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children, which has translated into the council's five-year plan. They have invested well and are committed to continuing to support the trust in delivering its vision to ensure that children who live in Slough are safe, secure and successful. The trust now needs to deliver on higher standards of practice'

As of the 1st of April 2021, Slough Children's Social Care will be under the sole direction of the local authority and repositioned as Slough Children First (SCF).

Slough Safeguarding Tactical Group

The Safeguarding Tactical Group meets on a quarterly basis and contributes to ongoing partnership working to develop the multi-agency approach to performance monitoring. The Covid pandemic has presented some additional challenges in building momentum of this group but there remains strong commitment.

The group works towards monitoring the effectiveness of the partnership in relation to the priorities set by the SLG.

The tactical group is chaired by a member of the SLG and delivers the following;

- Ensure the voice of the child, the vulnerable adult and the general community influence the partnership agenda.
- Transitions from the current partnership sub-structure to one that will support the delivery of the agreed priorities for 2019-2021.
- Develop strategies, action plans and performance measures to deliver the priorities set by the SSSLG.
- Monitor the effectiveness of strategies and actions plans designed to deliver the core priorities.
- Identify emerging issues and trends, using local intelligence and raise them with the SSSLG with recommendations for resolution.
- Identify obstacles to progress on performance in relation to the priorities and raise them with SSSLG with recommendations for resolution.
- Develop forward plans as agreed by SSSLG
- Co-ordinate one annual report.
- Ensure engagement and consensus by relevant partners to support forward movement.

Multi Agency Child Exploitation Panel (MACE)

The Slough MACE Panel was established in March 2020 to ensure there is a multi-agency risk management focus on children and young people who have been exploited or are at risk of exploitation in Slough. This includes:

- Children at risk of sexual exploitation
- Children at risk of criminal exploitation
- Children who are involved with gangs, county lines and serious youth violence

MACE is chaired jointly by TVP and Slough Children First (SCF)

The meeting agenda is held in two parts, part one focuses on criminal exploitation and gangs and youth violence, part two focuses on sexual exploitation.

The panel maintains an overview of risk management and disruption planning and informs multi-agency and strategic priorities for prevention and intervention activities for vulnerable young people in Slough.

The panel aims to reduce risks to children and young people by developing a contextual understanding of the links between victims and offenders, locations and hotspots, identifying themes and trends, and using this knowledge to inform diversionary measures, intervention, disruption and enforcement.

The panel also facilitates focused multi-agency discussions for each young person primarily concentrating on what disruptive and diversionary measures can be implemented to address the identified risks of exploitation, missing and abuse. The panel seeks to achieve this by:

- Understanding the relationship links and how exploitation is occurring between perpetrators and the victims.
- Triangulating and sharing intelligence and information from partners to ensure all agencies are working together to address abuse and exploitation.
- Mapping victims, perpetrators, local hotspot addresses through data analysis to provide a strategic oversight of trends and themes to inform a strategic partnership response and/or resource allocation.
- Assessing the effectiveness of interventions in place to reduce risk.
- Identifying and highlighting service gaps and barriers to the Slough Safeguarding Partnership.

Safeguarding Children from Exploitation Group (SCEG)

This group was set up to improve co-ordination of partnership agencies working with children at risk of or experiencing any form of exploitation. It's initial focus has been on developing a multi-agency response to children where there are concerns about knife crime/county lines and gangs and it has recently agreed to raise the profile of child sexual exploitation. It has been formed to compliment other governance arrangements with monthly meetings taking place for the last seven months. It has specifically helped to deliver on the safeguarding partnership strategic plan, in relation to exploitation.

Slough Violence Reduction Taskforce

The purpose of the Slough Violence Reduction Taskforce is to inform and reassure the local community, develop innovative methods to communicate with local communities, encourage behaviour change in relation to serious violence and promote positive role models and opportunity.

The taskforce stakeholders include the Local Authority, Police, Youth Offending Service, the NHS Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group, the Ambulance service, the Community Rehabilitation Service, Haybrook School, Aik Saath and the wider voluntary sector.

The taskforce focuses on four key areas of activity:

- Prevention – building resilience and supporting education in schools and communities; creating and promoting a positive view of the town.
- Early intervention – identifying young people at risk and providing effective intervention at the earliest opportunity to stop involvement in gangs and serious violence.
- Enforcement – robustly tackling knife crime, county lines and related criminality.
- Reactive intervention – people already involved in gangs, county lines activity and those committing serious violence will receive the right intervention at the right time.

The taskforce works to identify gaps in services, support and develop interventions that tackle the root causes of violence. They work with partners to build upon resources which already exist enabling long term sustainability of solutions.

Modern Slavery and Exploitation Group:

The Modern Slavery and Exploitation Group was originally formed in late 2016 and seeks to protect vulnerable adults from modern slavery and exploitation.

Whilst there is significant 'cross over' in terms of modern slavery and exploitation there is a consensus that this group is necessary in order to bring focus to the specific issues surrounding the exploitation of people over the age of 18.

The group compliments the established governance arrangements in place to protect children and young people.

The Terms of Reference were refreshed in 2020 and set out the following strategic vision:

The below bullet points are from the exploitation strategy which is delivered by both the SCEG and the modern slavery group.

- Every child and adult who is at risk of, or experiencing, exploitation will get the help and support they need.
- It will be more difficult to exploit people in Slough.

Slough Independent Advisory Group (IAG)

The Slough Independent Advisory Group (IAG) is chaired by Rob Deeks from Aik Saath.

The view is that the IAG is broadly representative in terms of ethnicity, faith and disability but more could be done to engage with the LGBTQ + community.

The group has a range of communities represented, including Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Polish and White British. Various faith groups are also represented

Special interest groups are also represented, including homeless people and people with disabilities.

The gender of the group is well-balanced, with around a 50/50 split.

Slough Youth Parliament

The Slough youth parliament seeks to ensure that young people in Slough can influence and be involved in decision making.

The parliament is made up of 40 young people aged 12 to 19 years of age. As well the members elected through schools and colleges, representatives also come from 'co-opted' groups from under- represented young people. The youth parliament are engaged with the safeguarding partnership.

The promotion of young people as agents of change can be very powerful. Stronger engagement with young people, can be extremely effective tool to drive change within local communities. The development of junior safeguarding boards / youth safeguarding ambassadors, with an associated sequence of activities to achieve effectiveness of contribution, are cited as examples of good practice in this area.

Context – Drivers for this review

I have observed that the partnership in Slough is collaborative, progressive and has a clear aspiration to improve the lives of people within the borough.

It is to the credit to the SLG that they have elected to commission this independent review rather than make assumptions around the demographics that underpin exploitation in Slough.

In commissioning this review, I understand there were several drivers which are referred to as follows. (in addition to local concern that this has not been done for some time).

The first of these was the *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation* (1997 - 2013) by Professor Alexis Jay OBE.

When this review was published in 2014 it examined in painstaking and at times horrifying detail the child abuse that took place in Rotherham over many years. The review had a seismic impact in terms of safeguarding and partnership working.

I attach at **Appendix D** Chapter 11 of the report which concentrated on issues of ethnicity and exploitation.

In carrying out this review I have consciously considered the findings within Professor Jay's report and whether any of the issues identified could be evident in Slough.

This review has not identified any direct evidence that the issues highlighted in Rotherham are visibly evident in Slough. However, the limitations of this review must be taking into account.

In terms of ongoing monitoring, it is important to keep the report and following recommendations from the review in clear line of sight:

Recommendation 12: There should be more direct and more frequent engagement by the Council and the Safeguarding Board/partnership with women and men from minority ethnic communities on the issue of CSE and other forms of abuse.

Recommendation 13: The Safeguarding Board/partnership should address the under-reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse in minority ethnic communities.

Recommendation 14: The issue of race should be tackled as an absolute priority if it is a significant factor in the criminal activity of organised child sexual abuse in the Borough.

Other drivers include some key cases which are referred to as follows.

Key Cases

Child Safeguarding Practice Review (SPR) 'John'

The tragic murder of a 15-year-old boy called 'John' in Slough in 2019 naturally invited fresh insight and attention.

Following the murder, a Child Safeguarding Practice Review was commissioned by the Slough Safeguarding Partnership in respect of 'John', a 15-year-old boy of White origin and of the Muslim faith. There was a recent history of concerns raised in respect of John, including his behaviour at school, his arrest for possession of a bladed article (knife) and being a victim of a violent assault. 'John' had become a subject of multi-agency discussions as a young person at risk of criminal exploitation and was a Slough child in need young person.

During September 2019 (the actual date has been redacted), 'John' was fatally stabbed with a knife at a local park in Slough. The perpetrator/defendant was another 15-year-old male who was known to 'John' and was arrested by Thames Valley Police. The defendant was charged with John's murder and was brought before the Courts where he entered a not guilty plea. He was however found guilty by a jury following his trial and was subsequently convicted and sentenced to nine years imprisonment. This SPR was anonymised to protect the identity of 'John' and his family and the perpetrator, who for legal reasons cannot be identified.

The independent author of the review into 'John's' death stated there was limited evidence that issues of culture and diversity identified from agency submissions and from the practitioners' events played a significant part in the death.

The defendant for 'John's' death, in his testimony at his subsequent trial, highlighted a possible concern with gang, knife crime and drug taking.

The author commented that his evidence, together with the other knife crimes that have occurred in Slough, suggested further work with a need to engage with young people to understand what is occurring and the dangers and difficulty they may face on the streets of Slough.

Looking at the background and lifestyle of 'John' and the defendant, shows they both had very similar backgrounds and both could equally have been victims of a dangerous lifestyle where youths carry knives for self-protection, are subjected to social media influence and pressures, liable to be exploited, gang affiliation, drug taking and dealing, county lines criminality, youth violence and knife crime.

This case reaffirms the importance of contextual safeguarding.

Child Exploitation Sikh female(s)

Concerns were raised by some stakeholders following a case involving a Sikh female in the later part of 2019.

Concerns were raised that the female may have been groomed by Muslim males and co-coerced into converting to Islam. I understand these concerns were thoroughly investigated, support has been put in place and the case is now closed.

My understanding was that there was no direct evidence to suggest a wider trend of exploitation at this time.

Impact of Covid 19

When examining exploitation, it is important to consider the challenges that the coronavirus pandemic has presented.

The pandemic has shone a light on the inequalities that exist within our society. These inequalities exist across health, education, housing, employment and criminal justice. It is also widely accepted that covid has disproportionately adversely affected minority communities and the more vulnerable in our society.

In 2020 the NPCC produced a report highlighting *'the risks to children's safety due to the conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic'*.

The NPCC reviewed research evidence to assess how likely it is that the conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic have heightened the risk of child abuse in the UK.

The NPCC looked at data from their own helpline and Childline, to see what people have been saying since the lockdown began. They also examined case studies

collected from practitioners working in their service centres about the impact of coronavirus on the children and families they were supporting.

Key findings include:

An increase in children and young people's vulnerability

There are indications that the conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic have heightened the vulnerability of children and young people to certain types of abuse, for example online abuse, abuse within the home, criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation.

A reduction in normal protective services

There is evidence that the 'normal' safeguards we rely on to protect children and young people have been reduced during the pandemic. However, some social connections and social support has remained and has helped provide a protective effect for children's safety and wellbeing.

Impact of Covid 19 in Slough

These national concerns are echoed in Slough, where all agencies have raised concerns around a reduction in engagement and support for vulnerable people over the last 12 months.

This is despite the extraordinary commitment of all professionals and collaborative partnership working throughout the pandemic.

The '*One Slough*' community response was implemented to build community resilience to help residents through the coronavirus crisis.

A specific multi-agency "Covid19 safeguarding" group was immediately created, meeting frequently at the peak of the pandemic, to identify risks and agree on mediation strategies. This provided the SLG with immediate information emerging from the front line, identifying areas of concern and leading on mitigating actions.

SBC and Slough Community Voluntary Service (CVS) have worked with key community groups and organisations to ensure a coordinated effort across the borough.

It is also important to acknowledge the adverse impact that the pandemic has had on professionals supporting the most vulnerable and it reflects their vocation for public service that they have continued to work through some unprecedented challenges.

Partners will say there is some evidence to suggest:

- Children and young people are presenting with more complex needs as a result of parental mental ill-health, drug and alcohol misuse, and domestic violence before the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Whilst this has been increasing over the past two years, it has been more acute during the pandemic and is forecast to increase further as the full impact of the pandemic is realised
- Agencies have also reported an increase in the work associated with safeguarding children and young people from exploitation.
- From a neighbourhood policing perspective, TVP will suggest that community engagement opportunities have reduced with fewer opportunities to build social capital.

As a partnership there is a range of 'resetting' activity taking to mitigate against these concerns as 'lockdown' eases. There is a recognition of the potential for an increase in criminal exploitation, county lines and knife crime and a 'surge' in safeguarding referrals.

Learning Point 1. Continue to work as a partnership as part of the 'resetting' strategy, post the pandemic to try and mitigate against the potential for an increase in criminal exploitation, county lines and knife crime and a 'surge' in safeguarding referrals as 'lockdown' eases.

Another perspective of the pandemic is provided by the Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF) who provide support and advice to migrants and asylum seekers.

When reflecting on the pandemic BCF say it has been a year of exacerbated inequalities, but also the breaking down of some social barriers.

The foundation noted that, particularly in areas of wide inequality, faith groups have stepped up to support others, beyond those of their immediate religious or ethnic communities. This has resulted in the breaking of stereotypes and greater appreciation between ethnic groups who previously have had little or no interaction with one another. This is encouraging and reflective of a cohesive community.

Evidence and assessment

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers can have limited influence over these contexts.

Contextual safeguarding is particularly important when seeking to explore the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators.

For example, we know that during the pandemic many young people from the more deprived areas or in multi occupancy accommodation may have had to spend more time in the public space. This in turn may present an increased risk of serious violence, knife crime and exploitation.

Local agencies should seek to fully understand the local context and facilitate strategic engagement between communities, agencies, businesses and charities to both understand the profile of offending and identify opportunities to disrupt it.

Group offending is particularly complex and requires relentless disruption and well-resourced, victim-centred investigations. Professionals should consider the local context, identifying and building safeguards around vulnerable children, and intervening in the situations or environments in which they are likely to be targeted.

The Slough multi-agency safeguarding partnership is well-placed to do this in a strategic way.

Several professionals have emphasised the importance of contextual safeguarding both in terms of 'place' (with references to 'hot spots' such as 'chicken shops') and 'people' (with references to peer pressure and affiliation).

As with any other borough there are many physical locations where young people congregate or can be easily accessed and therefore groomed by offenders in Slough. These include cafés, take-away food outlets, taxi ranks, hotels and hostels, known drug dealing hotspots, shopping centres, schools and colleges and public parks.

There is a belief from professionals that 'peer on peer' abuse is more prominent in the contextual safeguarding framework. This can be a consequence of the natural and vital adolescent need to push boundaries, to take risks and to form independent identities.

A refreshed threshold document acknowledges contextual safeguarding risks outside of the family home and recognises the associated risks.

There are plans by Children First (the new version of the Children's Trust) in the very near future to launch a Contextual Safeguarding Hub in Slough. This recognises that as children and young people get older the contextual position can carry more weight when looking at the risk of exploitation and the requirement for additional support.

The creation of this new team will be a significant development in understanding exploitation across different demographic groups. It will compliment and strengthen other partnership activity to safeguard children and young people.

Schools

Schools and colleges are at the heart of identifying and preventing the exploitation of children and young people.

They are a rich source of information and intelligence around the risks surrounding the most vulnerable.

There are 52 schools across Slough, 33 of which are primary schools and 19 secondary schools. There are a further 5 independent schools.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity of pupil's data as collected from the spring school Census 2019 is presented as follows:

Ethnicity	Numbers	Percentage %
Asian or Asian British Asian Heritage - Any Other	1445	4.5
Asian Heritage – Bangladeshi	258	0.8
Asian Heritage - Indian	6232	19.5
Asian Heritage – Pakistani	8165	25.5
Black or Black British Black Heritage – African	1944	6.1
Black Heritage - Any Other	218	0.7
Black Heritage – Caribbean	359	1.1
Mixed Heritage Mixed Heritage- Any Other	1391	4.3
Mixed Heritage - White & Asian	844	2.6
Mixed Heritage - White & Black African	301	0.9
Mixed Heritage - White & Black Caribbean	491	1.5
Other Chinese Heritage	43	0.1
Other Heritage	1239	3.9
Unclassified Heritage	539	1.7
White Heritage White Heritage - Any Other	3623	11.3
White Heritage - British	4573	14.3
White Heritage - Gypsy/Roma	188	0.6

White Heritage - Irish	120	0.4
White Heritage - Traveller of Irish Heritage	27	0.1

Key Outcomes

Within the same report the following key outcomes were presented:

- Girls are outperforming boys at all key stages, but the gaps are greatest at KS2.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are above the national average at KS2 and KS4.
- The gap between disadvantaged and all other pupils is also lower than the national gap at KS2 and KS4.

Pupils of White British origin and White Other origin are the lowest performing ethnic groups, and the Indian group are the highest performing. However, the biggest correlations for low attainment continue to be gender, disadvantage and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Slough 2020 Annual Equality and Diversity Report

The '2020 SBC Annual Equality and Diversity Report' made the following observations:

'The outcomes for most pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils, in Slough were in line with or above national average. Attainment outcomes for Asian Pakistani and Asian Indian pupils are particularly high and significantly above the national average for similar pupils.

Outcomes for White British pupils and pupils of White Other heritage are below national average for similar pupils

There is however a clear distinction between the outcomes for disadvantaged and not disadvantaged White British pupils in Slough. Outcomes for disadvantaged White British pupils in Slough are well below those of similar pupils nationally, this is particularly true for boys.

This suggests disadvantage and gender rather than ethnicity alone, are the biggest factors in the low attainment of White British pupils in Slough'.

The importance of disparities in education was referenced in the *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities* report where they offered a recommendation (7) as follows:

‘The Commission calls for the government to deploy additional funding to systematically target the entrenched and persistent disparities in education outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. It is right that in delivering this funding, the DfE should adopt a more holistic definition of need as well as consider ethnic, gender and socio-economic status. The additional funding should support proven interventions in early years, the transition between primary to secondary school, family hubs and careers provision among other key areas listed in the chapter. It is imperative for the funding to consider geographical variations, identifying disparities by regions or local areas including drilling down to individual school level where necessary. DfE should seek to avoid viewing disparities using national data which do not identify geographical variation in the performance of particular groups.

For example, funding allocation should consider how to best meet the needs of specific ethnic groups from low socio-economic status backgrounds who are scoring substantially below the average for all students including White British, Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean’

School Exclusions

There is a strong evidence to suggest that pupils excluded from school or college are at a heightened risk of being exploited.

The benefits of keeping vulnerable children within the school setting are clear.

Intensive support is required to provide young people with a high level of relational security to provide support against the ‘pull’ of exploitative relationships and circumstances. Both time and persistence in offering intensive support are required to engage with young people at risk.

The ongoing commitment of professionals who work tirelessly to try and support pupils in a school setting is acknowledged.

During an Inspection in 2018, Ofsted recognised the work at Haybrook College. They observed that many pupils arrive at the school having missed long periods of education, but rapidly improve their attendance and contribution.

Unscrupulous perpetrators will deliberately target children who have been excluded from school and are on the streets. Without the protections mainstream education affords, these children are inevitably more vulnerable.

Within a 2018 report commissioned by the Safer Slough Partnership (The community safety partnership) entitled *‘Child Sexual Exploitation. Our current understanding in Slough’* the author(s) made the following observations:

'Practitioners raised anecdotal concerns that a number of young people believed to be at risk of CSE, or who had disclosed CSE, have been excluded and / or had a managed moved / in year transfer/commissioned place away from mainstream education typically in response to displays of disruptive, hostile, and aggressive behaviour, with some placed in pupil referrals units.

Concerns were raised that not only does this bring together vulnerable children in relation to CSE, but also places them with other young people who have known gang affiliations, and / or who are thought to be criminally exploited i.e., running drugs both within Slough, and out of area, therefore heightening risk. It is recommended that at a local level, such concerns are investigated using through the use of quantitative school exclusion/transfer data'

Within the current draft '*Review of CS / CCE*' report, TVP have further recommended that 'there should be increasing focus and attention on school exclusions and poor attendance.'

A task and finish group has been established by the Safeguarding children from exploitation group (SCEG) to explore what can be done to reduce the risk of exploitation when children are not receiving full time education.

A Fair Access Protocol has been implemented, and professionals will say that schools have been supportive, and the position is improving.

Schools Exclusions Ethnicity

Data presented to this review by Slough Education Services, of children and young people who have been excluded from school and has been broken down broken in terms of ethnicity.

The data is presented as below:

Ethnicity	Exclusion category fixed period
White English	3498
Info not yet obtained	1606
Other Pakistani	1304
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	755
Indian	748
Black Caribbean	565
Black Somali	437
White European	431
Mirpuri Pakistani	357
Other Black African	300
White Other	278
Other mixed background	156
Kashmiri Pakistani	158
White Irish	154
Other Asian	135
White and Black African	109
White and Pakistani	106

Black & Any Oth Eth G'p	107
White and Any Oth Asian	87
Roma	72
White, UK heritage	70
Sri Lankan Tamil	66
White & Any Oth Eth G'p	65
White and Indian	58
Other Ethnic Group	58
Afghan	52
Other white British	48
Asian & Any Oth Eth G'p	51
(blank)	50
Other Black	48
Refused	48
Other Gypsy/Roma	48
Gypsy/Roma	44
Traveller - Irish Heritage	42
Black Nigerian	40
Black Ghanaian	37
Arab Other	35
Bangladeshi	31
White, European	25
Pakistani	24
Kosovan	17
African Asian	16
Filipino	14
Egyptian	13
Black European	13
Portuguese	12
Moroccan	12
Sri Lankan Other	12
Asian and Black	10
Albanian	9
Nepali	9
Black-Caribbean	9
Indian Sri - Lankan	9
Iraqi	8
Italian	7
Lebanese	7
Black Sudanese	6
Thai	7
Black Congolese	6
Kashmiri Other	6
Other (known)	5
Kurdish	5
Unclassified	5
Iranian	4
Polynesian	4

East-African	4
Black North American	3
Sri Lankan Sinhalese	3

On the data provided most children and young people excluded from school are defined as White British. This is followed by Other Pakistani and then a blend of different demographics reflecting the diversity in Slough.

It should be noted that when the totality of Non White children and young people excluded from school it far exceeds the number of White British. The significant number of children where the information around ethnicity is not available limits further analysis.

It should be noted that some professionals have indicated there were currently inconsistencies in how some schools interpret, record and share the data relating to school's exclusions.

There are a range of reasons for this and there is ongoing improvement work in order to bring more consistency.

It should also be noted there are significant numbers of children and young people who have been excluded from school where the ethnicity has not been recorded.

Further commentary on the importance of data quality and recording ethnicity is contained later in this report.

Learning Point 2. Improve the consistency in how some schools interpret, record and share the data relating to school's exclusions. A specific focus should be ensuring ethnicity is recorded.

Haybrook College Trust

Haybrook College Trust comprises a small special school called Millside School, a Pupil Referral Unit, which offers five unique programmes at KS4, as well as a range of 'revolving door' provisions at KS3 that have proven to be highly successful in supporting young people to maintain their place at or return to mainstream schools.

All pupils have significant and complex social, emotional, mental health and behavioural difficulties. Many have been permanently excluded from mainstream provision or are at risk of this happening. Others have missed significant amounts of schooling due to medical or mental health needs. The school aims to provide them with education and support that will either enable their successful return to mainstream schooling or to an appropriate post-16 course of education, training or apprenticeship.

In support of this review Haybrook have provided the following demographic data of children and young people who are victims of exploitation.

	Number	Percentage
Total on roll	191	100

Male	149	78
Female	42	22
Victims	58	38
Male	42	72
Female	16	28
Roma	6	10
Muslim	8	14
Somali	1	1.7
Traveller (Irish)	4	7
White British	29	50

The data indicates that most victims are male. In terms of ethnicity the significant higher proportion of children and young people who at risk of exploitation are White British, with broadly an equitable spread of victims from Roma, Muslim and White / Black Caribbean communities.

Haybrook will say they have only identified two children who could be defined as both victim and perpetrators.

A key question for partnership is how representative is the data presented by Haybrook of the demographics of victim exploitation in Slough?

Housing

Stable, safe and secure housing is a significant protective factor against exploitation, particularly for children and young people.

The Positive Pathway programme aims to give a clear framework young people aged 16 -25 from becoming homeless. It also sets out the services and support needed to help young people who do not become homeless to a build a more positive future.

This principle is articulated in the statement by the ‘*St Basils Positive Pathway Framework*’.

“All young people need somewhere safe and suitable to live and help them make a positive transition into adulthood. Good housing underpins success in other areas of life”.

The **Slough ‘2020 Annual Equality and Diversity Report’** offered the following data and narrative about accommodation and ethnicity.

Accommodation Ethnicity

Whilst there remains a considerable margin of error in the ethnicity data sets for tenants, applicants and temporary accommodation licensees, with up to 20% of tenants ‘unknown’, there is overrepresentation from certain groups compared to the wider population in Slough.

BAME households continue to be over-represented among housing applicants and homeless households. For applicants on the housing register, 30% are from Pakistani backgrounds, 22% from White British and 13% from White Other.

Those from a BAME background make up more than 50% of licensees in temporary accommodation. Around 40% of council tenants are from BAME backgrounds, with 36% from White British backgrounds and 7% declaring as White Other. After the White British cohort, the Pakistani cohort forms 15% of council tenants.

Accommodation Gender Breakdown

Of all tenants 53% are women, whilst 47% are men; Of all those in temporary accommodation: 55% are women, with 45% men. Slough has more lone parent households with dependent children than the national average. Approximately 90% of these lone parent households are female and lone parent households tend to experience greater levels of deprivation and economic and housing need than households made of couples. Furthermore, lone parent women are also over-represented in homeless acceptances and temporary accommodation in Slough.

By developing a diverse mix of affordable homes and improving the current standard of both private and council housing SBC aim to positively impact women heading up lone parent households. The focus on reducing and better managing homelessness in Slough could also positively benefit lone parent female households including the measures such as developing a new preventing homelessness strategy.

By building more truly affordable homes, tackling and preventing homelessness and improving the quality of existing housing this strategy should lead to a positive outcome for people from all ethnic groups, but especially those most impacted by low incomes, who may be more vulnerable to exploitation.

Housing and Young People

SBC currently provide supportive accommodation for vulnerable people between the age of 18 to 35 years of age.

There is a specific concern around the exploitation of younger people and SBC are designing a multi-agency partnership programme to enhance the support for the cohort between the ages of 16 to 25 years of age.

The project includes representatives from Slough Children First, SBC Housing Demand Team, SBC Targeted Youth Support and SBC Adult Social Care.

The aim of the 16+ project is to work collaboratively with departments across SBC and Children First to develop a pathway using the best practice as suggested by St

Basils Positive Pathway Framework for 16 – 25-year-olds and commission the required support and accommodation services.

It is expected that any new pathways or services are commissioned through co-production with young people.

The creation of a pathway for young people aged 16 – 25 is about avoiding housing crisis and ensuring homelessness is not part of young people's experience. This includes effective prevention, collaboration and the right support at the right time.

A business case has been written and is currently going through the required governance and decision-making process.

It is expected that if agreement is reached on the proposed pathway and suggested services to be commissioned, the services will be operational from early 2022.

Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

Young people aged between 16 and 18 who are NEET often face several barriers to participation and need to access support from a variety of sources.

There is a view with some partners that children and young people between the age of 16 and 18 are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Continuity may be lost should a young person is placed outside the borough although as referred to previously, there are plans to provide more accommodation during this transition period within Slough.

Thematic Review

Within the review I was invited to specifically explore the thematic areas of **Child Sexual Exploitation, Knife Crime, County Lines and Modern Slavery**. There is of course significant overlap when examining exploitation across all of these areas.

It is also worth noting that all these areas cut across both the child and young person and adult space and victims of exploitation can be drawn into several crime types at the same time.

Child Sexual Exploitation

The UK Government defines child sexual exploitation as follows:

'Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual

exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology.

This vulnerability may be exacerbated by risk factors in an individual's background, including adverse childhood experiences, trauma, violence in the family, involvement of siblings in gangs, poor educational attainment, or poverty or mental health problems'.

Home Office Review

The Home Office have recently published a review entitled '*Group – based Child Sexual Exploitation - Characteristics of Offending.*'

I detail below some of the key findings which are relevant when exploring the demographic profile of CSE perpetrators at a national level.

'Based on what we do know, the characteristics of offenders in group-based CSE include that they are predominantly but not exclusively male and are often older than sexual offenders in street gangs, but younger than lone child sexual offenders. In many cases, offenders are under the age of thirty, but in some cases, they are much older.

A number of high-profile cases - including the offending in Rotherham and convictions in Telford – have mainly involved men of Pakistani ethnicity.

Beyond specific high-profile cases, the academic literature highlights significant limitations to what can be said about links between ethnicity and this form of offending. Research has found that group based CSE offenders are most commonly White. Some studies suggest an over-representation of Black and Asian offenders relative to the demographics of national populations.

However, it is not possible to conclude that this is representative of all group based CSE offending. This is due to issues such as data quality problems, the way the samples were selected in studies, and the potential for bias and inaccuracies in the way that ethnicity data is collected.

During conversations with police forces, we have found that in the operations reflected, offender groups come from diverse backgrounds, with each group being broadly ethnically homogenous. However, there are cases where offenders within groups come from different backgrounds.'

Within the report the following commentary was also made:

'Research on offender ethnicity is limited and tends to rely on poor quality data. It is therefore difficult to draw conclusions about differences in ethnicity of offenders, but it is likely that no one community or culture is uniquely predisposed to offending.

A number of studies have indicated an over-representation of Asian and Black offenders in group based CSE. Most of the same studies show that the majority of offenders are White.

There is a limited amount of research looking at the ethnicity of perpetrators of group based CSE, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about whether or not certain ethnicities are over-represented in this type of offending.

What research there is tends to rely on poor-quality data, with issues in a number of areas:

- Data in this space is reliant on 'known' or identified offending behaviour, therefore limiting our understanding of group based CSE in its entirety.
- Law enforcement data can be particularly vulnerable to bias, in terms of those cases that come to the attention of the authorities, and this can impact on the generalisability of such data. This can also lead to greater attention being paid to certain types of offenders, making that data more readily identified and recorded.
- Police-collected data on ethnicity uses broad categories and requires the police to assign an ethnicity rather than it being self-reported by offenders. Data is therefore not always accurate; Many research and evidence collections have a lot of missing, inaccurate or incomplete data.

Further, it is common for offender groups to be classified as largely ethnically homogenous, although there are many cases where offenders within these groups come from very different backgrounds'

Several papers have reported on offender ethnicity in group based CSE, but all have concluded that for the reasons outlined the data and any interpretation should be treated with caution'.

HM Government Tackling CSE Strategy

HM Government have recently published it's '*Tackling CSE Strategy 2021*'.

Within the report the HM Government provide offer the following commentary on the demographics of victims and perpetrators:

'Children of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, sexes and abilities are targeted by offenders who abuse children on and offline, yet because of the challenges set out above concerning identification and reporting, we have a limited picture of 'who' victims and survivors are.

There appear to be differences in the ages at which children are most at-risk, depending on the type of abuse. In the family environment, victimisation appears to peak at the age of 9, and victimisation online peaks before age 13. A range of sources suggest that victimisation for child sexual exploitation peaks between 14 and 15 years-old, and that older teenagers are more likely than younger children to receive sexual messages online. However, our understanding of when victimisation peaks may be impacted by a lack of data around the overall prevalence of child sexual abuse.

A particular type of child sexual abuse is group-based child sexual exploitation. A number of large police operations in recent years have uncovered the scale of this

type of offending in the UK. In Rotherham alone, at least 1,400 children were sexually exploited between 1997 and 2013. These offenders tend to be in loosely connected networks formed through pre-existing social connections, such as work or family. Offender groups do not have a single defining structure. It is difficult to draw conclusions around the representation of different ethnic groups in the offending population as data on ethnicity is not consistently collected by the police and other agencies. The limited data that exist suggests that whilst offenders operating within the same group tend to be ethnically homogenous, offending is not unique to any particular ethnic group.'

A report entitled '*Sexual exploitation of children involved in children's hearing system*' prepared by the Scottish Children's Reporter and Barnardo's Scotland in 2020 also reflected the challenges in trying to characterise the demographics of victims and perpetrators. The report stated:

'CSE perpetrators and their victims can come from any background. However, children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to be recognised as victims. This is because there are specific vulnerabilities that BME children may face that are kept hidden, media and societal perceptions that victims are white girls, and barriers to services'

Child Sexual Exploitation in Slough

Many of the challenges identified at a national level in accurately identifying the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploitation are evident in Slough.

In 2018 a research-based report entitled '*Child Sexual Exploitation. Our current understanding in Slough*' was completed on behalf for the Safer Slough Partnership.

Within the report the authors provided the following contextual narrative

'There is an understanding that, although CSE is likely to exist in all areas across the UK, certain factors which include localised deprivation, social and cultural complexity, and excellent transport networks, may heighten the risks of CSE for young people in the borough'

When the report was compiled, the research found that by combining TVP, Sexual Exploitation Missing Risk Assessment Conference (SEMRAC), and Young People Service (YPS) data for 2018, 87 young people who were living in Slough were deemed at risk of CSE, and / or who made disclosures of CSE; the figure also included young people who did not live in Slough but are believed to have been exploited in Slough.

Most young people at risk of CSE were female. Cases heard at SEMRAC were largely as a result of young people demonstrating risk indicators which can be linked to CSE, for example, missing episodes, unexplained money/clothes/gifts, substance misuse, poor school attendance, rather than actual evidence.

The authors of the report were able to examine the ethnicity of CSE victims and presented the following data:

- 2 Asian - Bangladeshi
- 3 Asian Indian
- 4 Asian - Pakistani Not Stated
- 3 Asian - any other Asian background
- 5 Black / Black British African
- 3 Black Caribbean
- 1 Any other Black background
- 3 Mixed - White and Asian
- 4 Mixed - White and Black African
- 3 Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
- 3 Mixed - any other mixed background
- 1 Other
- 1 Polish
- 38 White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- 1 White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- 11 White - any other white background

It was noted however that the figures and demographics were to be treated tentatively, and as an indication only, owing to the recognition of data limitations and missing information sources.

Whilst the sample size is relatively small, the quantitative data at the time suggested that most young people that disclosed CSE and/or who were deemed at risk of CSE in 2018 were defined as White British. From a gender perspective most victims were female.

However, it is essential once again to consider the hidden nature of this type of crime, and that the quantitative data represents recorded understanding. Without these considerations there could be inaccurate portrayals and understanding of this type of abuse.

Within the report the author(s) proposed that

‘moving forward, this data product will be developed, and where possible the breadth of data sources expanded, with the aim of improving the partnerships understanding’.

The 2018 report also looked at the CSE perpetrator profile.

At this time professionals were unable to identify a dominant ethnic profile for abusers. The most common response was that the ethnicity of respondents was likely to mirror the ethnic diversity of Slough.

Their assessment at the time is replicated as follows:

‘Upon listening to practitioners, there appeared to be no clear offender profile for those involved in CSE in Slough, which contrasts with what has been uncovered for Rotherham, Rochdale, and Oxford. Some practitioners did however suggest that some of the young females they worked with were linked to the same boys, who

were typically associated with gangs, however it was recognised that the 'near peer' model adds complexity in identifying exploitation, particularly when the young people involved are 16 or over. Furthermore, practitioners noted the lack of disclosures in relation to sexual activity and perpetrators.'

In more recent interviews, professionals were still unable to identify a dominant ethnic profile for perpetrators. Many also recognised the 'near peer' model still being prevalent in Slough today.

TVP CSE & CCE Draft Review

TVP are currently undertaking an up-to-date *review of CSE and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) across Slough*. (Is it Slough only or the whole TVP area?) The figures below cover the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. At the time of writing, the figures for March not been compiled.

Within the draft report TVP have provided the following overview.

CSE Crimes

- There has been an increase compared with the same period 2019/20. There have been increases in online offences.

Victims

- The main age group was between 11 and 14.
- 28% of victims have been reported missing before.

Suspects

- The main age group was between 31 and 40. This is followed jointly by 11-14 and 22-30 age ranges.

Types of CSE

The main type of CSE being identified involves some form of online communication. This includes online grooming, Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) and the sharing of Self-Generated Indecent Images (SGII). Also, initial contact tends to be via an online means. It tends to still be lone offenders, there does not appear to be an organised gang element as seen with *Bullfinch* (a large scale CSE investigation in the Thames Valley area).

TVP also offer the following commentary:

'Child exploitation is complex, and it can be difficult to see what type of exploitation is taking place. It can be easier to see the drug side than the sexual exploitation side. Social care highlighted that children and young people appear to be more reluctant to talk about being sexually exploited and are more comfortable talking about child criminal exploitation and drug dealing.'

To date, my understanding is that the review does not offer any assessment around the demographics around CSE or CCE. I have invited TVP to build upon this assessment and seek to further explore the demographics of victims and perpetrators.

Learning point 3. TVP to build upon their assessment of CSE and CCE and seek to further explore the demographics of victims and perpetrators.

Whilst the majority of CSE victims that are known to the partnership are female, there are a small number of male victims of CSE who may be subject of exploitation.

Where young males have been found at risk of CSE and / or disclosed CSE, the importance of making sure that judgments about child sexual exploitation are consistent and gender neutral are well understood by partners and professionals.

Good practice includes asking if the same level of risk would be acceptable if the child was the opposite gender; and supporting children to explore their sexuality in safe ways, including building links and referral pathways to local LGBTQ + projects that could provide appropriate information and advice.

In support of the 2018 review, during more recent interviews some professionals have provided anecdotal evidence of CSE exploitation in Slough involving a perpetrator who may be slightly older than the victim(s). This so called 'near peer' exploitation may include older teenage boys who seek to exploit younger females.

As stated, there is a strong evidence base to say that where there are additional vulnerabilities abusers will seek to exploit. These vulnerabilities include being in care; experiencing episodes of going missing; and having a learning disability.

Many areas across the UK, including with Slough, have seen cases where perpetrators will groom vulnerable girls in and around at school using drugs and alcohol, which reduces inhibition and creates a dependency.

They may then encourage or coerce them to recruit other girls through school and social networks.

There were concerns raised about slightly older females grooming younger girls into attending 'parties', such that the female being groomed did not recognise the process, with it not matching the traditional perception of grooming.

Further, it was felt that peers who were grooming others may not necessarily recognise it as grooming, owing to a perceived friendship or a proximity in age.

Haybrook will offer anecdotal evidence of this type of exploitation taking place.

Some professionals have raised concerns around the increased risk to children online during the pandemic. The internet is a fertile ground for CSE.

Child protection professionals can be at a relative disadvantage in this environment as their knowledge of online spaces and services can fall behind that of young people and their would-be abusers.

Overall, I have observed there is a strong robust partnership response to CSE and CCE across Slough.

By way of example, Haybrook have an initiative in place called ‘Sandman’.

‘Sandman’ was launched two years ago and is cited as good practice. It focuses on some of the most vulnerable girls who are open to sexual exploitation. The work attempts to map names, places of interest and adults of interest. Information is shared with agencies across Slough and neighbouring areas.

Anecdotally Haybrook will suggest most victims are White British girls.

CSE and CCE MACE Panel

As referred to previously the MACE Panel ensures there is a multi-agency risk management focus on children and young people who have been exploited or are at risk of exploitation in Slough.

At the point of the MACE referral all the children had either been previously been known to the Trust or were current open active children.

The most recent data presented to the MACE panel is presented as follows:

Criminal Exploitation	Child Sexual Exploitation
66 children were at risk of criminal exploitation	31 children were at risk of child sexual exploitation
3 Female	30 female
63 males	1 male

Ethnicity

	Criminal Exploitation	Child Sexual Exploitation
A1 – White British	9	10
A2 – White Irish	3	
A3 - White any other background	7	7
A5 - Gypsy / Roma	1	
B1 – White & Black Caribbean	8	
B2 -White & Black African	2	4

B3 - White and Asian	3	1
B4 – Any other mixed background	3	2
C1 – Asian or Asian British Indian	2	3
C2 – Asian or Asian British Pakistani	11	2
C4 – Asian any other Asian background	4	
D1 – Black or Black British Caribbean	4	
D2 – Black of Black British African	6	1
		1
E2 - Any other ethnic group	1	
N/A	2 (not identified)	
	Total: 66	Total: 31

The data would suggest when examining victims of criminal and child sexual exploitation together, they are predominately White British.

There are higher proportions of victims of criminal exploitation who are Asian or Asian British Pakistani and White and Black Caribbean.

The MACE panel have also provided a breakdown of children by original postcode broken down to ward level as follows:

Britwell and Northborough	10 children (9 criminal exploitation, 1 child sexual exploitation)
Central	7 children - criminal exploitation
Chalvey	9 children (4 criminal exploitation , 5 child sexual exploitation)
Langley Kederminster	9 children (6 criminal exploitation , 3 child sexual exploitation)
Cippenham Green	4 children - criminal exploitation
Langley St Mary's	6 children – criminal exploitation
Wexham Lea	7 children (4 criminal exploitation, 3 child sexual exploitation)
Haymill and Lynch Hill	9 children (4 criminal exploitation, 5 child sexual exploitation)
Baylis and Stoke	3 children - criminal exploitation
Cippenham Meadows	8 children (3 criminal exploitation , 5 child sexual exploitation)
Upton	2 children – child sexual exploitation
Elliman	9 children (7 criminal exploitation, 2 child sexual exploitation)
Foxborough	5 children (4 criminal exploitation, 1 child sexual exploitation)
Farnham	4 children (92 criminal exploitation, 2 child

	sexual exploitation)
Colnbrook and Poyle	3 children (1 criminal exploitation, 2 child sexual exploitation)
	Total: 95 children

2 children were identified as other local authority children so did not have originating local address in Slough.

Knife Crime

The UK Government describes knife crime as simply a crime involving a knife. It's a crime to threaten someone with a knife or carry a knife as a weapon in a robbery or burglary. Some knives are offensive weapons and are banned in public places.

Knife crime includes:

- carrying a knife or trying to buy one if you're under 18.
- threatening someone with a knife.
- carrying a knife that's banned.
- a murder where the victim was stabbed with a knife.
- a robbery or burglary where a thief carried a knife as a weapon.

Knife Crime in Slough

SBC have commissioned two previous independent reviews in relation to youth violence after it was correctly recognised as a growing problem within the borough.

In February 2017 the '*Slough Locality Review, Gang and Youth Violence - Consultation Report*' was published.

Within the report the following commentary was made:

'New communities, who will often hold the key to understanding the issues and tracking perpetrators, are also not engaged with properly or often at all; partnerships will want to engage with them to help effect cultural change and communicate messages.'

In 2018 a report '*Gangs and Serious Youth Violence*' by Reach Every Generation Ltd was published. The authors commented as follows:

'During our time in Slough we were made aware of stabbing incidents and instances of rivals either chasing others with weapons or being found carrying knives. This highlighted that the young people of Slough were actively carrying knives and using them. The nature of gangs and violence is such that tit for tat attacks exist. With the recent stabbings and summer fast approaching there is a real concern that Slough could see an increase in stabbings and violence between rivals. Having spoken to many young people across Slough, it was verbalised continuously that many young people fear for their safety and believe it is better to carry weapons and be in gangs

to feel safe. This, we believe, is in response to the recent stabbings and lack of alternatives for them or direct access to services’.

The authors continued:

‘Due to the findings, we believe Slough has a current issue with stabbings and drug dealing. The gaps in multi-agency work, professional knowledge of current issues and difference of opinion amongst professionals, coupled with the rivalries amongst young people this could become a growing issue that will become more violent and untameable before too long.’

Rapid Reviews

A rapid review is undertaken if the following criteria is met:

Abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and either:

i) the child has died

ii) the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their board partners or relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.

When seeking to understand the demographics around knife crime a review of recent Slough Rapid Reviews revealed the following in terms of victim profile:

- **Rapid Review 1** - ‘John’. Ethnicity - White Kosovan Albanian Muslim. The victim was a 15-year-old male.
- **Rapid Review 2** - (Name and date of incident redacted). Ethnicity - Black or Black British - African Somali. The victim was a 17-year-old male.
- **Rapid Review 3** - (Name and date of incident redacted). Ethnicity - Asian Pakistani. The victim was an 18-year-old male.
- **Rapid Review 4** - (Name and date of incident redacted). Ethnicity - Romanian/Polish. The victim was a 17-year-old male.
- **Rapid Review 5** - (Name and date of incident redacted). Ethnicity – White British. The victim was a teenage male.
- **Rapid Review 6** - (Name and date of incident redacted). Ethnicity - Black or Black British - Caribbean. The victim was a 17-year-old male.
- **Rapid Review 7** - This SPR has been made aware of another non-fatal stabbing of a young male in Slough which is on-going from an incident in October/November 2020. The full details are not fully known at the time of writing this report.

Whilst these reviews represent a relatively small number of serious knife related incidents, they do illustrate the diverse nature of victims and a repeated pattern of young males between the ages of 15 and 18 being most at risk.

These rapid reviews also show that there are still concerns of knife crime and assaults continuing within Slough which supports the proactive partnership activity taking place.

During interviews, some professionals supported the view that some young people may elect to carry a knife for so called 'protection'. The counter narrative is most children and young people do not, and have no wish, to carry a knife.

Several agencies particularly noted a 'spike' in knife crime offences following the easing of Covid lockdown restrictions in 2020. This 'spike' is thought to be in part a result of rivalries escalating online during lockdown.

Agencies are aware that there are some potential risks that Slough may once again see an increase in knife related crime and serious violence during the summer of 2021.

An additional £735,000 was provided by the Home Office to the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Partnership for 2021-22.

In order to reduce the risk, the Violent Reduction Unit and Violent Crime Taskforce are leading innovative work to combat knife crime including a high impact knife awareness programme offering the counter narrative, diversion schemes, conflict resolution classes, a hospital navigator scheme, detached outreach teams, one to one case management and engagement with parents and schools.

The partnership is seeking to strike the balance between responding to the 'here and now' risks and delivering a longer-term sustainable reduction.

Gangs Intervention

Some professionals have raised concerns around the absence of a specific gangs' intervention programme in Slough.

Within the 2018 report '*Gangs and Serious Youth Violence*' the authors commented:

'In some cases, there was little evidence of a joint, multi-agency approach to the current gang issues and there were many who expressed concerns over the way others work or operate which has led to a breakdown in relationships, with no real sharing of resources and expertise in many cases.

Despite many positive opportunities for young people, there was no evidence of specialist prevention / intervention for young people involved in gangs or at risk of gangs other than the YOT which is an enforcement agency by nature. Some professionals suggest there is a requirement for a specific locally based service'.

Defining a 'gang' is difficult. They tend to fall into three categories: peer groups, street gangs and organised crime groups. It can be common for groups of children and young people to gather in public places to socialise and although some peer group gatherings can lead to increased antisocial behaviour and low-level youth offending, these activities should not be confused with the serious violence of a street gang.

Children may be involved in more than one 'gang', with some cross-border movement, and may not stay in a 'gang' for significant periods of time.

The specific risks for males and females may be quite different. There may be more propensity for violence with the males' groups, whilst there may be a higher risk of sexual abuse for females, and they are more likely to have been coerced into involvement with a gang through peer pressure than their male counterparts.

Other professionals offer a view that that perceptions of a 'gang -problem' in Slough are relative and subjective. They state a specific gang intervention programme is not necessary as the current level of risk would not justify such an investment. Some professionals have suggested the introduction of a specific gang's intervention programme may increase the risk of exploitation by bringing groups of vulnerable young people into the same space.

It is important to acknowledge the work of the Violence Reduction Unit and Violence Reduction Taskforce in tackling youth violence and the progress that has been made since the 2018 report.

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) would suggest that the nature of gangs within Slough are less clear than in metropolitan areas with less emphasis on identity. YOT will point out serious crime youth workers already work closely with those at risk of gang affiliation.

Young People and Violence (YOT)

The Youth Offending Service (YOT) play a crucial role within any borough as they engage with some of the most prolific young offenders who are vulnerable to exploitation and / or commit serious violence.

The Slough YOT offer includes both a statutory and preventative capability. There is a strong multi agency 'one stop shop' comprising youth workers, social workers, police officers, education and health professionals.

The YOT will support children and young people from the age of 10 up until the age of 18.

YOT adopt a trauma informed approach and have put in place a raft of support programmes addressing mental health and communication issues.

In 'headline terms' 67% (226) preventative YISP referrals in 2020 were related to episodes of serious youth violence, whether due to concerns of young person carrying a weapon, violent incidents within school, harmful sexualised behaviour, exploitation through county lines & drug dealing etc.

The YOT will say the predominant current Slough demographic is White Male, 17, convicted for violence against the person offences with assault by beating being the most committed offence, followed by possession of a knife, ABH, and possession of an offensive weapon. Many of the young people involved have special educational needs.

County Lines

The UK Government defines County Lines as:

‘County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing, and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.

Within their *Strategic Threat Assessment* for 2020 the NCA commented:

‘Young people are intimidated into becoming ‘runners’ in county lines drug supply, or groomed into becoming ‘money mules’, helping criminals to launder their profits. Recent examples have seen children as young as 11 being exploited by criminal groups involved in drugs and acquisitive crime.’

County Lines in Slough

Within the 2018 ‘*Gangs and Serious Youth Violence*’ review the authors commented:

‘Slough has a history of gangs, from organised criminal groups, street gangs, drug importation gangs, human trafficking gangs and drug dealing gangs. When considering county lines, which is a national issue, Slough is unique as the drug lines are predominately operating out of Slough.

This view built upon comments made in the 2017 ‘*Slough Locality Review, Gang and Youth Violence - Consultation Report*’

‘The intelligence team stated that importing / inward county lines were not present in Slough even though several of the named gang had links with London e.g., Hounslow, Croydon. The absence of county lines was attributed to the established OCGs who currently control of the drugs market’.

During interviews some professionals supported this opinion that with its proximity to London and good transport links, Slough is generally more of an ‘exporter’ of county lines activity.

Further, there is evidence of groups or gangs facilitating the use of local vulnerable people or children to sell drugs areas outside of Slough.

There are cases of vulnerable young people travelling as far away as Brighton, Birmingham, Cambridge, Oxford, Yeovil and Torquay.

This highlights the risk of vulnerable young people who reside in Slough being exploited and the importance of multi-agency engagement, not only in Slough but with other police forces and local authorities.

Professionals acknowledge that if a young person is arrested for offences a long way from home in an area where they have no local connections and no obvious means of getting home, this clearly should invite questions about their welfare, and they should potentially be considered as victims of child criminal exploitation and trafficking rather than be treated as an offender.

Whilst professionals understand the requirement to be proactive and contact statutory services in the young person's home area to share information, feedback would indicate that when children and young people go missing, information is not always shared, and they do not always consistently receive timely return home interviews.

Where return home interviews are completed, they are not always sufficiently analysed to ensure that intelligence is used to support plans to reduce the risk of further exploitation.

Within the TVP draft '*review of CSE*' they recommend the following:

'In some cases, young people are travelling to different locations and as a result, they are becoming known in different force areas. This highlights the importance of multi-agency working and information sharing not just in force but with other forces too.

'It is important to ensure there is good information sharing between police and partner agencies especially when dealing with other force areas. For example, if the child is found in a different area or being moved to another area'.

Learning point 4. Improve the consistency of carrying out return home interviews, analysis and intelligence sharing across the partnership to reduce the risk of further exploitation.

It is important to note that some professionals have mentioned a small but emerging county lines market in Slough with links to London via the train network, with connections with the 'west country'. This is subject of further exploitation.

When exploring the demographics that underpin county lines and drug possession or supply the report entitled *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities* have made the following recommendation (12):

'The Commission wants to urgently address the disproportionate number of ethnic minority young people going into the criminal justice system as a result of low-level Class B drug possession. The Commission is not advocating or endorsing the legalisation of Class B drugs, however, it points to examples such as the Thames

Valley and West Midlands Police drug diversion models to keep these young people away from gaining a criminal record, while trying to address the root cause of their drug use'

The drug diversion model referred to relates to a Drugs Diversion Pilot (DDP) that has been running in the West Berkshire area of the Thames Valley area since December 2018.

Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is an umbrella term that encompasses the offences of human trafficking and slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, as defined in the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Modern slavery frequently involves multiple victims, offenders and places; it is often hidden and may take place alongside a wide range of abuses and other criminal offences.

Human traffickers can use a variety of means to recruit, transport, receive and hide their victims such as threats or force, abduction, deception or false promises. Any consent victims have given to their treatment will be irrelevant where they have been coerced, deceived or provided with payment or benefit to achieve that consent.

Children (those aged under 18) are considered victims of trafficking, whether they have been coerced, deceived or paid to secure their compliance. They need only have been recruited, transported, received or harboured for the purpose of exploitation.

Some professionals will offer the view that agencies have 'blind spots' in terms of identifying and supporting vulnerable adults when compared to children and young people.

Some feel there is a lack of understanding, on one hand, about the correlation between exploitation (the act of using someone for personal gain) and modern slavery (the legislated offence of exploitation) and therefore "child exploitation" is seen as distinctly different from modern slavery.

Some professionals offer the view that if you try to manage both adult and child exploitation / modern slavery in the same forum, the statutory obligation towards children will always gain precedence and the issues affecting adults, including those above, run the risk of getting lost, particularly when those adults may not fall into the remit of anyone within the local authority.

That said, any tension that may exist is managed within Slough by having a child exploitation coordinator, a contextual safeguarding coordinator and a risk and exploitation coordinator, primarily looking at adults all working together in a mutually supportive way.

Some professionals have offered the view that the correlation between modern slavery and exploitation is still not well understood. Exploitation is the act and

behaviour, modern slavery is the definition applied by use of the Modern Slavery Act – but modern slavery and exploitation are the same thing and happen to children, young people and adults.

SBC have identified the issue and are now delivering multi-agency training on exploitation which encompasses both.

Learning Point 5. Continue to improve the awareness and understanding of the correlation between modern slavery and exploitation.

Within the *UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery 2020* the anti-slavery commissioner identified 17 types of modern slavery.

When examining demographics nationally, the author(s) of the 2018 *'Unseen Modern Slavery Report'* commented as follows:

'Potential victims of human trafficking were reported from 130 different nationalities in 2018 according to the National Crime Agency's National Referral Mechanism statistics. UK, Albanian and Vietnamese nationals were the most commonly reported potential victims.'

National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

Within the *'UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery 2020'* the authors commented:

'The number of NRM referrals provides a good indication of the scale of known victims in the UK but is not a good estimate of overall prevalence.

The number of NRM referrals has increased year-on-year since its inception in 2009, which is likely to be due to greater awareness of the NRM process, though higher incidence of modern slavery cannot be ruled out.'

Referrals are made by a wide range of organisations. The highest volume of contacts has consistently been from police, schools and health.

These are the key statutory agencies, and the pattern of referrals from these three key agencies has remained constant over the past three years.

In 2020 the Home Office published a report *'Child Sexual Exploitation - Characteristics of Offending.'*

Within the report the authors commented specifically on NRM referrals:

'Traditional means of measuring crime (victimisation surveys or police records) are less effective at measuring the prevalence of this complex and largely hidden crime whose victims are often too traumatised to report their exploitation or may not self-identify as victims'

Data presented as follows:

- In 2019, 10,627 potential victims were referred to the NRM,
- This is a 52% increase from the 6,986 referrals in 2018.
- However, the second quarter of 2020 saw the second successive quarter-on-quarter decrease (-23%) in NRM referrals which is understood to be influenced by the effects of restrictions implemented in the UK as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Of the potential victims referred in 2019, 32% (3,391) were female, 68% (7,224) were male, one individual was transgender and the gender of 11 potential victims was unknown. Males have slightly increased as a proportion of all NRM referrals compared to 2018.
- Over half (5,866) of the referrals were for those potentially exploited as adults, with 43% (4,550) referred for potential exploitation as children. These proportions are similar to 2018 figures.
- In 2019, 125 different nationalities of potential victims were referred to the NRM, compared to 128 in 2018. Overall, the top 5 most commonly referred nationalities were UK, Albanian, Vietnamese, Chinese and Indian nationals.
- Since 2018, Indian nationals have replaced Romanian nationals in the top 5 groups subject to exploitation.'

When considering where Slough is located and considering issues of migration it is important to note the following observations contained within the 2020 NCA '*serious and organised crime strategic threat assessment*'.

'OCGs have continued to use high-risk methods to smuggle irregular migrants into the UK, such as concealment within refrigerated lorries. Such methods pose significant risk to those concealed, as highlighted by the discovery in October 2019 of 39 deceased victims inside a refrigerated lorry in Essex.

Within the UK, social issues such as homelessness, isolation and substance abuse often contribute to victim vulnerability. Outside the UK, a lack of economic or educational opportunity drives the movement of vulnerable people. It is almost certain that non-UK victims of modern slavery are at greatest risk of exploitation immediately following their arrival to the UK.

Even with the UK's exit from the EU, OCGs will continue to attempt to exploit any perceived border vulnerabilities'.

Modern Slavery in Slough

The Modern Slavery and Exploitation Group have refreshed its aims and objectives and developed an action plan to improve victim identification & initial response from partner agencies.

The group has an aspiration to maintain and maximise the momentum that has been built around addressing modern slavery and exploitation in Slough.

There is a consensus with professionals that there is hidden harm, such that modern slavery numbers recorded by agencies are likely to underestimate the true scale of exploitation.

In support of national Anti-Slavery day in October 2020 the partnership issued a media release highlighting the demographic trends around modern slavery.

The partnership provided the following narrative which was published in the Slough Observer.

"No-one should live a life feeling scared, intimidated and trapped at the hands of someone else. However, the reality is that modern slavery is happening across the country and here in Slough"

The media release confirmed that most modern slavery victims discovered in Slough in the first half of 2020 were British.

This report dispelled a misconception by some that most victims of modern slavery are trafficked from abroad.

The release confirmed that between January and July of 2020, 27 people in the borough were identified as being taken advantage of and could potentially be considered as modern-day slaves.

The age range of people identified to the National Referral Mechanism for assessment was between 15 and 43 years old with victims originating from 11 different countries. However, the nationality represented most was British.

Despite these demographic trends professionals remain concerned about potential hidden harm within migrant communities.

In recognition of this, the modern slavery awareness campaigns in Slough have sought to reach out to all the Slough's communities. For example, awareness posters were translated into Polish and Romanian and placed at strategic points in the borough.

The demographic modern slavery data presented to the Slough partnership for 2020 is presented as follows:

Nationalities:

- Afghanistan – 2
- Albanian - 5
- British - 24
- Bulgarian – 1
- Eritrean – 3
- Indian - 2
- Iraqi – 1

- Iranian – 2
- Italian – 1
- Jamaican – 1
- Pakistani - 3
- Polish – 3
- Romanian – 4
- Slovakian – 1
- Somalian – 1
- Sudanese – 1
- Vietnamese - 2

Gender

- Male = 45, Female = 12
- Adult = 33, Child = 24

Age Range:

- 15 – 63yo

Exploitation Type:

- Forced Criminality = 29 (mainly linked to CDL or drug related exploitation)
- Forced Labour = 15 (6 relate to overseas offences)
- Sexual Exploitation = 7
- Domestic Servitude = 2 (one of which was overseas offences)
- Unknown = 4

Whilst this represents a relatively small sample of victims, and acknowledging the issue of under reporting, the data illustrates a higher proportion of reports of victims of modern slavery are British. From a gender perspective most victims were male.

National Referral Mechanism in Slough

TVP are currently undertaking a '*review of CCE and CSE*' across Slough. (as above; is it just Slough?) Within the draft report they provide the following the following summary of NRM referrals.

This brief summary of NRM referrals does not include those received from external agencies. This covers April 2020 to February 2021. The majority are for Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) not for CSE.

Gender:

- Male – 80%
- Females – 20%

Age range:

87% were aged between 15 and 17 and 13% were aged between 11 and 14. The average age was 16.8.

Drugs

Out of the referrals about 71% had links to drugs. From these:

- Some the young people were frequent missing persons.
- Some of them had a drug debt, some getting into debt as they had been robbed of drugs and then owed a debt.

TVP and other partners suggest there is still much to do to continue to support professionals in identifying the signs of modern slavery and why it is important to submit an NRM.

Professionals have raised concerns that there is currently no consistent mechanism to record NRM as all agencies keep separate records. Because cases of modern slavery are not seen regularly, there is a risk of processes not being fully understood and responses not improving from first-contact agencies.

There is a suggestion that there could be gaps in completing a NRM referral when children and young people are being exploited although the situation is said to be improving.

Learning Point 6. Continue to improve the awareness about modern slavery and the importance of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Exploitation through Sex Work

The term sex worker refers to those engaged in prostitution and is the preferred term used throughout literature on this subject.

In 2018, an All-Party Parliamentary inquiry into commercial sexual exploitation led to a report entitled '*Behind Closed Doors*'. The inquiry concluded that Romanian women were being trafficking on an industrial scale across the UK.

The review identified that pop-up brothels were changing migration patterns with huge numbers of women, particularly from Eastern Europe, being exploited and brought to the UK by organised criminals.

Figures provided by the Modern Slavery Police Transformation Unit revealed that Romanian suspects constituted the largest nationality group among the individuals under investigation. In the 212 ongoing police operations into modern slavery involving sexual exploitation in the UK 40% of all suspected offenders were Romanian.

The second largest nationality group represented among suspected offenders in live investigations was British - constituting 25% of suspects, followed by Chinese and Hungarian suspected offenders.

Exploitation through Sex Work in Slough

During interviews some professionals suggested exploitation through sex work is an area where the Romanian (or more broadly the Eastern European) female demographic may be disproportionately represented.

However, it is widely accepted amongst professionals that the current knowledge and understanding of exploitation through sex work in Slough is limited, particularly post the pandemic. Some professionals have specifically raised concerns about the limited number of referrals and intelligence for this form of exploitation.

Evidence would suggest exploitation via sex work can often be fuelled by drug addiction. Intelligence would suggest the drug market remains buoyant and therefore it is not unreasonable to draw a conclusion that exploitation via sex work continues.

During this review a case was cited in Oxford where Romanian females were flown into the UK and a property was rented for a short period of time. It was clear the females were being exploited and support was put in place. Professionals recognised the need to consider whether this form of exploitation may also be happening within Slough.

There is a consensus that the exploitation of sex workers has moved from street-based prostitution to digitally enabled sex work where the exploitation primarily takes place indoors. There is a view is that the pandemic has potentially accelerated this trend.

Whilst working indoors may provide some safeguards it does make it more challenging for agencies to identify and support victims of exploitation.

There is an agreement that more partnership work should be undertaken in this area including engaging with the sexual health service, GPs and voluntary agencies such as Turning Point to develop collective understanding of sex work exploitation, particularly post 'lockdown'.

Learning Point 7. Prioritise the partnership work to develop the collective understanding of and tackle sex work exploitation.

Exploitation through Car Washes

Along similar lines some professionals have suggested there may be an over representation of Romanian males either benefiting or being exploited through car washes within Slough.

In 2018 the Nottingham Trent University produced a research report for the Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner entitled '*labour exploitation in hand car washes*'. The authors made the following commentary:

'HCWs tend to be owned and operated by Eastern European migrants, although other nationalities are also present. Our research findings reveal that there is a high proportion of Albanian and Romanian owners / managers and workers in HCWs'

Top reported nationality / ethnicity of workers in HCWs were:

- Romania 16%
- Poland 11%
- Albania 9%
- Iraq 8%
- Bulgaria 7%
- Kurdish 7%
- UK 5%
- Hungary 4%.

Nationally, in 2020 the *'Gang Masters and Labour Abuse website'* explored the victim profile of people being exploited through car washes.

They found 'that victims are predominantly male between the ages of 18-35 years. Vulnerable victims are specifically targeted, mainly irregular migrants and those who are unable to communicate in English.

Romanian nationals were the most frequently reported victims, followed by Albanian and Bulgarian nationals.'

Exploitation through Car Washes in Slough

In 2019 the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) worked with TVP and a range of partners on an operation to identify and support victims of exploitation working at hand car washes.

- *Operation Flinch* was undertaken in two separate areas: Slough and Newbury.
- The aim of the operation was to visit all independent car washes in a local policing area with the focus on engagement, education and compliance.
- Car wash locations were generated from local police intelligence submissions, the safe car wash app, intelligence and planning permission applications provided by the local authority.
- Visits sought to improve the police intelligence picture with any identified concerns passed to the local force/partner agencies for follow up.
- 19 sites were found to be operational.
- A follow up seminar saw 14 of the 19 sites represented with several landlords also in attendance.

Some of the key findings from the operation were:

- The overarching response from most owners / directors was that they were happy something was being done.

- Owners are sick and tired of “rogue” car washes springing up and “cowboys” undercutting them, with no regard for their colleagues, staff or consumers.
- A large network was evident between the owners, with phone calls and conversations being held following the activity and interest in the seminar being self-generated.
- This operation revealed an even more diverse group of people engaged in this work than initially suspected.
- There were specific concerns around financial exploitation. Examples were presented of vulnerable people working for as little as £4.00 per hour. It is probable that these victims were working long hours and residing in poor conditions.

The impact of the pandemic has been significant and does invite the question how the people previously engaged in car wash activity have survived over the last 12 months and what may happen when ‘lockdown’ eases.

The pandemic may have temporally dispersed the workforce into other sectors which may have an impact on worker demographics. Post ‘lockdown’ consumer demand is likely to increase and therefore the risk of this type of exploitation may also increase.

In order to mitigate against the risk, SBC has started to pilot the Responsible Car Wash Scheme in conjunction with the Gangs Masters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA). Scoping work has started although has been hampered by covid restrictions.

Exploitation through Nail Bars

Whilst also severely affected by the pandemic, exploitation through nail bars remains a concern for all agencies.

In 2017 the *‘Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Annual Report’* highlighted a rising number of exploited Vietnamese workers in nail bars.

While many of the workers have paid smugglers to bring them to the UK from impoverished parts of rural Vietnam, others, mostly children, have been tricked into exploitation. The report says there is evidence that some have been kidnapped and brought to the UK against their will.

In 2019 the *Info Migrant website* reported:

‘The high street nail business in the UK is booming, and despite growing competition from South Asians, most of the employees are still Vietnamese.

‘The Vietnamese nail shop business is well-established in the UK – it is believed to be the most popular niche business run by the Vietnamese community in the country. The businesses are typically set up in one of two ways: The Vietnamese national owns a business and hires their own staff, or staff are hired on a self-employed basis, renting out chairs in salons’

Exploitation through Nail Bars in Slough

Operation Aidant is co-ordinated by the National Crime Agency (NCA). The operation involves local police forces working alongside partner agencies to focus on modern slavery and human trafficking.

In late 2020, as part of *Operation Aidant*, TVP and partners undertook an operation to tackle exploitation through nail bars in Slough.

- In total, they visited 40 premises, 16 of which had ceased trading (presumably due to lockdown).
- One venue had an adult suspected to have been trafficked, but no disclosures made.
- 4 other venues had immigration issues, non-UK nationals working with no right to work or having overstayed.

Several venues had some issues around illegal labour but thankfully no child exploitation issues were identified.

During the review another *Operation Aidant* took place with a specific focus on labour exploitation and domestic servitude.

Domestic servitude is extremely difficult to identify because the work is performed in private residences as seemingly normal practice, for example, nannies, housekeepers or other domestic help. It can also happen where someone is living with extended family.

There can be a cross over with domestic abuse when the victim and perpetrator(s) are related and concerns about “honour”, immigration status and access to children may prevent a victim from disclosing exploitation.

Emerging Risk. Cuckooing. Exploitation of Older Vulnerable People in Slough.

When exploring the demographic of victims of exploitation, it is important to consider some of the older vulnerable people who reside in Slough.

There is emerging evidence of older drug users (60+) who are cuckooed in the borough. It is important to note that the small number of referrals received to date only reflect cases which have been identified and may not be representative.

Cuckooing is where criminals take over the home of a vulnerable person in order to use it as a base for drug trafficking and other illegal criminal activity.

Given the relative low numbers put forward it is premature establish if there is any predominant demographic group identified as victims, other than a higher proportion of the relatively small number of victims identified to date are primarily White older men.

Adult Social Care does not have a standard pathway for managing cuckooing or modern slavery concerns, therefore there can be a variable and inconsistent response to safeguarding alerts, especially those where there are not traditional care and support needs over and above those caused by drug use.

Learning Point 8. Improve the consistency of response to safeguarding alerts involving vulnerable adults.

Key Lines of Enquiry

I will now seek to address the Key Lines of Enquiry

What is the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators (*that we know about*) of exploitation in Slough?

In seeking to respond to this line of enquiry, it is important to note that children, young people and vulnerable adults can be either victims or perpetrators, often due to the contextual situation. It is important to keep in mind that, although some perpetrators may appear to be willing accomplices in the abuse of others this should be seen in the context of the controls exerted by others. Some local authorities have prioritised the support for vulnerable children and young people who cut across the victim and perpetrator category.

Professionals acknowledged the concept of 'alpha victims', in which an individual may be complicit in the abuse / grooming of others, yet is still a victim, who is exploited themselves, but may receive special treatment for aiding offenders with the abuse and grooming.

It is also important to note different types of exploitation can overlap, with those targeted for one form of exploitation at times becoming victims of another. For example, victims of modern slavery may be forced to commit crimes, such as becoming 'runners' in county lines drug supply or committing acquisitive crime.

In researching the national position, it is recognised that it is challenging to draw any definitive evidenced based assessments around the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators of exploitation.

This is due to several complex reasons which are summarised as follows:

- Under reporting in specific areas such as CSE and modern slavery.
- Hidden harm across diverse communities with victims who are often too traumatised to report their exploitation or may not self-identify as victims.
- Victims themselves being involved in criminal activities and therefore being afraid to come forward.
- Victims fearing repercussions, for themselves or their families and friends, if they report exploitation.
- Lack of comprehensive and reliable data.
- Partners interpreting information requirements and data in different ways.
- Over reliance on police data rather than partnership data.
- Agencies not consistently sharing data.
- The data that is captured is not always 'joined up' in order to establish a 'rich picture'.

- Specific gaps and challenges in recording ethnicity and other protected characteristics.
- Unconscious bias or gaps in cultural competence.
- Confidence of professionals to encourage victims and perpetrators to self-define and report exploitation.
- The absence of a strategic threat assessment with a specific focus on the demographics of victims and perpetrators.

The key line of enquiry is 'what is the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators (*that we know about*) of exploitation in Slough?'

This review has clearly highlighted that many of the challenges identified in understanding the demographics of exploitation nationally also apply in Slough.

There are clear 'blind spots' in the understanding of the demographic profile of victims and perpetrators in the borough.

Therefore, any commentary, data or analysis is based on *what we do know* and has been presented for the purposes of this review.

In terms of *what we do know* I am grateful to professionals for presenting the following data referred to within this report.

Data Sets

- **2021 CSE / CCE draft assessment by TVP.**
- **2021 CSE data presented to the MACE panel**
- **2021 Demographic data presented by Haybrook College**
- **2021 School exclusion data**
- **2021 Data relating to accommodation**
- **2021 Data relating to modern slavery cuckooing**
- **2020 Data from SBC Annual Equality & Diversity Report**
- **2020 YOT perpetrator demographic**
- **2020 Summary of serious violence rapid reviews serious violence**
- **2020 Modern Slavery data presented to the partnership**
- **2020 National Referral Mechanism data**
- **2019 Findings from *Operation Flinch* – exploitation via car washes**
- **2019 Findings from *Operation Aidant* – exploitation through nail bars.**
- **2018 Data from the '*Child Sexual Exploitation. Our current understanding in Slough*' report.**

Commentary is made within the report on the data and information presented in each of the above areas.

When examining the data across these data sets together, in most areas the predominant demographic profile of victims and perpetrators of exploitation is White British. This is also the case with school exclusions.

The exceptions are the more diverse demographic profile of victims of serious violence identified as part of the rapid review process and a higher proportion of victims of child criminal exploitation who are defined as Asian or Asian British Pakistani and White and Black Caribbean.

When reviewing housing and accommodation BAME households continue to be over-represented among housing applicants and homeless households.

However, given the challenges outlined, the limitations of what has been provided and concerns around data quality any in depth interpretation is challenging. Whilst many of the data sets identify a higher proportion of White British victims and perpetrators it is important to acknowledge hidden harm, under reporting and the 'unknowns' when seeking to when interpreting trends / patterns in data.

Are there any specific demographic groups experiencing specific forms of exploitation?

The diverse profile of Slough is important context is seeking to address this question.

As stated, data presented around CSE and Modern Slavery, indicates that the predominant demographic profile of exploitation is White British.

There is a more diverse demographic presented when reviewing CCE and serious violence.

Again, when exploring specific demographic groups and exploitation the caveat is the limitation of joined up demographic data that is currently available for analysis and the potential for hidden harm.

When professionals were asked around specific demographic groups that may be suffering specific forms of exploitation most felt that there was insufficient data, information and too many unknowns to respond with complete confidence.

As one professional put it "you only know as much as you know".

Several professionals did offer their professional opinion around potential exploitation within the Roma community, with some offering some commentary on the Somali, Sikh and Muslim communities.

Roma Communities

Several professionals have raised concerns around exploitation across the Roma community. This is in a supportive way with a desire to more closely engage with and support these often-maligned communities.

It should be noted that the commentary that follows is primarily based on professional opinion and it is accepted that there remain significant gaps in the knowledge and understanding of the Roma community. It is also very important not to view the Roma community as a single homogenous group but look to explore individual context and vulnerabilities.

All professionals recognise it is imperative we keep an open mind and not be drawn into 'group think' or stereotyping a community based on prejudicial, anecdotal or inaccurate information.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have historically been persecuted across Europe, with every modern EU state having anti-Gypsy laws at some point.

It is important to note that many professionals have cited anti Roma rhetoric within the borough with on occasions open discrimination and hostility. All agree that this is completely unacceptable is based on prejudice and misconceptions and requires positive action.

Gypsies and some traveller ethnicities have been recognised in law as being ethnic groups protected against discrimination by the Equality Act 2010. Migrant Roma is protected both by virtue of their ethnicities and their national identities.

There have been some concerns about Roma children in Slough as far back as 2007.

Operation Golf, which was a joint investigation between Romania and the UK tackling Romanian organised crime and child trafficking, involved at least one girl from Slough.

Within the 2017 '*Slough Locality Review, Gang and Youth Violence*' report following a focus group the authors commented as follows:

'The group were aware of Roma gangs from Algeria and Albania based in Chalvey. There was a slight disagreement in the group about the areas of crime this gang was involved in. Fraud, car crime, drugs and sex trade were the crimes perpetrated by this gang'.

Within the 2018 CSE report the following commentary was made:

'Concerns were raised in relation to hidden sexual exploitation in the Roma and traveller communities. It was felt that although young people from these communities were rarely referred, and thus not captured in the quantitative data, that anecdotal and cultural information would suggest them to be at risk, with barriers to engagement including language, culture, and fear of dishonour.'

Chalvey is an area in Slough which has a strong Roma community. Professionals will say that many of the Roma families living in the Chalvey area come from Tandarei, (a town in Romania) which is well known for concerns around trafficking and other forms of exploitation and criminality.

SBC Community Development Team provide outreach support for children and families within the Roma community.

SBC have also illustrated their commitment to engaging with the Roma community by using additional funding to employ a family support worker from the community.

It is important that the Roma community can trust and have confidence in the professionals who may be offering support. Having people who are representative of the community can help break down barriers and encourage people to ask for help where they may not have previously.

I understand that the family support worker has made significant progress in engaging the Roma community. Opportunities around employment, training, sporting and diversion activity with younger members of the Roma community have all been positive developments.

Whilst I understand a new exploitation team aligned to the YOT is being developed and will include workers from the community there are concerns around the potential loss of knowledge and understanding of the local Roma community.

Despite a clear willingness to support the Roma community several professionals have expressed concerns around the hidden harm and exploitation that may be taking place.

Some professionals have suggested that some people within the Roma community can be resistant to intervention and support. However, we need to balance this against an element of mistrust in authorities based on the lived experience that some Roma communities may have. Cultural awareness, understanding and accessibility of services are important issues to consider.

The concerns expressed by professionals are summarised as follows. It is important to note that these concerns are primarily anecdotal and are set within a desire to support vulnerable members of the Roma community.

All of the commentary that follows require careful, sensitive corroboration.

It is important to note that the author has had no direct contact with members of the Roma community to hear and understand their experience first-hand and seek to corroborate these concerns.

The collective concerns are summarised as follows:

- There may be a disproportionate level of exploitation taking place within the Roma community particularly involving children and young people. One professional went as far to say there should be a 'red flag' raised about the scale of exploitation.
- Lifestyles can be disinhibited, chaotic and with limited boundaries.

- Exploitation may be taking place within the home setting with a perception that there is an expectation that children and young people follow the direction given by the family.
- There can be blurred and fluid family networks. Sometimes, the identities of children and young people are not being openly shared.
- There is some suggestion of an informal hierarchy where older males may exploit younger children and direct them to commit acquisitive crime such as robbery and theft or resort to begging.
- There is a suggestion that the Roma community in Slough may be connected with other Roma Communities in Birmingham and Dagenham. This may present opportunities in terms of partnership working.
- It has also been highlighted that younger groups sometimes travel to London, but the reasons for these trips are not fully understood.
- There are concerns of gatherings by some younger Roma males in the streets which can lead to disruptive behaviour or feel intimidating to others. This needs to be considered against the reality of many Roma families living in multi occupancy homes and the discrimination that they suffer.
- There is a perception of children missing from education, especially girls, from around the age of 14. Some schools suggest that the children are returning to Romania to live with family or to complete their education there.
- Concerns were raised by some, by that younger Roma females may be also be returned to Romania to get married at any early age. There is also anecdotal evidence of boys under the age of 16 disclosing that they are married.
- There are also concerns raised by some about some suggestion of early motherhood and underage pregnancy.
- There is also some anecdotal evidence of some highly sexualised behaviour of young Roma boys, including towards teachers.

Many of these concerns are also evident in other demographic groups and of course will not apply to some members of the Roma community.

It is fair to say that concerns within the Roma community were the most prominent when interviewing professionals and the commentary detailed above has come directly from professionals from a range of agencies working across Slough.

There is a perception from some professionals working with the community that there are exploitative practices occurring which are sometimes too easily explained as 'cultural' differences. They are sometimes viewed as isolated incidents and the concern is that a wider context may be being missed. However, these concerns are largely unsubstantiated, and direct evidence can be difficult to find.

Culture is very powerful and can be a force for good. It is defined as the social heritage of a group, organised community or society. It is a pattern of responses discovered, developed or invented during the group's history of handling problems which arise from interactions among its members, and between them and their environment. These responses are considered the correct way to perceive, feel, think, and act, and are passed on to the new members through immersion and teaching. Culture determines what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable.

Other professionals have suggested that the exploitation that may be taking place is not always recognised as such. For example, when younger people are directed to beg or steal from shops and give the money to their parents this is clearly trafficking and exploitation of young people but on occasions the partnership response does not always reflect this.

Following a programme of work with the community, funded by the Controlling Migration Fund, the Community Safety Team are in the process of commissioning research by Nottingham University on potential exploitation amongst children and adults within the Roma community in Slough. It will also look at the ways in which this group are exploited by those outside of the community.

The findings will be presented in September 2021.

This review was underway prior to this work being commissioned by SLG, but it is envisaged that the two pieces of work will dovetail and complement each other.

I would suggest given the strength of concern presented by professionals around potential exploitation within the Roma community there is a 'here and now' need to review the current operational strategy and put in place some immediate interventions.

Learning Point 9. Ahead of the research by Nottingham University, the partnership to review and seek to corroborate these concerns around the Roma community and prioritise an operational strategy built upon engagement, support and intervention.

Engagement with Roma Communities

Given some of the concerns raised by professionals around engagement with the Roma community in order to build upon what is already in place there may be some learning from a review undertaken in Barnsley in 2017.

Whilst it is recognised not all learning is transferable the Slough partnership may wish to consider some of the findings contained with the report entitled '*Roma in Barnsley. Mapping Services and Local Priorities*' report, which are in part replicated below:

'Engagement and trust with Roma service users could be developed further by designing interventions that build on Roma priorities. The top priorities of Roma in this project concerned employment or their children. Future projects could consider being designed around these in a range of ways.'

There are significant gaps in the knowledge of many staff in statutory services and among the host community about migrant Roma living in their local areas. Building up their knowledge, understanding and engagement with Roma as service users, colleagues and neighbours could improve Roma access to mainstream services and improve relationships within local communities.

Services need to react quickly to changes that are occurring in Roma communities. Changes include increased diversity among Roma service users, less transience, and increased precariousness in terms of work, income and reception by local communities. These could provide opportunities for engagement, such as providing support to document individuals' residency as the UK'.

Aik Saath

Aik Saath is a not-for-profit charity based founded in 2006 in Slough.

Aik Saath was established in response to gang violence between young people from Asian backgrounds in Slough.

The words Aik Saath means "Together As One" in Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. This also embodies the ethos of the charity, who, work together for positive social change.

Their mission is to work with people from all communities, faiths and backgrounds to promote and encourage conflict resolution and community cohesion through training, campaigns and projects.

Aik Saath have a very diverse group of young people across Slough attending their numerous groups. The Slough Integration Service have also been engaging the Somali community. Both agencies are heavily involved in Chalvey where it is common for Roma and Somali communities to reside.

Aik Saath have raised concerns around the dilution in levels of engagement with the Roma community since the closure of a community venue some 18 months ago.

The levels of engagement have been further challenged by the pandemic. I understand there are plans to reignite engagement via a new venue soon.

Inclusive Engagement in Chalvey

As mentioned, a significant proportion of the Roma community reside in the deprived Chalvey area of Slough.

The Intensive Engagement programme is a 40-week project (lengthened due to Covid).

Intensive Engagement are a private sector company who work with partnerships to develop safer, stronger and more resilient communities. They specifically seek to identify assets that individuals and communities can offer.

The programme reflects the willingness for the partnership to reach out and engage with diverse communities in Chalvey.

Commissioned by the Violence Reduction Unit the project works on the premise of locally identified solutions and practices. The community have a say in determining the issues on their area that most affect them and are invested in the process of identify solutions that they can provide, based on their own skills and what they can offer.

The programme has moved to the stage that two working groups have developed. They are around a drug use / dealing and associated ASB in a newer home development and problems around gatherings in the area of Chalvey Road West.

The latter problem a group of the community who are vocal and make themselves heard. The other side are some of the Roma community who gather on the street (the Roma community being on the periphery, with limited community involvement). There is limited community cohesion and limited consideration/time given to understand the other party.

The Intensive Engagement programme is now entering its later stages and a full evaluation will be presented soon.

Somali Communities

Some professionals have expressed their concerns about vulnerability and exploitation across some Somali communities. That said, as with the Roma communities, many professionals accept there are 'blind spots' in their knowledge and understanding of Somali communities.

Again, the author has had no direct contact with the Somali community in Slough.

Professionals drew a clear distinction between the potential exploitation of Somali boys and girls. It would be naïve to suggest that there are no Somali girls exposed to violence, but it is suggested there are much higher proportion of boys that are at risk of becoming involved in violence.

Some professionals have raised the question around the level of engagement within a small number of faith schools. This in turn may limit the opportunity for professionals to develop their understanding of sensitive cultural issues.

It is suggested that there can be a strong matriarchal influence within the Somali community with a high value placed on educational attainment. This is supported by a view from early years professionals who suggest there is a comparatively low number of Somali children to the local authority referred at a young age.

Professionals have suggested that given the absence of a male role model in some households, once Somali boys reach teenage years, the positive influence of their mothers and other family members may become diluted and they may then come to the attention of agencies. This trend is also observed with teenage boys from a different demographics.

It is important to note the partnership work that has taken place in Slough with Somali mothers to support their children. The Somali mothers have demonstrated care, leadership and a willingness to work with agencies to prevent exploitation.

Role modelling and access to a different pathway are important. Some professionals raised concerns about how young Somali males can be heavily influenced by witnessing criminality by an older sibling or peer group. There may be certain rites involving antisocial or criminal behaviour or violent / sex acts in order to become part of the group. These rituals are also of course observed with many other young people from different communities.

Learning Point 10. Explore and if necessary, seek to build upon and enhance the level of engagement with the Somali community.

Sikh and Muslim Communities

Whilst there are historical tensions between the Sikh and Muslim communities in Slough there was overwhelming consensus across professionals that any tension has reduced significantly over time, communities are broadly cohesive, and senior stakeholders and faith leaders are mutually supportive.

Evidence of any exploitation involving either the Muslim or Sikh communities presented to this review was extremely limited.

The author has not had any direct contact with members of the Muslim or Sikh communities in Slough.

However, accepting the unknowns some professionals also offered a view that exploitation of vulnerable people from different faith groups could be taking place, but agencies may not be sighted on the risk.

Some professionals have specifically raised concerns around what they perceive to be limited engagement with a small number of faith schools.

There is anecdotal evidence that some faith schools may have different thresholds and some schools may wish to manage issues rather than refer matters to agencies, where it is appropriate to do so.

Examples were cited of a handful of faith-based schools where there are very apparently lower rates of referrals.

There was a view offered that the awareness and understanding of vulnerability and exploitation may be lower than in some of these schools, although this is unsubstantiated.

There is nothing to suggest that the schools concerned are doing anything other than providing a safe supportive environment but the relatively low referral rate to the statutory agencies may invite further collaborative work.

This is a complex and sensitive area. Should the partnerships elect to take forward further collaborative work they are invited to consider to what extent have they considered cultural barriers such as 'shame' and 'honour' feature in their discourse, policies and practice. Some cultural norms may limit discussions regarding healthy relationships and sexual intimacy.

The alternative view is that there are now four generations of minority communities residing in the borough. There is a view that 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations embrace the importance of supporting children and young people around sensitive issues and therefore any perceived risk is not significant.

Learning Point 11. Explore and if necessary, seek to improve the level of engagement (and referrals) within some faith schools.

Is there any learning for the SLG to inform the holistic exploitation strategy?

Slough is a richly diverse growing cohesive community. The partnership working is built upon inclusion.

Diversity in Slough can be viewed as a success story and partners and professionals should be proud of their ongoing engagement with evolving local communities.

Some professionals have identified that the strengths in terms of the collective will to 'embrace diversity and 'get on and make a difference' may also reduce the time to 'stop and think'.

There is always a careful balance to be struck between analysis and activity. Whilst recognising the capacity issue, partners are invited to consider whether they have this balance right.

Understanding the demographics of exploitation cannot be tackled by one agency operating alone. They will hold only partial knowledge of the issues and will be unable to deliver anything more than a partial response. Effective responses must be built on a holistic understanding of the problem, which will only come through identifying where the gaps in knowledge are, community engagement and insight, and joined up data and information sharing to develop a rich picture of exploitation.

With rising and more complex demand and limited capacity, trying to balance partnership effort, assets and funding to address short-, medium- and longer-term risk is challenging.

Some professionals for example feel that the balance between CCE and CSE requires repositioning whilst other believe there is insufficient focus on vulnerable adults and modern slavery.

It is also important to avoid the risk of one agency such as the police focusing on CCE or the local authority focusing on CSE.

Others offer the view that it is not always helpful to try and categorise vulnerability and exploitation and prefer a more holistic approach focusing on people and place.

Many of these issues are interdependent and rely heavily of shared ambition and evidence-based decision making.

In a climate of limited resources, priorities on where resources and energies should be spent need to be very carefully considered and decided upon at the highest levels by accountable leaders. This provides direction and support to the work of the partnership infra-structure including business plans and agenda setting. It also provides a focus for assessing impact and quality assurance.

I have observed that Slough has a strong partnership and a solid foundation from which to take the issues raised in this review forward.

The partnership should also take encouragement from the fact that their priorities are aligned to national priorities whilst also considering the nuances of the borough.

However, a multiagency response to these challenging issues does not develop naturally. I would suggest it could be systematically embedded at all levels and fully integrated through multiagency forums and work plans.

I will now detail some specific **learning points** for consideration.

Data and Information Sharing.

Within the *2020 SBC annual Equality and Diversity* report SBC have a specific data collection quality objective which is replicated as follows:

“Slough Borough Council will improve equality of opportunity through fair and evidence-based decision-making”

SBC state they will:

- Improve the collection and use of quantitative and qualitative information available on the impact of major decisions on different equality groups.
- Ensure residents have the opportunity to have their views heard on all major decisions.
- Commit to mitigating negative impacts, wherever reasonable and proportionate.
- Ensure a range of monitoring data should be made available to the right people at the right time to assess our progress, including assisting in determining long-term equality objectives.
- Review current data collection methods to improve coordination and consistency, which over time will provide more robust equality data.
- Ensure that equality data collection is factored into decision-making when working on major projects, particularly in relation to new systems and digital initiatives.

Whilst professionals have been supportive, throughout this review a consistent challenge has been the collection of data on the demographics of victims and perpetrators.

There are mutually supportive professional relationships in place, but integration could be strengthened.

There is some information and data sharing taking place, but it does not appear to be at scale or co-ordinated.

I would characterise the situation where several jigsaw pieces have been presented but unless the pieces are put together the full picture will not emerge.

That is not to say that data around ethnicity is not captured and several data sets are presented within this report as detailed above. Rather, the data appears to be captured for a specific purpose, sometimes held by a single agency and not always joined up and shared with other data sets.

It is also important to recognise there is good practice taking place. For example, in the area of exploitation SBC works closely with Children First to share intelligence on all forms of exploitation. Analysts collaborate to understand where exploitation is occurring and how.

Except for the '*SBC 2020 Equality & Diversity Report*' the data presented is somewhat fragmented and not considered of sufficient scale for any in-depth analysis.

There are a range of reasons as to why these data challenges exist which are also evident at a national level and referred to previously in this report.

The lack of good quality data limits what can be known about the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploitation in Slough.

Partners need to be able to share information and data holistically so that they know and understand the experiences of children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk of or subject to exploitation, and the prevalence of these issues in their area.

More consistent data collection and recording processes, as well as the sharing of these between agencies, could lead to improved responses and awareness. Studies have found that partners are more able to tackle exploitation when they have the data and information to allow them to build a good understanding of the local threat and a proactive multi-agency process in place to tackle it.

This can lead to effective targeted positive action. In terms of preventative work confidence in the data could also lead to some predictive profiling for early intervention.

Transformation Programme

In recognition of this, SBC is undergoing a transformation programme.

The programme includes a dedicated examination of systems use, data management, and how the borough uses data insight to drive decision making.

Over the next two years it is anticipated that SBC will be making a series of changes to upgrade systems, utilise modern analytical techniques, and align how they work to enable partners to act smartly based on the insight.

Collaboration is integral to the futures programme, and in the area of data and insight SBC are forming two new collaborative groups – one joining up teams in the Council and Children First and the other joining up teams across agencies in Slough and Thames Valley more widely.

In tackling serious violence, SBC are supported by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and specifically their data team, Thames Valley Together (TVT).

TVT are developing new products that will improve the ability to act based on the data insights into the incidences of, and the causes of violent crime.

Learning Point 12. Improve the collection, sharing and analysis of data to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploration.

Recording Ethnicity and other Protected Characteristics.

When seeking to improve data quality one specific area for consideration is the recording of ethnicity and other protected characteristics.

Ethnicity refers to a group of people whose members identify with each other through a common heritage, such as a common language, faith and culture.

In a report entitled '*the importance of ethnic data for promoting the right to education*', the author Zoë Gray commented:

'The collection of ethnic data is infrequently prioritised, and the impact of this lack of information is grave. Minorities are not adequately targeted, they fall through the gaps, marginalised in mainstream development and education programmes, stuck in poverty. In the collection of information and development of indices of children's well-being, geographic and income deprivation indicators are often used instead'.

It is accepted that collecting data on ethnicity and other protected characteristics can be complex as the issue is multi-faceted.

Further commentary on the challenges and importance of capturing ethnicity is offered within the '*Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report*':

'Arguments about discrimination almost always start with data but how that data is framed and selected is crucial, and differences in outcomes need understanding and explaining. Differences – or 'disparities' – are not always sinister and do not always arise from discrimination. Throughout the report we express various concerns about

the way that data is collected and used by public authorities. One concern is the lack of precision in some data collection.

The Census has gradually increased its granularity of ethnicity over recent decades and for 2021 has 19 tick-box categories for ethnic self-identification, with Roma added since 2011. Yet too much data continues to be collected at the level of the so-called 'big 5' classifications: White, Black, Asian, Mixed and Other – and this is further compounded by small sample sizes, which make meaningful analysis at lower granularity unviable. We know that broad categories like Black or Asian hide hugely different outcomes between different sub-groups and can therefore be very misleading. This is pertinent in the crime and policing chapter where there are inconsistencies in the ethnicity categories being used.

So, we would urge public authorities, where practical, to use the most disaggregated categories possible. The Race Disparity Unit (RDU) has added clarity and transparency to these debates by pulling much of the ethnicity data onto one official website, but too much of the RDU data is still, through no fault of its own, provided only in the big 5 categories.

The ONS has its own processes for determining which new categories should be included in the Census but 2 categories that could in future be helpfully sub-divided are White Other which does not distinguish between West Europeans and East Europeans, and Black African which does not distinguish between sub-Saharan African people in general and Somalis who are now a substantial group in their own right.

Then there is the broader issue of the way data is presented. We should, where possible, be reporting net disparities not gross disparities. So, for example, most ethnic minority groups are on average younger and more likely to live-in inner-city areas than the White population, and because crime is disproportionately committed by young people and people in big cities this needs to be adjusted for when looking at the raw data on crime. This would use a regression analysis – meaning adjusting for relevant factors to get a more realistic comparison on a like for like basis. This is used by the ONS, for example, in its analysis of pay and wealth by ethnicity. There is also the issue of relevant benchmarks for ethnic minority representation. The general population benchmark often presents a more negative picture of minority achievement than is justified. Different groups have different histories, periods of residence in the country, class and educational backgrounds, average ages, so there are many reasons, apart from discrimination, why you would not expect that representation in a given profession, say, should match a group's share of the general population.

We would also ask for a more responsible use of statistics in general in the sometimes-emotional field of race and ethnicity. The reporting of hate crime figures, which is touched on more than once in the report, should, for example, make clear that recent increases are in incidents reported to the police and more reliable national survey evidence suggests that actual hate crime incidents are falling. It is worth considering whether a set of ethnicity data standards might be useful to raise standards along the lines described above for all organisations in receipt of public money. The Commission agrees with advice provided by the RDU in that when

reliable data for the full, harmonised set of classifications is not available, then the 5 aggregated groups can be used. It is further agreed that users should note the limitations of the analysis, in particular that data for an aggregated group (the Black group, for example) can mask differences in outcomes for detailed ethnic groups (the Black Caribbean and Black African groups, for example). Users should avoid, unless it is absolutely necessary, binary analysis for example comparing White and 'Other than White' because of the lack of analytical value this gives. Furthermore, if it is possible to show data for some of the detailed groups, then the RDU encourages consideration of this, a suggestion that the Commission also supports, noting that every level of disaggregation adds analytical value providing that it remains possible to draw meaningful comparisons'

Within the report a specific recommendation (23) was made 'to develop and publish a set of ethnicity data standards to improve understanding and information gathering, reducing the opportunity for misunderstanding and misuse'.

Ethnic group, religion and national identity and other protected characteristics should always be self-identification measures reflecting how people define themselves. It is important that professionals seek to close the gap by encouraging victims and perpetrators to self-define and do not attempt to use their own judgements.

Capturing ethnicity onwards maximises completeness and comparability with the UK and local population. High concordance across professionals would ensure the data is of high value when examining vulnerability and exploitation. Poor completeness and inconsistency of data render can render assessments unreliable.

It is important that systems and processes which capture protected characteristics across the partnership are consistent and understood.

It is acknowledged that SBC have and continue to strive to improve the position. The 2021 Census will provide a much richer picture of the ethnic profile in Slough.

The importance of accurately capturing the ethnicity of residents is illustrated by a case cited by one of the professionals. There were concerns raised about the behaviour of a small number of Roma children within a local college. When support and intervention was proposed the college indicated that records stated there were no Roma children in education at the establishment. This may be an isolated case but may also be representative of a wider issue.

On a more positive note, TVP will report high levels of ethnicity being recorded accurately when hate crime is reported. There may be some learning from TVP that could be replicated across the partnership.

Learning Point 13. Improve the recording of ethnicity and other protected characteristics to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploration.

Strategic Threat Assessment and Problem Profile

This review has established a clear requirement to commission a wide-ranging strategic threat assessment that helps explain and understand the demographic profile of victims and preparators of exploitation in Slough. A strategic threat assessment and problem profile is key to 'joining the dots.'

Whilst professional's knowledge of the borough and their business area is clear, this information is often shared across different forums and it could be viewed as a somewhat piecemeal approach. There does not appear to be a co-ordinated complete rich intelligence picture of exploitation, with a clear focus on different demographic groups.

It has accepted that the investigation of exploitation by the partnership requires a proactive approach to explore the nature and patterns of exploitation locally, and to share information about those at risk and potential perpetrators.

In informing the assessment, some professionals have raised concerns that intelligence is fed to the police but sometimes without any return or response. This perception of a potential 'black hole' can act as a barrier to sharing further information for some agencies.

Professionals have offered the view that a contributory factor in the absence of a strategic threat assessment is the reduction of analytical capacity over time. Whilst capacity is acknowledged the importance of a holistic threat assessment and a more systematic approach should be prioritised.

In undertaking the strategic threat assessment, it will be necessary to determine the scope of the assessment, collect multi agency data, identify potential vulnerabilities, highlight any threats and complete the analysis.

By carrying out the strategic threat assessment partners will be able to identify gaps in knowledge, patterns of concern and more fully understand the specific risks of exploitation across demographic groups.

Learning Point 14. Commission a strategic threat assessment and / or problem profile to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploration.

Community Engagement

Effective inclusive community engagement is essential in maintaining trust and confidence.

Community-led approaches to promoting child safeguarding have been shown to be critical in engaging socially excluded communities and in changing attitudes and behaviour. Engaging communities in discussion and debate about human rights can be used as a touchstone for change. There are tensions between children's and parent's rights in all communities. Effective community engagement is integral in seeking to understand exploitation across different demographic groups.

The concept of local communities is evolving and changing from a geographically shared space to one of shared interests and experiences.

That said, key locations within faith communities such as Mosques, Gurdwaras and Churches provide important trusted focal points for communities and engagement opportunities for agencies.

All agencies should be asking themselves how do we support new and diverse communities? How do we engage with them? How do we embrace all our communities into mainstream society?

For trust to flourish, professionals need to better understand these communities and faith groups, thereby increasing professionals' confidence to challenge cultural and faith-related practices which can give rise to safeguarding children concerns.

Within a report entitled *'Tackling child sexual exploitation. A resource pack for Councils'* published in 2014 the authors commented:

'The Rotherham Inquiry made it clear that the council had failed to work with and engage local minority ethnic communities and in particular the women of those communities on the issue of CSE and other forms of abuse. Both the Manchester and Rotherham reports made a series of recommendations about engaging with all communities. For example, LSCBs and all partner agencies should improve their methods of communicating with, engaging and working in partnership with all communities, including socially advantaged, disadvantaged, white and minority ethnic communities to raise awareness of CSE and address the issue of under reporting of CSE and abuse. Councils and their partners need to engage with local community organisations such as women's groups, youth groups and religious groups. Learning should be disseminated to parents to help build the resilience of children and young people and prevent them from becoming victims or offenders in online and street grooming circles'

Within the report on CSE, Professor Jay identified the requirement for engagement with communities to be meaningful, and to reach into every part of the community, stating that in Rotherham there was:

'too much reliance by agencies on traditional community leaders as being the primary conduit of communication with the Pakistani-heritage community, with several women from that community feeling disenfranchised by this and thought it was a barrier to people coming forward to talk about CSE'.

Within the *'Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities'* report there is a specific recommendation (4) around strengthening partnerships between police and communities as follows:

'The Commission makes a two-part recommendation: A) The College of Policing, working alongside the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), and National Police Chief's Council (NPCC), develop a minimum standard framework for community 'safeguarding trust' groups that will not only have a function to scrutinise and problem-solve alongside policing, but also to ensure there is a minimum level of engagement with communities in every police service area.

Once a year, safeguarding trust groups should write to, and receive a response from the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner to update on progress. Police forces should also be required to demonstrate how they have responded and implemented changes as a result of scrutiny or challenge by the community. Throughout the framework development phase, there should be engagement with independent experts in community engagement and scrutiny external to policing. Consideration should be given to how members of Safeguarding Trust groups are adequately enabled to undertake their roles.

Where required, the Home Office should also provide support in identifying the areas where trustworthiness is low and set targets to close the confidence gap, with Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners to publish delivery plans to achieve that improvement. Progress against these delivery plans should be presented and discussed at the safeguarding trust group meetings.'

Engagement with key stakeholders is equally important. Local faith leaders can be very influential, and this influence be harnessed in a positive way. Faith leaders have a pivotal role to play in developing children's rights within minority ethnic culture and faith groups and communities. However, it can be difficult for followers to challenge them. Individuals may also be concerned not to bring 'shame' on their community or group by reporting safeguarding issues.

Elected local councillors, particularly from minority communities, can be a real asset. Some professionals have suggested their understanding of what may be happening in local communities may be high but not routinely shared with agencies.

These leaders need to be positively engaged, and individuals who have fears need more assurance that confidentiality issues are managed with transparency and integrity.

Community Engagement in Slough

SBC have the following Community Cohesion Equality Objective:

"Slough Borough Council will help to foster good community relations and cohesion."

SBC state they will:

- Celebrate Slough as a diverse and welcoming place
- Provide a leadership role on issues that impact on local community cohesion.
- Promote mutual respect and tolerance.
- Promote local democracy and civic engagement
- Champion equality and challenge prejudice
- Reinforce civic values and democracy
- Promote dialogue and understanding between different groups
- Speak out against extremism

The Council has been developing a new community cohesion strategy for Slough with the following four areas identified as key priorities:

- Celebrating Slough
- Identifying and seek opportunities to reduce inequality
- Strengthening community leadership
- Embedding community cohesion as a council-wide priority

Central to the strategy is the theme that community cohesion is everybody's business and needs to be incorporated into the plans for every directorate across the Council.

As with any form of exploitation, statutory services cannot tackle it without the support of the wider community. Social workers, police officers, teachers and health professionals can only respond to issues that they are aware of. It is within families and the wider community that many of the key risk indicators will first come to light. It is vital that everyone is aware of the signs of exploitation and knows how to refer concerns through to the relevant agency.

Several professionals believe that existing engagement with diverse communities is strong across Slough.

The ongoing work of the local authority, police, health, education and a raft of voluntary agencies reflect the commitment of the partnership to connect with all communities within the borough.

Some professionals in Slough suggest that there is 'not a single door that is not open to agencies', but they perceive this is primarily due to the work of frontline professionals who have worked sensitively over time to develop trust and confidence. There is some frustration that the insight that can be provided by people embedded within communities is not given sufficient weight by decision makers. There is a desire to give community workers a more influential voice and a hope that further investment is made 'on the ground'.

TVP will say they have good coverage across a broad range of diverse communities in the borough, primarily through their neighbourhood policing model. By engaging on a formal and informal basis with a network of contacts the police will offer the view that their understanding of what is happening across the borough is relatively strong.

Professionals also made the point of not being disproportionately influenced by the 'loudest voices' but it is as important to hear the more measured less vocal representatives of the community.

In addition to the IAG there is a community cohesion meeting chaired by the police, which is broadly representative of the community.

I also understand that TVP are developing a legitimacy committee which will explore in detail issues affecting different demographic groups.

In contrast, other professionals have expressed the view that further work could be undertaken to build upon the significant amount of community engagement that has and continues to take place in Slough. For example, some of the concerns raised previously within the report around limited engagement in a small number of faith schools could be an area for further exploration.

Some professionals have noted that some minority ethnic groups and communities may need greater awareness, support and education about UK children's legislation, the role and responsibilities of local statutory services and their powers and duties (e.g., to provide support) towards children and their families.

There is some suggestion that some of the barriers to service access such as providing service information and a single point of contact with services could be refreshed considering different languages and literacy levels. It was acknowledged that much service information is available online, but this is not always appropriate for the more vulnerable residents in Slough.

Some professionals felt that it would be useful to map out the provisions in place to support people from Slough who are deemed at risk of exploitation. Whilst it was recognised that staff possess an impressive working knowledge of the services available, such mapping may be useful for strategic decision makers, commissioning bodies, and working groups.

Mapping would support the identification of gaps in capacity / capability within the current 'Slough offer' and again allow for targeted intervention.

The Department for Health suggests two main approaches to commissioning or developing services which meet the needs of minority groups:

- A service which is specifically and exclusively designed for a particular group. This may be a standalone service, or one which forms part of a mainstream service.
- Mainstream services which can be flexible and skilled enough to meet the needs of all people.

In looking at services to minority communities the debate is about whether, and when, a 'culturally specific' service should be developed, or whether it is sufficient that mainstream services should be 'culturally competent'.

It may be beneficial to undertake consultation exercises to pick out common needs between new and small communities and use this when planning mainstream services.

Consideration could be given to revisiting the equalities analysis template and guidance to include how mainstream services will meet the needs of new and smaller communities in the borough.

Professionals have suggested any community engagement strategy should also seek to connect with the large business sector in Slough and help them deliver upon their corporate social responsibility. This would bring fresh insight, perspective and

opportunity. There would be some clear benefits to the business community including attracting and retaining a more representative workforce, an enhanced business reputation and joined up problem solving around issues affecting the local community.

The input from key community representatives should be included at all levels of the work around exploitation and they should be involved in the co-design of future strategies. A broad approach promoting children's healthy development, safety and safeguarding can be more effective for engaging communities and faith groups than a narrow focus on particular practices. It is imperative that key stakeholders feel empowered and trusted to deliver partnership-based improvements for their own communities.

It is critical that ideas are valued and there are some clear benefits for people if they elect to become involved in community activity, these benefits include an opportunity to gain valuable experience and skills and a chance to get involved in areas which directly affect their lives.

It would also be beneficial to consider providing training to key community representatives This would provide a consistency of understanding and knowledge around exploitation, vulnerability and safeguarding.

Learning Point 15. Review the community engagement strategy with diverse socially excluded communities to further understand and mitigate against any potential exploitation.

SBC New Operating Model

SBC are introducing a new operating model which is locality based and provides an opportunity to engage with communities via strategically based hubs.

The key benefits of the locality model are outlined as follows:

- Bring services to the heart of the communities
- Provide more integrated service to customers
- Deliver high quality services tailored to community needs
- Work closely with partners and communities through shared locality plans
- Encourage behaviour change in communities that builds resilience and independence.
- Prioritise well-being and preventative interventions in communities
- Provide strategic oversight of all local projects
- Leverage local data and insight to improve service delivery

Each area will co-develop a locality plan with input from communities, the voluntary sector, public sector partners and local businesses.

The plan will outline key objectives for the area and inform what projects and services are most needed in a locality.

The plan will be living document and be part of an ongoing discussion between the local authority, the community and the key stakeholders

External Communication

A coordinated hyper local tailored communications strategy could also be a means to engaging with minority communities. Professionals are invited to consider innovative ways in which to build upon the communication and engagement activity already taking place to connect with communities who do not currently have a voice.

For example, communications professionals have suggested using high profile TV programmes which run stories of exploitation of vulnerable people as a platform to raise awareness of issues across the borough.

Any future engagement and communication strategy will need to be inclusive, creative, balance the geographic context with the online space and identify who are the key influences within the community.

Learning Point 16. Consider the implementation of a ‘hyper local’ communication strategy to engage with and support minority communities.

Is there learning about management and front-line practice for the two groups leading on this in Slough, the safeguarding children from exploitation and modern slavery groups.

Internal Communication

Professional relationships are strong. I found that many teams and professionals are doing great work in Slough at both statutory and community levels.

However, several frontline practitioners felt they were all working extremely hard and were mutually supportive but felt there could be more done to communicate a clear coherent strategy in informing their work to tackle exploitation with diverse, evolving communities.

There was a consensus that reliable and consistent partnership data, intelligence and analysis information, aligned to community engagement and insight is key.

Learning Point 17. Be clearer in communicating a clear coherent strategy to front line professionals in informing their work to tackle exploitation with diverse, evolving communities.

Front line practice

In terms of improving frontline practice, there are a number of learning points referenced earlier in this report.

In addition, professionals have raised the following learning points:

Early Intervention

There are some professionals who suggest that there could be more focus on early intervention, with some children who are subject of exploitation only coming to notice within the 14 to 17 age group. Some professionals have anecdotally cited Somali boys as an example of this, although there is evidence of this happening across other demographic groups.

They also believe there should be an enhanced focus on identifying younger siblings for preventative work.

This issue was commented on during the 2018 *'review of CSE'*:

'Practitioners recognised that one of hardest challenges in relation to working with young people at risk of any type of exploitation is ensuring voluntary engagement from both the young person and their parents, where there are no statutory grounds for engagement. Practitioners further suggested that resistance to engagement limited somewhat the ability to intervene for the purposes of prevention. It is recommended that the CSE subgroup, which reports into the LSCB, endeavour to identify from case studies and best practise examples from other local authority areas, methods of improving and encouraging voluntary engagement'

Professional's state they wish to break the generational cycle. Reflecting the vocational nature of their work and passion for safeguarding, some describe feeling that they have 'failed the child' when they are subject of exploitation during their teenage years.

Until recently early help was provided by the Local Authority, with the child in need support provided by the Children's Trust. The new SBC Children First operating model will provide an opportunity to provide a clear consistent continuum of care.

Key Stages 7 & 8

Some professionals also raised concerns around the potential vulnerability of children between key stages 7 and 8. The transition from primary to secondary education is a significant step for children and many may be understandably naïve to potential grooming and exploitation, particularly in the online space.

Professionals have suggested the transition at the age of 11 can be 'underplayed' and enhanced support could be provided to help children understand the risks presented by older groups.

Some professionals have stated anecdotally that there is a trend of younger females (some as young as ten) been sexually exploited, reaffirming the need for enhanced preventative work.

Preventative education – raising awareness and linking the teaching with relevant school policies, including those on sex and relationships education, e-safety, anti-bullying and child protection will help to ensure clear links with SBC aspiration to reduce harm.

Encouragingly, the PHSE programme is again mandatory on the school curriculum.

SBC have also introduced the Choices Programme which aims to support children in the last two years of primary education and the first year of secondary school. The

Choices programme introduces key blocks of knowledge during primary phase to develop a framework for decision making built upon the understanding of 'choice'. I understand Choices has been adopted by around two thirds of primary schools in Slough and feedback is positive. There may be opportunities moving forward to expand the Choices programme and encourage greater involvement of lay members.

Haybrook College Trust have launched a programme called 'Fratelli' which focuses on a group of boys in year 8 and 9 who are on the 'serious crime radar' and have the potential to be exploited. Information around this risk group is shared with agencies across Slough and neighbouring areas with a view to preventative action being taken.

Anecdotally, Haybrook will suggest this cohort is primarily White British boys.

Learning Point 18. Review focus and levels of support around early intervention and key stage 7 & 8.

Continuous Professional Development

Within the 2014 report '*Tackling child sexual exploitation. A resource pack for Councils*' the authors commented:

'The National Working Group Network report, citing Barnardo's recommendations, suggested that training should be developed for frontline staff in services for children and young people to recognise the warning signs and risk factors of child sexual exploitation and how to respond using child protection procedures. This should include understanding the elements of grooming and coercion so that a child or young person's behaviour is not dismissed as rebellious or somehow consenting to the abuse. It should also include an understanding of the sexual exploitation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic victims and different types of victim-offender models. Information about the behaviour of people who sexually offend should also be incorporated into training and awareness-raising activities'.

Within SBC, even considering the pandemic, there is evidence of strong partnership professional development with an emphasis on exploitation. Equality and Diversity e-learning is mandatory for all employees as part of the corporate learning requirements.

Further, a new management training programme is being rolled out, with diversity and inclusion embedded into key themes.

Other examples of a commitment to training include health mandating modern slavery training and an ongoing virtual safeguarding programme which seeks to encourage professionals to look beyond their area of business and take a holistic view of exploitation.

Professionals have offered a view that there could be greater emphasis on cultural competence. This would give professionals more confidence to engage with diverse communities and understand different cultural perspectives. Any programme would be enhanced with involvement from minority community members.

I understand this proposal is been explored and would build upon the investment already made by agencies in supporting their staff around inclusion.

Others have offered the view that more could be done to explain to front line staff of the value of capturing and sharing intelligence and information. There is a belief that professionals across many agencies have a rich understanding around exploitation, but this is not always shared across the partnership. It is suggested more awareness around the value of community intelligence sharing would support the partnership.

Learning Point 19. Review continuous professional development for partnership professionals with a focus on cultural competence and the importance of community intelligence.

Are there any demographic groups overrepresented as victims of exploitation in Slough?

In addressing this question, evidence suggests that migration, health, education and economic inequalities create a pool of vulnerable people who may be disproportionately exploited.

The pandemic is only likely to have exacerbated these inequalities.

When examining the data presented by professionals together in most areas the predominant demographic profile of victims is White British. This is evident across CSE and Modern Slavery. This is also the case with school exclusions.

The exceptions are the more diverse demographic profile of victims of serious violence identified as part of the rapid review process and a higher proportion of victims of child criminal exploitation who are defined as Asian or Asian British Pakistani and White and Black Caribbean.

When reviewing housing and accommodation BAME households continue to be over-represented among housing applicants and homeless households.

Again, the caveat is the data quality issues and the potential for hidden harm.

Professionals have commented extensively on potential exploitation with the Roma community, with some describing it as a 'red flag' issue. The evidence around the Roma community has been primarily anecdotal and requires further corroboration, but this does not mean it should not be given sufficient prioritisation.

The overwhelming concerns around the Roma community reaffirm the importance of looking beyond the data and placing sufficient weight on the views and concerns of professionals.

Conclusion

The passion that professionals have in Slough is very evident and contagious.

In carrying out any review, I have identified several learning points for further consideration. However, it is as important to acknowledge the clear strengths around partnership working in Slough. These strengths include:

- Despite the pandemic, multi-agency engagement and participation has been excellent, and the commitment of professionals has been exemplary.
- There is evidence of a collective understanding of threat, harm and risk and positive actions to mitigate it.
- There are some positive examples of engagement with minority communities.
- There are some examples of proactive information and data sharing by partners.
- There is some evidence of agencies linking up information and intelligence on particular groups of children and vulnerable adults and robust discussions about levels of support and intervention required.
- There is a collective desire to build upon these strengths and an ethos of continuous professional development.

There are several strategic developments which provide an opportunity for SBC to build upon these strengths. These include the repositioning of Children First, the new locality based operating model, the transformation programme and the commissioned work to support the Roma community.

Whilst resetting out of the pandemic presents some challenges and risk, it also presents opportunities for the partnership.

When reviewing the requirements of the SLG this review has highlighted:

- Community and cultural factors are highly relevant to understanding and tackling the demographics of exploitation. Engagement and communication are key.
- Accurate, reliable data and intelligence is critical to truly understanding the demographics of exploitation.
- The insight and experience of front-line professionals is vital in understanding the demographics of exploitation. They are often representative of the voice of the children and young people who may be subject of exploitation.

Whilst there is really good work taking place, if the partnership is truly to understand the demographics around exploitation, it will need to build upon the strengths and

require a more sophisticated approach to identifying victims and perpetrators moving forward.

END

Appendix A Learning Points

Learning Point 1. Continue to work as a partnership as part of the ‘resetting’ strategy post the pandemic to try and mitigate against the potential for an increase in criminal exploitation, county lines and knife crime and a ‘surge’ in safeguarding referrals as ‘lockdown’ eases.

Learning Point 2. Improve the consistency in how some schools interpret, record and share the data relating to school’s exclusions. A specific focus should be ensuring ethnicity is recorded.

Learning Point 3. TVP to build upon their assessment of CSE and CCE and seek to further explore the demographics of victims and perpetrators.

Learning Point 4. Improve the consistency of carrying out return home interviews, analysis and intelligence sharing across the partnership to reduce the risk of further exploitation.

Learning Point 5. Continue to improve the awareness and understanding of the correlation between modern slavery and exploitation.

Learning Point 6. Continue to improve the awareness modern slavery and the importance of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Learning Point 7. Prioritise the partnership work to develop the collective understanding of and tackle sex work exploitation.

Learning Point 8. Improve the consistency of response to safeguarding alerts involving vulnerable adults.

Learning Point 9. Ahead of the research by Nottingham University, the partnership to review and seek to corroborate these concerns around the Roma community and prioritise an operational strategy built upon engagement, support and intervention.

Learning Point 10. Explore and if necessary, seek to build upon and enhance the level of engagement with the Somali community.

Learning Point 11. Explore and if necessary, seek to improve the level of engagement within some faith schools.

Learning Point 12. Improve the collection, sharing and analysis of data to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploration.

Learning Point 13. Improve the recording of ethnicity and other protected characteristics to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploitation.

Learning Point 14. Commission a strategic threat assessment and / or problem profile to inform the understanding of the demographics of victims and perpetrators of exploitation.

Learning Point 15. Review the community engagement strategy with diverse socially excluded communities to further understand and mitigate against any potential exploitation.

Learning Point 16. Consider the implementation of a 'hyper local' communication strategy to engage with and support minority communities.

Learning Point 17. Be clearer in communicating a clear coherent strategy to front line professionals in informing their work to tackle exploitation with diverse, evolving communities.

Learning Point 18. Review focus and levels of support around early intervention. and key stage 7 & 8.

Learning Point 19. Review continuous professional development for partnership professionals with a focus on cultural competence and the importance of community intelligence.

Appendix B

List of professionals interviewed

- Alan Anstee Intelligence Analyst Thames Valley Police
- Zauf Awan -Community Development team
- Nadine Barratt – Senior Youth Worker – Youth Voice SBC
- Naheem Bashir | Prevent Manager SBC
- Kulbir Briar Community & Diversity Officer Slough LPA
- Donna Briggs Early Help Co-Ordinator SBC
- Helen Buckland Risk and Co – Ordinator SBC
- Jennifer Cail Youth Offending Team
- Clarisser Cupid – Director of Nursing & Safeguarding
- Sandra Davies Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding
- Rob Deeks - Aik Saath
- Carol Douch Assistant Director SBC
- Janine Edwards SBC Partnership Training & Development Officer
- Emma Fadipe Contextual Safeguarding Co-ordinator SBC
- Christine Ford Equality & Diversity Manager SB
- Jane Fowler – Named Nurse Child Protection. Berkshire East Community Health Service.
- Ketan Gandhi Associate Director – Place Regulation
- Helen Hadaway - Safeguarding Lead Our Lady of Peace Catholic Primary School
- Gill Hewlett - Targeted Young People Service
- Sabi Hothi. Education Services Manager SBC
- Shakir Hussain Safeguarding Partnership Coordinator
- David Hounsell Strategic Insight Manager SBC
- Michael Jarrett – Associate Director, Children and Families SB
- Ian Johnson - Deputy Head Haybrook College Trust
- Andalina Kolsawala - Targeted Young People Service
- Betty Lynch Safeguarding Partnerships Manager SBC
- Jatinder Matharu Education Safeguarding professional SBC
- Inspector Neil Misselbrook - Slough Neighbourhood Engagement Team
- Ishar Kaur Nijhar Assistant Team Manager. Slough Children First
- Ian Peplow Independent Scrutineer Slough Safeguarding Partnership
- Alex Potop - Community Development Worker
- Deidre Race - Head of Nursing for safeguarding and Vulnerable. Family Health
- Inspector John Stanley – Safeguarding Lead Thames Valley Police
- Garry Tallett Group Manager – Community Safety, Housing Regulation & Enforcement
- Vicky Tutty Commissioning Manager SBC

- DS Andy Ward - Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit.
- Beth Wilks Community Safety Team Manager SBC
- Superintendent Gavin Wong Thames Valley Police
- Josie Wragg – Chief Executive Slough Brough council

Appendix C

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Meetings Attended

- Attendance at the Safeguarding Children Exploitation Group 23rd March 2021
- Attendance at the Modern Slavery Exploitation Group 8th April 2021

Appendix D

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (1997 -2013) Professor Alexis Jay OBE

Section 11

Issues of ethnicity Issues of ethnicity related to child sexual exploitation have been discussed in other reports, including the Home Affairs Select Committee report, and the report of the Children's Commissioner. Within the Council, we found no evidence of children's social care staff being influenced by concerns about the ethnic origins of suspected perpetrators when dealing with individual child protection cases, including CSE.

In the broader organisational context, however, there was a widespread perception that messages conveyed by some senior people in the Council and also the Police, were to 'downplay' the ethnic dimensions of CSE. Unsurprisingly, frontline staff appeared to be confused as to what they were supposed to say and do and what would be interpreted as 'racist'. From a political perspective, the approach of avoiding public discussion of the issues was ill judged. There was too much reliance by agencies on traditional community leaders such as elected members and imams as being the primary conduit of communication with the Pakistani-heritage community. The Inquiry spoke to several Pakistani-heritage women who felt disenfranchised by this and thought it was a barrier to people coming forward to talk about CSE. Others believed there was wholesale denial of the problem in the Pakistani-heritage community in the same way that other forms of abuse were ignored. Representatives of women's groups were frustrated that interpretations of the Borough's problems with CSE were often based on an assumption that similar abuse did not take place in their own community and therefore concentrated mainly on young white girls.

Both women and men from the community voiced strong concern that other than two meetings in 2011, there had been no direct engagement with them about CSE over the past 15 years, and this needed to be addressed urgently, rather than 'tiptoeing' around the issue.

Ethnic Minorities and Safeguarding Issues

11.1 Census information from 2011 showed that Rotherham had nearly 8000 people with Pakistani or Kashmiri ethnicity, or 3.1% of the Borough population, an increase from 2% in the previous census. 77% of this population lived in one of three central wards of Rotherham. There are eight mosques in Rotherham. There were few

references in any minutes to ethnic minorities or migrant families until 2006, when concern was raised at the Safeguarding Board about the living conditions of migrant families. Young people were thought to be at risk of physical or sexual abuse for a variety of reasons. Some had been separated from their own families. There were also issues of poverty, forced marriage and child abduction. In the early months of 2005, twelve cases of forced marriage had been dealt with in Rotherham - the highest in the South Yorkshire Police area. Of particular concern was the young age of many of the girls involved.

11.2 As has been stated many times before, there is no simple link between race and child sexual exploitation, and across the UK the greatest numbers of perpetrators of CSE are white men. The second largest category, according to the Children's Commissioner's report, are those from a minority ethnic background, particularly - 92 - those recorded as 'Asian'. In Rotherham, the majority of known perpetrators were of Pakistani heritage including the five men convicted in 2010. The file reading carried out by the Inquiry also confirmed that the ethnic origin of many perpetrators was 'Asian'. In one major case in the mid-2000s, the convicted perpetrator was Afghan. Latterly, some child victims of CSE and some perpetrators had originated from the Roma Slovak community, with a steady increase in the number of child protection cases involving Roma children, though mainly in the category of neglect. Work with Roma families was one of the six priorities of the Child Sexual Exploitation sub-group of the Safeguarding Board in 2012. The Roma population in Rotherham was proportionately much larger than in bigger areas such as Bradford and Manchester.

11.3 By March 2012, the child protection profile was showing that Rotherham had more than double the English average for Roma Slovak families being referred under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

The Early Years

11.4 Dr Heal, in her 2003 report, stated that 'In Rotherham the local Asian community are reported to rarely speak about them [the perpetrators].' The subject was taboo and local people were probably equally frightened of the violent tendencies of the perpetrators as the young women they were abusing. In her 2006 report she described how the appeal of organised sexual exploitation for Asian gangs had changed. In the past, it had been for their personal gratification, whereas now it offered 'career and financial opportunities to young Asian men who got involved'. She also noted that Iraqi Kurds and Kosovan men were participating in organised activities against young women.

11.5 In her 2006 report, she stated that 'it is believed by a number of workers that one of the difficulties that prevent this issue [CSE] being dealt with effectively is the ethnicity of the main perpetrators'.

11.6 She also reported in 2006 that young people in Rotherham believed at that time that the Police dared not act against Asian youths for fear of allegations of racism. This perception was echoed at the present time by some young people we met during the Inquiry but was not supported by specific examples.

11.7 Several people interviewed expressed the general view that ethnic considerations had influenced the policy response of the Council and the Police, rather than in individual cases. One example was given by the Risky Business project Manager (1997- 2012) who reported that she was told not to refer to the ethnic origins of perpetrators when carrying out training. Other staff in children's social care said that when writing reports on CSE cases, they were advised by their managers to be cautious about referring to the ethnicity of the perpetrators.

Officer Involvement

11.8 All the senior officers we interviewed were asked whether ethnic considerations influenced their decision making. All were unequivocal that this did not happen. However, several of those involved in the operational management of services reported some attempts to pressurise them into changing their approach to some issues. This mainly affected the support given to Pakistani-heritage women fleeing domestic violence, where a small number of councillors had demanded that social workers reveal the whereabouts of these women or effect reconciliation rather than supporting the women to make up their own minds. The Inquiry team was confident that ethnic issues did not influence professional decision-making in individual cases.

11.9 Frontline staff did not report personal experience of attempts to influence their practice or decision making because of ethnic issues. Those who had involvement in CSE were acutely aware of these issues and recalled a general nervousness in the earlier years about discussing them, for fear of being thought racist.

11.10 Good work was done by officers in developing a protocol on child protection issues in the mosques in 2008. Each mosque appointed a designated person responsible for child protection, and training was provided for imams and others. The current chair of the Rotherham Council of Mosques had made strenuous efforts to widen representation on his Council to include women and demonstrated a strong personal commitment to dealing with child protection and CSE. He was disappointed not to have had any contact from the Safeguarding Board in the past but was encouraged by recent discussions.

Political Engagement.

11.11 The issue of race, regardless of ethnic group, should be tackled as an absolute priority if it is known to be a significant factor in the criminal activity of organised abuse in any local community. There was little evidence of such action being taken in Rotherham in the earlier years. Councillors can play an effective role in this, especially those representing the communities in question, but only if they act as facilitators of communication rather than barriers to it. One senior officer suggested that some influential Pakistani-heritage councillors in Rotherham had acted as barriers.

11.12 Several councillors interviewed believed that by opening up these issues they could be 'giving oxygen' to racist perspectives that might in turn attract extremist political groups and threaten community cohesion. To some extent this concern was

valid, with the apparent targeting of the town by groups such as the English Defence League. The Deputy Council Leader (2011-2014) from the Pakistani-heritage community was clear that he had not understood the scale of the CSE problem in Rotherham until 2013. He then disagreed with colleague elected members on the way to approach it. He had advocated taking the issue 'head on' but had been overruled. He was one of the elected members who said they thought the criminal - 94 - convictions in 2010 were 'a one-off, isolated case', and not an example of a more deep-rooted problem of Pakistani-heritage perpetrators targeting young white girls. This was at best naïve, and at worst ignoring a politically inconvenient truth.

11.13 Both the Council and the Police used traditional channels of communication with the Pakistani-heritage community for many years on general issues of child protection. There seemed, from all accounts, to be very few, if any, specific discussions of CSE, though this was difficult to verify. These contacts were almost exclusively with men.

Pakistani – heritage Women and Girls

11.14 One of the local Pakistani women's groups described how Pakistani-heritage girls were targeted by taxi drivers and on occasion by older men lying in wait outside school gates at dinner times and after school. They also cited cases in Rotherham where Pakistani landlords had befriended Pakistani women and girls on their own for purposes of sex, then passed on their name to other men who had then contacted them for sex. The women and girls feared reporting such incidents to the Police because it would affect their future marriage prospects.

11.15 The UK Muslim Women's Network produced a report on CSE in September 2013 which drew on 35 case studies of women from across the UK who were victims, the majority of whom were Muslim. It highlighted that Asian girls were being sexually exploited where authorities were failing to identify or support them. They were most vulnerable to men from their own communities who manipulated cultural norms to prevent them from reporting their abuse. It

11.16 The Deputy Children's Commissioner's report reached a similar conclusion to the Muslim Women's Network research, stating 'one of these myths was that only white girls are victims of sexual exploitation by Asian or Muslim males, as if these men only abuse outside of their own community, driven by hatred and contempt for white females. This belief flies in the face of evidence that shows that those who violate children are most likely to target those who are closest to them and most easily accessible.' The Home Affairs Select Committee quoted witnesses saying that cases of Asian men grooming Asian girls did not come to light because victims 'are often alienated and ostracised by their own families and by the whole community, if they go public with allegations of abuse.

11.17 With hindsight, it is clear that women and girls in the Pakistani community in Rotherham should have been encouraged and empowered by the authorities to speak out about perpetrators and their own experiences as victims of sexual exploitation, so often hidden from sight. The Safeguarding Board has recently received a presentation from a local Pakistani women's group about abuse within their community. The Board should address as a priority the under-reporting of

exploitation and abuse in minority ethnic communities. We recommend that the relevant agencies immediately initiate dialogue about CSE with minority ethnic communities, and in particular with the Pakistani-heritage community. This should be done in consultation with local women's groups and should develop strategies that support young women and girls from the community to participate without fear or threat.

Within Professor Jay's report there were a whole series of recommendations made.

Whilst this review has not identified any direct correlation between the issues highlighted in Rotherham being prevalent in Slough it is worth keeping the following recommendations in line of sight.

Recommendation 12: There should be more direct and more frequent engagement by the Council and also the Safeguarding Board with women and men from minority ethnic communities on the issue of CSE and other forms of abuse. Recommendation

Recommendation 13: The Safeguarding Board should address the under-reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse in minority ethnic communities.

Recommendation 14: The issue of race should be tackled as an absolute priority if it is a significant factor in the criminal activity of organised child sexual abuse in the Borough.

