

The Operation Linden Report

The IOPC independent investigations of complaints and conduct matters in relation to South Yorkshire Police's handling of reports into non-recent child sexual abuse and exploitation in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, between 1997 and 2013

June 2022

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

We oversee the police complaints system in England and Wales.



We **investigate** the most serious matters, including deaths following police contact, and set the standards for how the police should handle complaints.



We use **learning** from our work to influence changes in policing.



We are **independent** and make our decisions entirely independently of the police and government.

Content warning and further information

There is a list of organisations and charities at the back that may be able to provide support if you, or someone you know, are/is affected by any issues in this report, or if you need any general information about child sexual abuse or exploitation.

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Foreword

Operation Linden is one of our largest, most complex investigations to date and, whilst there is no statutory requirement to publish our findings, we hope this report offers survivors some form of closure and police forces and our partners benefit from us sharing what we found.

We faced many challenges in reaching our conclusions and these included the non-recent nature of allegations, gaps in the evidence available, and limits to our powers engaging with former and retired police officers.

The systemic issues we identified in South Yorkshire Police (SYP) during our investigations work covered many key areas of policing practice. We found that officers were not fully aware, or able, to deal with Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSA/E) offences and showed insufficient empathy towards survivors who were vulnerable children and young people. We saw examples of SYP seeing children, and young people, as ‘consenting’ to their exploitation, and a police culture that did not always recognise survivors as victims, or understand that, often, neither did those being groomed and abused.

Our independent investigations informed the formal recommendations¹ we made to SYP, and other agencies.

We are encouraged by SYP’s response to the recommendations and believe this demonstrates its commitment to taking action so that the issues in this report are never repeated.²

Our investigation findings are uncomfortable to read. Survivors’ complaints reveal they were not always believed when reporting what had happened to them and this has had a lasting impact on their lives and their trust and confidence in the police.

We are acutely aware that these were children, and young people, exploited over many years. They were assaulted, threatened with violence, coerced, groomed, and raped.

Throughout our investigation it has been important to put survivors’ welfare first and our dedicated Survivor Engagement Management (SEM) team continue to do this every day.

Finally, and most importantly I want to thank those survivors who bravely came forward to complain to us and speak about what happened to them. Your voice has

¹ [Our Operation Linden – Learning and Recommendation Report](#) was published November 2021 and our final recommendation was published in April 2022.

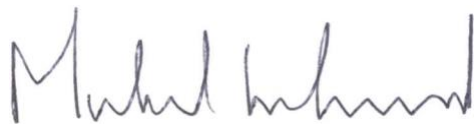
² You can read about [SYP’s statutory response to our recommendations on our website](#).

been central to our work. Your courage enabled us to identify SYP's past failings and to make important recommendations which we hope will lead to lasting change.

I know that the scars of what happened to you continue to affect your daily lives and you have fought bravely for your voices to be heard in the face of considerable challenges. Many of you will never meet, but you are not alone in what you experienced, and we know some of you may never feel able to share with anyone your experience of abuse and exploitation.

No child, or young person, can **ever** consent to their own abuse or exploitation, nor should be seen as bringing matters upon themselves. Your protection should not have been seen as a lesser policing priority.

Police and Crime Commissioners and police forces across England and Wales must help to continue to provide this reassurance through consistent and repeated action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Lockwood', written in a cursive style.

Michael Lockwood
IOPC Director General

A Glossary of terms is at Annex C to help with reading and understanding this report.

List of acronyms used in this report

<p>ABE interview – achieving best evidence interview</p> <p>AA – Appropriate Authority</p> <p>ACC – Assistant Chief Constable</p> <p>ACPO – Association of Chief Police Officers</p> <p>APP – Authorised Professional Practice</p> <p>BCU – Basic Command Unit</p> <p>CATS – Case Administration and Tracking IT System</p> <p>CS – Chief Superintendent</p> <p>CAWN – Child Abduction Warning Notice</p> <p>CCE – child criminal exploitation</p> <p>CSA - child sexual abuse</p> <p>CSA/E - child sexual abuse and exploitation</p> <p>CSE – child sexual exploitation</p> <p>CID – Criminal Investigation Department</p> <p>CJS – criminal justice system</p> <p>CPS – Crown Prosecution Service</p> <p>DC – Detective Constable</p> <p>DCC – Deputy Chief Constable</p> <p>DDG – Deputy Director General</p> <p>DI – Detective Inspector</p> <p>DS – Detective Sergeant</p> <p>DG – Director General</p> <p>FCB – Force Crime Bureau</p> <p>FIB – Force Intelligence Bureau</p> <p>HMICFRS – Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p> <p>IICSA – Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse</p> <p>IPCC – Independent Police Complaints Commission</p> <p>IOPC – Independent Office for Police Conduct</p> <p>ISVA – Independent Sexual Violence Adviser or Advocate</p>	<p>MiPO – misconduct in public office</p> <p>MfH – missing from home</p> <p>MASH – Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub</p> <p>NCA – National Crime Agency</p> <p>NCRS – National Crime Recording Standard</p> <p>NDMM – National Decision Making Model</p> <p>NFA – no further action</p> <p>OIS – Operational Intelligence System</p> <p>OCG – organised crime gang or group</p> <p>PCC – Police and Crime Commissioner</p> <p>PC – Police Constable</p> <p>PI – Police Inspector</p> <p>PNB – police notebook</p> <p>PPO – Police Protection Order</p> <p>PIP – Professionalising Investigation Programme</p> <p>PS – Police Sergeant</p> <p>PPU – Public Protection Unit</p> <p>PSD – Professional Standards Department</p> <p>RMBC – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council</p> <p>SARC – Sexual Assault Referral Centre</p> <p>SHPO – Sexual Harm Prevention Order</p> <p>SRO – Sexual Risk Order</p> <p>SYP – South Yorkshire Police</p> <p>SYPA – South Yorkshire Police Authority</p> <p>SEM – Survivor Engagement Management team</p> <p>WISE – Witness Information Survivor Engagement manager</p> <p>YOT – Youth Offending Team</p>
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Introduction

This report, and accompanying executive summary, are about the IOPC independent investigations of complaints and conduct matters in relation to South Yorkshire Police’s (SYP) handling of reports into non-recent child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSA/E), in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, between 1997 and 2013. Collectively our investigative work is referred to as ‘Operation Linden’.

This report has been published, as soon as practicably possible, following the conclusion of a misconduct hearing (31 March 2022) that resulted from our independent investigations. [You can read more about our investigation process on our website.](#)

In this report you can read a detailed explanation of our investigations, the systemic issues we found, and the investigation outcomes for complaints and conduct matters. While the report focuses on these key areas, we have also included details about CSA/E survivors’ experiences that we became aware of during the course of our work.

As a result of our findings, we issued [learning and recommendations](#)³ to South Yorkshire Police and others, [and you can read these in full, along with the responses to our recommendations, on our website.](#)

³ Under paragraph 28A, Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002*, we can make a recommendation in relation to any matter dealt with in an investigation report, appeal, or review. These recommendations can be made to police forces, (one or a number), or police and crime commissioners. We can also, in certain circumstances, make recommendations for other organisations that are relevant to the investigation, appeal or review. The force or organisation we make a recommendation to must provide us with their response within 56 days unless there are valid reasons not to. They can also request that we extend the time they have to respond. Both the recommendation and the response must be published. Section 10 of the *Police Reform Act 2002* allows us to make recommendations more broadly about police practice that appear, from the carrying out of our functions, to be necessary or desirable. These recommendations do not carry the same legal requirement for the recipient of the recommendation to respond, or for the recommendation or any response to be published.

What we investigated and summary of outcomes

This section has information about our investigations and the outcomes. You can read the full details of individual investigation complaint outcomes and conduct matters later on in this report.

In 2014, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) started investigations into complaints and allegations received from survivors, family members and third parties about SYP's handling of reports of non-recent CSA/E in Rotherham. These investigations included **conduct matters** referred to the IPCC by the force.⁴

After replacing the IPCC (8 January 2018)⁵ we continued these investigations and started five new ones, concluding all of them in August 2020. We more recently received two new complaints in relation to CSA/E in Rotherham (in 2020 and 2021), and, as a result, started two further investigations – one is now under investigation, and the other is completed. We found no officers had a case to answer⁶⁷.

An investigation is subject to special requirements⁸ if it appears to the investigator that there is an indication a person to whose conduct the investigation relates may have:

1. committed a criminal offence, or
2. behaved in a manner which would justify the bringing of disciplinary proceedings.

In these cases the decision maker is required to make a number of determinations including whether the subject has a **case to answer**.

In certain case types the decision maker may express their view on whether any complaints should be upheld in the following case types:

- Complaints not subject to special requirements

⁴ A number arose from: Jay, A. (2014) [The Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation by Alexis Jay, OBE](#).

⁵ This change was made as a result of the *Policing and Crime Act 2017*.

⁶ SYP, as the AA, responded to our final investigation report in May 2022. The complaint was not subject to special requirements, and therefore our decision maker concluded findings.

⁷ The *Policing and Crime Act 2017*, and supporting regulations, made significant changes to the police complaints and disciplinary systems from 1 February 2020. These changes meant that, in most cases, any complaint made on, or later than 1 February 2020, or any conduct matter brought to the attention of the AA, on or after 1 February 2020, was investigated under the 2020 regime, (the *Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020*, *Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020* and the *Police Reform Act 2002* amended by the *Policing and Crime Act 2017*).

⁸ From 1 February 2020, special requirements changed to the term special procedures.

- Complaint matters where there are multiple complaints (some subject to special requirements and some which are not)
- Death or serious injury, where a complaint matter has been recorded and the recorded complaint is not subject to special requirements.

In complaints not subject to special requirements, the decision maker can record whether the complaint for each allegation is upheld.

Conduct matter: Any matter which is not, and has not, been the subject of a complaint but where there is an indication that a person, serving with the police, may have committed a criminal offence, or behaved in a manner which would justify disciplinary proceedings.

An overview of our investigations for Operation Linden

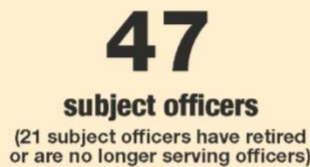
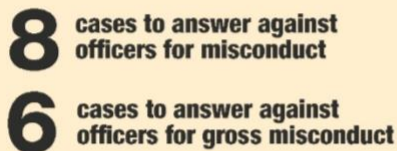
A total of 93 investigations (April 2022) of which 92 are concluded

Before August 2020



The remaining 101 complaint allegations followed a different decision making process because these related to named individuals from SYP whose conduct was under investigation

During our investigations we referred one matter to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and this was where we considered that an officer may have committed a criminal offence under the Data Protection Act 1998.



Evidence including:

- nearly 20,000 documents
- 800 investigation statements
- more than 1,300 exhibits



* Managed investigation. We no longer conduct managed investigations but did so until 31 January 2020. For a managed investigation we could set the terms of reference, and we directed work for a police force's Professional Standards Department (PSD). Once the police force had finished the investigation it shared its evidence and analysis with us, and we would decide whether the initial terms of reference had been met.

Systemic issues identified during our investigations: South Yorkshire Police

Operation Linden discovered systemic problems in policing practice by SYP between 1997 and 2013, and these are explored in detail in this section.

Our independent investigations⁹ helped us identify areas of concern. We then took additional action to ensure we issued relevant and meaningful recommendations and this included:

- speaking to SYP about any changes made to policing practice since 2013
- speaking to individuals at SYP about their experiences dealing with CSA/E-related offences
- speaking to police stakeholders, including the College of Policing
- speaking to agencies who represent CSA/E survivors, such as the Rotherham ISVA service
- considering more current SYP and national policies and other, relevant materials
- considering Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service's findings relevant to SYP.

Leadership

We found little evidence that SYP's leadership identified, and acted on, emerging concerns about CSA/E, and was proactively policing related offences, despite:

- concerns about CSA/E being discussed at SYP district meetings, (from 2002, and possibly earlier), which included risks posed to others by known perpetrators
- some officers attempting to raise the profile of CSA/E at strategic policing meetings by bringing to senior officers' attention problem profiles¹⁰ linked to CSA/E,¹¹ and initiating special CSA/E-focused police operations,¹² and training
- the 2010 Rotherham Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment¹³ noting the issue of safeguarding children and child protection was 'a 'priority' (although it did not follow through on this in an accompanying 'Partnership Plan' about priorities for 2010/11)

⁹ We do not have a statutory police inspection role.

¹⁰ A problem profile allows for a better understanding of a particular policing problem that has already been identified. It may include, for example, crime trends, or 'hotspots', where particular types of crimes are being committed, indicate where there are any intelligence gaps, and/or outline preventative opportunities.

¹¹ A 2006 problem profile evidenced links between drugs offences and CSA/E.

¹² This included Operation Forced and Operation Central.

¹³ This was produced by force senior officers, alongside partners, for crime reduction purposes.

- there being an opportunity for District Commanders to request additional resources at NIM Strategic and Tactical Tasking and Co-ordinating Group meetings for tackling CSA/E because of problems in the locality (we were told there was much less opportunity to do this outside of these meetings because CSA/E was unrelated to policing performance targets and strategic priorities¹⁴).

One Superintendent told us they were given little support for their proposals to implement new, early interventions, to help tackle CSA/E and for a Rotherham PPU restructure to increase staff resources.

In 2003 an SYP staff officer recalled there was a fear of scrutiny from the Public Standards Unit, the SYPA, and the public, about how well the force tackled serious acquisitive crime¹⁵, and that this greatly influenced decision making and resource allocation.

The manager of Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (SSES) told us that when they shared their concerns about CSA/E, specific intelligence on survivors known to be at risk, perpetrators' details, and also requested a police operation for an investigation, their request was not actioned. The manager said they were told policing priorities lay elsewhere, and that they included burglary and car crime.

A DI, from Operation K-Safe, told us the Operation had been threatened with closure because it lacked sufficient resources and was considered a liability. They told us this decision was reversed after (SSES) wrote to SYP appealing it.

One complaint we received was referred to us by SYP on behalf of a complainant who said the force failed in its statutory responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable young people (1999/2011).

Our investigation into this matter included us considering:

- the *Children Act 1989*
- the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*
- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary reports into SYP covering 2005, 2006 and 2007
- SYP's representation at Local Strategic Child Safeguarding Boards (LSCBs)
- three-year plans required by the Home Office, the result of collaborating with partners for a co-ordinated and consistent approach in the local area to safeguard children and vulnerable young people

¹⁴ Two former Rotherham District Commanders we spoke to pointed out that CSA/E was generally only included in targets relating to prostitution.

¹⁵ Acquisitive crime is an offence where the perpetrator derives material gain from the crime. Examples include shoplifting, burglary, theft, and robbery.

- the *National Intelligence Model (NIM) and The National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) 2009 Guidance* on investigating child abuse and safeguarding children

Our investigators found no evidence that individual members of the force failed in their statutory duties.

We were asked to investigate an allegation that a research and development officer, working for Risky Business on a crime reduction project¹⁶ about ‘street prostitution’ and intelligence gathering in 2001/2002, was not able to do their job properly.

From our investigation it appeared that, in 2001, a document was produced by the project, setting out perpetrators’, and possible CSA/E victims’ details, and that this was shared at ‘key players’ meetings and sent to the Rotherham District Commander who later used it for Operation Forced.

The research and development officer described SYP’s response to the project¹⁷ as ‘dismissive’ of CSA/E incidents and added that the force regarded what was happening as a result of ‘typical teenage behaviour’. We were told the development officer wrote directly to the Chief Constable in late 2001 expressing concerns about the prevalence of CSA/E in Rotherham. However, in the Chief Constable’s statement to us they said they could not recall receiving the letter and that, had that been the case, the details would have been passed on to the relevant District Commander.

Problem profiles

Problem profiles were produced by SYP but did not always directly tackle CSA/E-related offences. They were also instigated as a result of others’ actions, not the force’s chief officers. For example, by Sheffield-based UK Human Trafficking Centre, where a problem profile was created for Operation Clover to effectively tackle people trafficking.

A SYP drug strategic intelligence analyst produced three separate problem profiles (in 2002, 2003 and 2006). The first two analysed child abuse links to perpetrators involved in gun crime and drugs. The 2006 profile was more focused on CSA/E and links to named perpetrators, as well as to violent and gun crime. In 2006 the profiles were apparently circulated to senior officers for intelligence purposes and to help direct resources to help address serious criminality. However, we were unable to

¹⁶ This project also involved the Coalition for Removal of Pimping (CROP), set up in 1996, by the mother of a murdered 17-year-old girl who was groomed, sexually exploited then forced into prostitution by a perpetrator. In 2012 CROP was renamed Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE).

¹⁷ We never recovered the initial project report that was produced for SYP and, instead, we were provided with an early draft, setting out perpetrators’, and possible CSA/E victims’ details.

verify who received/read the profile despite the analyst telling us that senior officers were included in its distribution, and the profile featuring on a Policy Advisory Group meeting agenda. Its circulation, and proper consideration of its content, could have provided an opportunity for ownership, strategic oversight, and future plans for a pan-force response to tackling CSA/E.

We were made aware that, in 2006, SYP, and the Head of SSES, jointly developed a problem profile that relied on SSES' intelligence to support a case for additional police resources to tackle CSA/E. We found no evidence this work was sufficiently progressed, although the intelligence later informed Operation Clover.

We found a 2010 CSA/E problem profile was commissioned, possibly by the Head of Sheffield Child Abuse Investigations Unit (CAIU)¹⁸, which we considered as evidence showing opportunities to gather intelligence were being missed and that SYP needed to develop better working relationships with other agencies on CSA/E issues.

There was no force lead for CSA/E until 2012 when a DCI, with no specific CSA/E experience, was appointed. Before 2012 there had been a lack of clarity about who was responsible for the portfolio, and for overseeing the progression/ownership of CSA/E-related investigations.

We heard conflicting opinions about whether there was a lead for CSA/E at district level.

Many of the complaints we investigated were about individual officers working for Rotherham PPU, which seems to have taken, by default, local ownership of CSA/E. We were told CSA/E did not officially become part of its remit until 2010.

One DI from the PPU told us about how they viewed the situation before 2010, saying it became clear to them that CSA/E was 'not receiving any sort of quality service from the district elsewhere and was not widely recognised outside of the unit as an issue' and that they felt 'there was nobody really set up to deal with it'.

They told us that they were given a direction by their line management to to fix what was broken at the PPU and get it back on its feet.

They said when they joined, staff morale in the PPU was rock bottom because they felt they had been neglected...and they also told us that '...some of them felt they had been left to rot'.

¹⁸ This Unit's team worked closely with partner agencies.

Confusion in the force about the PPU's responsibilities sometimes led to disagreements about what could be handed over to the unit for further investigation.

Complaint investigation We found in one of our investigations that a rape report, that was initially dealt with by the PPU in Sheffield, where the young victim lived, was later transferred to Rotherham where the rape happened. However, neither Rotherham PPU nor Rotherham Criminal Investigation Department (CID)¹⁹ seemed willing to take ownership – PPU staff said that because the victim was under 18, and had been raped by a stranger, the case was CID's responsibility, whilst CID said that, because a child was involved, PPU should take responsibility for the case.

The Sheffield PPU DC, who had already agreed with one survivor that they would make a formal report of rape told us that the next stage would have been to meet the survivor, with a support worker, for an ABE video interview. Unfortunately, this never happened after the case was transferred to Rotherham.

We found officers involved in the case found the situation frustrating, confusing and a barrier to effectively fulfilling their duties.

Following on from this we also looked at the CSA/E-related responsibilities allocated to individual officers' roles. However, it proved difficult to locate formal job descriptions for posts that appeared to us to have evolved over time. This situation contributed to confusion and increased the risk of CSA/E matters not being dealt with. Where CSA/E-specific roles existed, there appeared to be sometimes differing expectations about an individual's remit.

A former PC, who was an SYP child protection officer, (from 1993), told us their role mainly involved attending case conferences about children at risk of abuse, providing background information about linked criminal activity, and liaising with social workers. They regarded themselves as being in a 'research and information' role, with no investigative responsibility. According to this same officer, investigations were referred to the Sexual Offences Unit at Wath-upon-Deerne Police Station, which was also responsible for logging any relevant intelligence.

A second PC was a child abuse officer in the mid-1990s. Later on, they spent three years as a domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation officer, gathering

¹⁹ There were conflicting views of how responsibilities were allocated in Rotherham, however, it appeared that any investigation into sexual offences against children, committed by a stranger, would usually have been conducted by the 'reactive' section of district CID over the period covered in this SYP investigation, and trained PPU officers might have assisted CID by interviewing child victims and witnesses. PPU's, on the other hand, considered cases of possible child abuse by a family member or someone else in a position of trust they knew.

information and intelligence for investigative colleagues only. They were appointed as a child protection officer, working alongside Rotherham PPU colleagues, and their key responsibilities were to prepare reports, gather and share intelligence with other agencies, and attend child protection conferences. Unofficially, they visited children's homes to get to know residents and staff to glean information. In the late 2000s the officer was told the force was 'civilianising' the child protection officer role and was, instead, appointed as Rotherham's MfH officer.

Professional curiosity, and awareness and understanding of CSA/E

A common theme of complaints we received was how little SYP understood CSA/E,²⁰ and how the problem had been left to grow in Rotherham.

Our investigations identified poor practice that contributed to the situation including insufficient/poor supervision, the complex nature of a number of CSA/E cases, work pressures, occupational stress, continuous staffing changes, and officers' preconceptions about CSA/E survivors.

A social worker told us during one of our investigations, which related to a 1998 incident, that the police often viewed survivors as 'runaways' and 'petty criminals' and that social services 'had to educate all agencies to realise that survivors, although often compliant with those exploiting them and often involved in petty crime and drugs, were, in fact, victims of grooming and exploitation'.

Our investigations found there was widespread lack of awareness and professional curiosity around CSA/E at SYP which, in summary, led to:

- SYP not understanding the full picture of CSA/E-related offences in Rotherham leading to **missed opportunities** to protect survivors and stop perpetrators
- police tending to respond to incidents in isolation, and not applying what they learned from other incidents so that **information and intelligence were often not acted upon**²¹

²⁰ CSA/E was in the public domain from around the late 1990s, when charity Barnardo's started lobbying for greater protection for children and young people. Charity PACE (Parents Against Child Exploitation) has long raised concerns about the stereotype of a dysfunctional family making a child more vulnerable to CSA/E.

²¹ We did consider the possibility that some Police Officers regarded what they saw as 'normal' and, for this reason, did not look any further than immediate incidents they came across. This type of normalisation can happen when an officer is desensitised to what they see through regular exposure to certain conditions or situations.

- officers having an **insufficient knowledge of CSA/E, and awareness of its coercive and manipulative nature.**²² This meant they did not recognise that survivors did not often identify themselves as being abused and could commit minor offences, be aggressive, or appear to be under the influence of drink and drugs as a direct consequence of grooming and sexually exploitation.

Missed opportunities

Lack of specialist training and CSA/E experience

It is clear from our investigations that officers were ill-prepared for taking on CSA/E-specific posts,²³ did not recognise the risks associated with CSA/E, and largely relied on following colleagues' practices, even for important tasks including serving abduction notices.²⁴ A former Rotherham DC told us that when they were appointed there was little national or local guidance available to officers about CSA/E and no specialist training, (2001-2005).

A DI explained public protection was an unfamiliar area for them to work in following a transfer to Rotherham PPU, after promotion, and that they spent their first six months learning a 'different way of policing' from PPU colleagues. They said they had never heard of 'CSA/E' previously, and it was barely mentioned in a handover from their predecessor.

They said that even though they had been attending daily management meetings for the past year in their previous department they had no idea what the PPU did when they joined the unit. They told us they were given little direction on the unit's approach to tackling CSA/E, for example, working with Risky Business, and that engaging with partners seemed to be a neglected area.

There were not enough supervisory officers available at Rotherham PPU to ensure lower-ranking colleagues had the right access to/gained appropriate experience.

²² Offences relating to grooming, coercion and control were introduced under the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* and should have been reflected in force strategies and frontline policing, but this did not always appear to have been the case to us.

²³ A DI and DS, appointed to Rotherham PPU in the late 2000s, told us they had not specifically applied for their posts but had been transferred from reactive CID after being given a promotion. Neither had any previous experience or training in CSA/E.

²⁴ We interviewed a DC at Rotherham PPU about how a 14-year-old CSA/E survivor was protected from a named perpetrator in 2010 and they told us they had learned from colleagues how to serve an abduction notice.

We investigated allegations about a DC failing to properly look into reported sexual activity between a perpetrator and a 13-year-old survivor, and to record a crime (in 2007). The individual told us they worked part-time on the PPU child abuse team, had been there for one year, and that the child protection officer was on long-term sick with no substantive sergeant in post until 2008. The DC, and colleagues, were supervised by three different acting sergeants – one was on light duties, one was also a detective on the team and the third worked in another part of the PPU.

Sometimes officers were asked to complete tasks they were not properly qualified to carry out. For example, according to an action in minutes from a 2008 multi-agency strategy meeting, a PC with child protection responsibilities, but with no training in building problem profiles, had been tasked with a CSA/E-related profile.

We found it was not uncommon for uniformed patrol officers to respond to rape incidents if no one from CID was available, and later report back to CID.

A PC, who handled the initial report of rape of a 16-year-old in 2008, told us they had little training, or experience, dealing with CSA/E or sexual offences in general, although they knew the right form to use to submit any concerns they had about a child.

We considered a DC's training record (from 1994 to 2009), who had investigated unlawful sexual intercourse offences that led to the pregnancy of a survivor aged 12 (in 2001). We found nothing relating to CSA/E, sexual abuse, or grooming.

A DC said they were allocated a rape case, reported by a 14-year-old survivor (in 2006), but had not long returned to an investigative role after 11 years, and had not received any refresher training, although they had raised concerns in relation to both.

We identified ABE video interview training as a CSA/E-specific training area for improvement, and with a particular emphasis on officers encouraging further disclosures from a survivor to help build a better picture of ongoing abuse.

A PC, who conducted an ABE video interview with a survivor in 2000, acknowledged to us that they lacked experience, especially in child protection work. There was no observer during the interview, which was against best practice. A final recording was produced that could not be used to support the prosecution case. It was also observed that an accompanying written report by the

PC was potentially subjective because it could be seen as presenting the PC's personal conclusions (specifically, that the survivor could have fabricated the reported abuse to secure a move to alternative foster care).

Officers' inexperience of CSA/E was compounded by a confusion about what powers they had to protect young people at risk.

We received a complaint that a DS failed to obtain potential forensic evidence from a hotel room after being told by a third party that two CSA/E victims might have recently stayed there with older men. The officer explained that he thought that as neither survivor had made a complaint or disclosed a sexual offence, the police would not have the right to enter private premises like a hotel without the consent of the owner.

We were told that at a 2001 child protection conference a DC commented that a survivor – a 12-year-old child – had provided consent in different sexual encounters, despite legislation being clear that it is not possible for a child to give consent in such a situation. The legal age of consent for sexual activity is 16.

One of our investigations concluded that a Rotherham child protection officer's performance had been unsatisfactory because they were unsure of their power to remove a 16-year-old CSA/E survivor from the home of a woman believed to be harbouring survivors and facilitating their exploitation. It seems this officer told the survivor's parents, on more than one occasion, that the survivor could not be forced to leave the house against their wishes, but on other occasions, they actively helped SYP colleagues remove the survivor from the same woman's home.

We identified an incident where, following a police interview with a 14-year-old survivor, (in 2003), about their reported CSA/E offences, it was suggested by the police there was not a strong enough case to secure a prosecution because the survivor did not appear traumatised and was 'quite dismissive' about their 'relationships' with perpetrators. The survivor's parents told the police the survivor had been pressured to perform sexual acts, in particular because they 'owed' perpetrators money for cannabis they had been given, but the police report concluded with the survivor effectively saying they could have 'just stopped'.

This incident, (above), we considered as not the only one where officers were dismissive, or unsympathetic, towards a survivor – effectively deterring them from making, or continuing with, their report of a crime.

The need for CSA/E awareness training appears to have been recognised by SYP from the early 2000s.

Complaint investigation In 2007 a survivor reported to the police being raped by a perpetrator who they also said had physically abused them and forced them to have intercourse with other men when aged 14. The relatively inexperienced PC, who was in charge, failed to identify the possible, non-recent CSA/E-related offence.

The survivor told the police they met the perpetrator again, by chance, after several months, that intercourse with them was initially consensual, but later the survivor asked them to stop when they became physically and verbally abusive.

The survivor told us the police said the perpetrator would not be charged because the survivor had given their consent, and therefore the survivor made a statement retracting their complaint.

The officer in charge's 'no crime' report described the survivor as being in a 'relationship' for three years and we felt they had not considered how the survivor's previous sexual exploitation might have affected their decision-making about how to proceed with their complaint.

We noted a low-key conciliatory tone of the retraction statement, which referred to a 'misunderstanding', and that this was in complete contrast to the survivor's distress when they called 999 to report the rape the night before.

The full intelligence that was available to the officer in charge at the time indicated that the survivor was likely to be an intimidated, vulnerable witness, and therefore it might have been better for them to have dealt with the survivor as a witness wanting to withdraw support for a prosecution (by giving a withdrawal, instead of a retraction, statement).

Stop and search

Many survivors told us that being in an older man's car, who was not related to them, rarely triggered any concerns from the police. Officers did not always ask for their personal details including their age, and sometimes did not acknowledge them.

We found there was no SYP policy or guidance about what action officers should take in this situation. Despite this, we felt it would have been reasonable, and in line with broader safeguarding guidance and legislation,²⁵ for an officer to submit an

²⁵ Under the *Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984* officers had the power to stop and search someone when there was reasonable cause to believe they had been involved in a crime, or were in possession of a prohibited item, for example drugs or an unlicensed firearm. There was no obligation on the person who had been stopped to provide their details.

intelligence report and take the survivor somewhere safe until the situation was checked out by them properly.²⁶

Complaint investigation A survivor was sexually exploited during the 1990s from the age of 11, and regularly went MfH. They were a passenger in a perpetrator's car when it was stopped by police.

The survivor knew the perpetrator had drugs and that they were stored in the car boot. The perpetrator warned the survivor to say nothing to the officer apart from giving personal details. The officer asked if the survivor was happy to be in the car, and they said they were, and volunteered information that they were living in a children's home, their real age, and that the perpetrator was their 'boyfriend'. After police spoke briefly to the perpetrator, the survivor said they were allowed to drive away.

We could find no police record of this or other incidents the survivor described but, on the balance of probabilities²⁷, believed they did occur and upheld the complaint allegations.

Information and intelligence not acted upon

Despite a number of CSA/E perpetrators being jailed for drug, and other criminal offences, during our investigations – which included three brothers being sentenced for kidnapping and aggravated burglary (from 2002 to 2005) – it appeared to us that some perpetrators no longer remained on SYP's radar, and we heard accounts from survivors that they stayed in contact with these individuals, and that they continued to be exploited by other members of the same 'group'.

Our investigations found that there was a tendency for SYP to regard some perpetrators as local drug dealers as opposed to operating as part of an OCG, and also being involved in CSA/E.

A March 2000 SYP police computer entry about one key CSA/E perpetrator, who was named in many complaints we received, was possibly the first one recorded. It was based on information from the local social services and said the perpetrator

²⁶ We acknowledged the challenges officers did face while carrying out stop and searches, where it could be hard to tell a survivor's age, especially at night, and for an officer to verify information given to them if the right police checking systems were not available to allow them to do this.

²⁷ We apply the balance of probabilities standard of proof when deciding whether something is more likely than not to have happened. This process involves us looking at all the evidence we have, and the weight that should be attached to it. Our decision about this is reflected in our findings and final investigation outcome.

was involved with an underage survivor who became pregnant by them. The computer record included detail such as the perpetrator having a number of relationships with young survivors in foster care and said, 'he targets young, vulnerable women'. It is unclear to us how social services obtained this information.

Another key perpetrator²⁸ and their brothers appeared on a police computer system in 2001 and were linked to making pornographic videos of children in care and dealing drugs to school children and socialising with vulnerable, young school girls. Soon afterwards, survivors' names started to be added to these details.

We found concerns were raised about key, blood-related perpetrators (brothers)²⁹ of CSA/E at multi-agency strategy meetings, although we were unsure whether attendees included SYP – we do know many of our investigations into survivors' complaints found that this type of intelligence was not recorded on force computer systems.³⁰

A social worker told us that, in the early 2000s, they were told by SYP that the blood-related perpetrators were heroin dealers. Their view was that the police were very interested in any information about drugs that might lead to convictions but seemed less hopeful of obtaining any convictions for CSA/E-related activity.

According to computer records available to us, between 1998 and 2013, another group of CSA/E perpetrators, again brothers, were discussed at sixteen multi-agency strategy meetings and sexual exploitation forums. Concerns raised about them included grooming and assaults. It appears that no one from SYP was present at four of these meetings but, while investigating allegations about the 'main' perpetrator from this group, we discovered that information from three of the meetings had been added to a SYP computer record, and that this could be seen alongside key intelligence about the perpetrator.

²⁸ An officer visited one survivor's parents who were apparently twice threatened after trying to warn off this perpetrator because they feared he was trying to get her 'hooked on' heroin, and involved in 'prostitution'. In early 2002, staff at a Rotherham children's home reported to the police that five named survivors were being picked up by two key, related perpetrators, and taken to a house for men to have sexual intercourse with them.

²⁹ Survivors' accounts, taken for our investigations, frequently named these individuals, and some survivors described them as 'boyfriends'. The accounts dated back to the late 1990s, onwards, and included mention of criminal activities (that were not CSA/E-related).

³⁰ This included, what appeared to be, known links between a named survivor and a named perpetrator and vice versa.

Family concerns

We found officers frequently dismissed parents' concerns³¹, and the information they could offer, because officers did not fully understand CSA/E.

Parents told us they frequently felt the police were blaming them rather than trying to find out what was behind a survivor's behaviour.

A 2016 Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE) UK survey summary said: 'The appropriate response to parents in the crisis of CSA/E is not to expect them already to be demonstrating a certain level of competence or rectitude, but to look at how they could assist, if offered adequate support, respect and partnership'.

Failure to take a statement

We considered how active officers were in encouraging survivors to make disclosures that might have identified alternative lines of enquiries. At the same time, we were aware it was important for us to recognise that the nature of CSA/E means it can be understandably difficult for a survivor to share their personal experiences.

We found no indication that a DC had spoken to a survivor on their own, despite there being existing police records about the survivor's home life that said they opened up slightly when not in the presence of their mother and stepfather.

The DC would not answer our questions about whether they had spoken to the survivor separately, and if it was usual practice to speak to parents, instead of just a child or young person, in situations that potentially involved CSA/E.

Some survivors told us they did not think they were asked if they wanted to report a crime or make a statement, even when circumstances strongly suggested the force was aware of a CSA/E-related offence being committed.

One survivor said that, after they and a friend had run away from two men, they were helped by an off-duty officer who took them to Main Street Police Station. The survivor told us they thought they might have given a statement, had they been asked to, but only remembered their friend's father being called to collect

³¹ The charity Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE) UK, formerly CROP, has long pushed for parents to be treated as crucial partners in tackling CSA/E, and their potential contribution recognised.

them. We found no further evidence of this particular incident, and were unsure what information was given to the police, although the level of detail of the survivor's account indicated that the incident did happen.

We noted discrepancies around police recording of how a survivor made a decision not to make a formal complaint. For example, a PC, who responded to a survivor's report of rape in 2008, explained that at the time an officer might get the individual to countersign their PNB entry to confirm that they did not want to make a complaint, but said that this was not mandatory.

Working with community leaders

There was clearly some awareness amongst frontline officers of the high proportion of Asian men involved in CSA/E locally and a 2003 problem profile noted that CSA/E involving Asian men was becoming more prevalent, and that many sexual exploitation incidents in Rotherham, but not all, were by Asian men against white survivors.

Our investigations found there were missed opportunities to approach community leaders for their views on how to develop community cohesion and/or identify any actions SYP could consider taking to help tackle CSA/E.

Complaint investigation A survivor of around 16 years of age, who had gone missing from a care home, told an officer when they returned that they had spent the night in Nottingham with two Asian men they had met online, but the survivor would not give any details of where they had gone, or about the men. Their view, apparently stated to police was: 'I'm old enough, so what's the problem?'

SYP attended a multi-agency strategy meeting where social services explained that a girl's behaviour had deteriorated very quickly after a family breakdown. It had been reported that she had put herself at risk of sexual exploitation with Asian men in cars and takeaway delivery drivers and that she had been frequenting a property known to the police as being a very dangerous place for young girls to frequent and have unprotected sex.

Understanding CSA/E and survivors' experiences

Our investigations show that, even after SYP had started gathering CSA/E-specific intelligence, and was organising targeted operations, officers' awareness and understanding of CAS/E-related offences evolved slowly.

A PC, who was a child abuse investigator involved in Operation Carbine in 2008, told us: 'The term CSA/E specifically was not something that I became aware of until much later in my time within CAIU'.

An officer in Rotherham PPU, from 2008, felt that, across the force, 'there was no concept that there was a hidden issue of children being groomed and manipulated into abuse'.

The Head of the SYP central PPU, who had worked in child abuse investigations and child protection from the mid-1990s, told us: 'I think it was around 2007/2008 that the term CSA/E...was being recognised. However, it was still something that was very unknown in terms of its impact and the severity...I suppose, in a sense, nationally this was a similar picture.

'Wrongly, I think there was still the mindset that what we had was 14-, 15- and 16-year-old girls having inappropriate relationships with older 'boyfriends' and being showered with gifts and presents'.

We found that officers were also largely not aware, or dismissive, of the connection between CSA/E and grooming.

A CSA/E survivor who was involved in multi-agency training in South Yorkshire, (from around 1998) said officers often looked uninterested in their shared experiences, or tried to discredit their story, while other officers expressed frustrations about the role of the police in tackling CSA/E. The survivor said officers often asked inappropriate questions, such as 'are you able to enjoy sex?'.

Survivors were sometimes involved in criminal activities because of their association with perpetrators, but police rarely seemed to notice the connection between the two.

We found police officers tended towards describing survivors as being in a relationship, instead of being exploited, and that this belief could deter them from

trusting their professional instincts to pursue enquiries about any criminal activity. We found this situation could be compounded by a survivor also believing they were 'in a relationship' and/or having a misplaced loyalty towards a perpetrator.

Complaint investigation In one of our investigations, a survivor returned home with a cigarette burn to their face, caused by their 'boyfriend'. A social worker spoke to the survivor about this, but they did not feel able to go to the police because they did not consider themselves to have been assaulted. Several years later the survivor disclosed to their social worker they had been sexually exploited in 2000 when they had left local authority care, aged 17.

We acknowledge, however, that there were some officers who understood how survivors were affected by grooming. For example, one PC recalled a 13-year-old survivor telling them they were involved in sexual activity in 2007. The PC said this was the first time a child had told them about their sexual abuse, and that they believed the survivor because their account was detailed.

As police awareness of CSA/E grew, particularly around how grooming and coercion could affect a survivor's willingness to disclose their experiences, more officers recognised how hard it could be for a survivor to talk about their experiences and also recognise that they had been exploited.

Working with victims and survivors

Victimless prosecutions

Although SYP did sometimes attempt to investigate an incident despite a victim withdrawing their complaint, or refusing to give evidence (known as a victimless prosecution), there was a general 'acceptance' by officers that this was rarely likely to result in a successful prosecution.³²

Also, police partner stakeholders, survivors and their families seemed to mistakenly believe that a victim statement, or detailed disclosure, was needed for a police investigation. This was the case at a 2001 key partners meeting where we identified a RMBC representative informed everyone, in the absence of SYP attending, that unless a formal complaint is received from a girl over 13 years old about unlawful sexual intercourse, and the police have evidence to substantiate the report, then the police cannot act.

³² For example, it was often more difficult to gather enough evidence for the prosecution, such as old CCTV footage, especially in the case of non-recent CSA/E.

Complaint investigation One woman said she told SYP about an inappropriate relationship between her 12-year-old stepdaughter and an older man but was informed that if the survivor would not make a statement there was nothing the police could do.

The stepmother felt the message was that there was no point in making a report, and this put her off reporting future concerns, although it seems this survivor was sexually exploited for a further three or four years.

Complaint investigation We were told another survivor returned home late at night in an 'extremely dishevelled state and in a lot of pain' after their mother reported them MfH. Officers were adamant there was nothing they could do unless the survivor gave the police names and an account of what had happened.

Sometimes we felt an officer's decision not to pursue a victimless investigation was reasonable, especially if it prioritised the survivor's welfare and safeguarding needs.

One officer recommended to their line manager that they file a crime as 'undetected' so that a 2006 rape was recorded, without detracting from the credibility of the 14-year-old survivor who made the report. This also complied with the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS).

The officer had followed all available lines of enquiry, which were limited because they could not engage with the survivor, and the survivor did not feel able, or safe enough, to be interviewed. The officer's decision also took into consideration concerns which other agencies had raised about the survivor's mental health.

The force's position on needing a formal complaint from a victim to progress investigations appeared to us to differ when a report of CSA/E involved an underage pregnancy.

There were some survivors, with children by perpetrators, who complained to us. In one case, a retired CAIU sergeant assured us that at the time (2000), a referral about underage pregnancy would not just be 'written off' because a survivor did not make a formal complaint and that the police would not accept what a referring agency said as accurate without speaking to the survivor and/or her parents, as well as to the survivor's doctor.

Failure to obtain further information

We came across instances where police accepted what a survivor said at face value and did not encourage further disclosure(s). In other cases, they were dismissive.

Complaint investigation In 2009, someone reported to SYP that a survivor, aged 15, had been raped in a Rotherham park.

The survivor had significant internal injuries which, hospital and social care staff suspected, could be consistent with rape, and they required surgery.

We were told by the survivor's father that the officer dealing with the incident was insensitive and made no attempt to reassure the survivor, even suggesting to their father that this would 'teach' the survivor a 'lesson'.

We found that SYP made numerous attempts, over a number of months, to encourage the survivor to make a complaint about this incident. Unfortunately, the survivor did not feel able to disclose what had happened to them and did not consent to a forensic medical examination. We found a lack of any recorded lines of enquiry regarding the potential suspect, and missed forensic opportunities to examine the clothing seized from the survivor on the night of the incident.

The survivor contacted the police when they later received threatening texts from the men involved in the rape and officers searched the survivor's room without consent and took their mobile phone.

Some officers we spoke to were adamant that, where there was any indication a CSA/E survivor was willing to talk to them, they would engage with them, and that they would always be open to a victim/survivor coming forward to them at a future date. However, our investigations discovered that this was not what always happened in practice, especially in the early part of the period that Operation Linden investigated.

Based on officers' evidence it seemed to us it was usually left to a survivor to tell the police if they wanted a case to be reopened.

One former child protection officer told us that Risky Business staff rang them in 2003 about the reported assault of a 13-year-old survivor because it would not have been normal practice to try to speak to the survivor directly to identify if they were willing to make a formal complaint.

The officer said: 'In those days you didn't go looking for complaints', adding that 'now, if I'd been passed this information, I'd have done a visit and then another

visit and another visit but, in those days, you didn't do it, they didn't have to be crimed and it was all just forgotten about'.

A Rotherham PPU DC told us that 'child concern' referrals that were received with no victim complaint 'were finalised and written off with no further unit action', and they added that 'this was accepted practice, there was no official policy'.

Missing from home

We gained a growing understanding of the link between children and young people repeatedly going MfH, or care, and CSA/E, during our investigations. We found that some survivors went missing for days, weeks or months at a time, and that there were particular properties where they were usually discovered. This aspect of our work eventually highlighted the role female perpetrators played in CSA/E when they 'harboured' survivors in their home where perpetrators were encouraged to visit.³³

A social services witness told us many survivors referred to the Risky Business project appeared to be 'persistent runaways or missing persons for periods of time, which was when the grooming and sexual exploitation took place'.

At a 2002 key player meeting it was suggested that officers should gain insight into why CSA/E survivors did not seek help and for this use 'in-depth interviews', conducted by a female officer, after a MfH survivor returned.

We explored whether SYP officers recognised the connection between CSA/E and MfH behaviour, if their preconceptions affected their judgement of those MfH, and if they actively used MfH incident information to assess future risks to potential victims, and/or to help shape a strategic response to CSA/E.

Our investigations reflected much of a 1995 national police research review on missing persons which suggested forces believed care homes' reports of missing individuals could significantly drain police resources, and that officers sometimes felt carers reported individuals missing to 'cover their backs', that missing individuals were not 'really vulnerable,' more likely to commit crime than become a victim, and

³³ Our investigators interviewed Police Officers who said they were frustrated at the limited action they could take in this situation. There also appeared to be confusion about police powers to remove possible CSA/E victims who were 16 or over, where an individual did not want to leave a premises.

were 'uncooperative', 'difficult', 'unresponsive' and 'aware of their legal rights not to speak to the police'.

Complaint investigation The guardian of two sexually exploited sisters (in 1999) told us her opinion of what she felt police attitudes were like at the time. The guardian regularly reported the survivors MfH but also went looking for them herself because she said officers never seemed to take on board the risks of CSA/E: 'I did tell them that they were out with older men, but I was told, 'well if you don't know where they are, you can't prove who they are with'.

On one occasion, the guardian told us they asked a uniformed officer in a patrol car in Rotherham town centre if they had seen the survivors and the officer just pointed them out then drove off.

We were also told by the guardian that some officers knew the survivors by name and where they might be, but did not help the guardian look for them, and said things like 'we're sick and tired of chasing them'.

She added that she had never understood why nothing ever seemed to happen to the men the survivors were with when the police picked them up.

We considered how quickly SYP officers pursued a child or young person MfH report.

Complaint investigation According to social care records, one survivor, who was sexually exploited from the age of 11, for several years, from 1995, regularly went missing from a care home. Sometimes this was as often as 15 times in one month.

Once, after staff had reported the survivor missing to police at 11pm, an officer returning their call said they might not be able to send someone to get the relevant forms that night, adding they 'could see no urgency'. The officer did take down a few details over the phone, such as the individual's possible whereabouts. On another occasion, involving a different survivor, the same care home staff were told not to report the incident until after 24 hours had passed.

Any police response to a MfH report should have considered a survivor's possible, and known, vulnerability for a risk assessment. Our investigations revealed an inconsistency at SYP in meeting this requirement.

Also, officers sometimes conducted a 'return to home' interview with a survivor, and spoke to their parents about their behaviour, however this did not always happen. Incident reports were not always detailed enough for us to be sure about the quality of contact between an officer and survivor, and what, if any, specific police action was taken.

Complaint investigation An incident involving a survivor, of around 16, who had gone missing from a care home and returned but would not give any details of their past whereabouts, should have resulted in further police enquiries in line with the *Missing Persons Policy* at the time. The Policy stated that even if a child or young person was reluctant to give information this should not prevent a robust investigation into the circumstances, and that firm and positive action should be taken. However, we found no evidence that the Policy had been followed.

We identified a failure to share relevant information with other police forces when potential CSA/E victims moved 'out of area', and this included taxi registration numbers passed to SYP by a Rotherham children's home that was concerned about drivers who regularly picked up survivors and drove off when children's home staff challenged them.

We found SYP failed to record information about one incident involving a number of survivors under all survivors' names, instead it was entered under just the one survivor.

We found a reference to a new job post being introduced in 2002 covering sexual exploitation and domestic abuse with responsibility 'to visit survivors who have been MfH'. There was also a dedicated missing persons officer (MPO) in district PPU teams in the early 2000s.

We did find examples of police following appropriate procedures, including checking hospitals and railway stations as well as possible addresses where a missing survivor might be staying and carrying out return to home interviews with follow-up visits by the MPO. At least one survivor remembered the Rotherham MPO visiting them and trying to persuade them not to go missing again, and we are aware that this was a MPO's responsibility.

However, it was unclear to us exactly how and when an MPO should have been involved in a CSA/E investigation. The officer who held the MPO post in Rotherham from 2005 to 2008 told us that when they were appointed it was a relatively new role and still being developed. Our investigations identified that MPOs probably could have played a more active role in identifying patterns of MfH behaviour given they were privy to social care referrals and street intelligence. We felt there was a vacuum

where professional curiosity could have been used to record, flag, and act on intelligence to tackle CSA/E.

Complaint investigation Sometimes MPOs reacted to incidents in isolation, and we saw one instance where an MPO did not meticulously record all incidents under individual survivor's names, over a period of time, preventing the building of an intelligence profile that could have been shared with others for a better response against CSA/E.

By 2005 SYP had minimum standards guidance for the management, recording and investigation of missing persons. This was revised when the force brought in a new computer system, known as iTrace, in 2006.

The 2006 version stated the first thing a police call handler should do after receiving a MfH report and this was to create an 'incident'. However, in practice, there was confusion about exactly how this incident was perceived and recorded by the call handler, because of other potentially conflicting guidance available to them. Subsequently there was sometimes a lengthy delay before the police responded to such an incident.

Lack of proactive safeguarding

We identified numerous missed safeguarding opportunities relating to poor police practice and inaction.

Our investigations found:

- there was some confusion about how two different 'child concern' forms (known as GEN117 and GEN118A) should be completed and submitted
- SYP officers did not always factor into their approach to safeguarding and engaging with some survivors their family situation and living arrangements
- that details shared at one multi-agency meetings about a perpetrator were not initially loaded onto police systems and this led to one survivor being viewed as 'complicit' as opposed to 'vulnerable'

There were cases of individual officers 'trying their best' to protect CSA/E victims in the absence of an effective strategy. At least one SYP officer we spoke to said they sometimes arranged to move survivors into care, (including foster care), because the only way they knew to stop the abuse from happening was to remove a child from an environment and put them in 'a place of safety'.

Complaint investigation One officer we spoke to said that criminal activity by a survivor at risk could be seen as an opportunity to protect. The officer explained they had once found a survivor, who had been reported MfH, hiding under a bed

with an extendable police baton in their handbag, and lying alongside a known CSA/E perpetrator. Although the survivor did not disclose they were in a sexual relationship with the perpetrator, the officer recognised how vulnerable they were and decided to use possession of the baton as a reason to detain them and move them to safety.

The officer told us they hoped that once the survivor was away from the perpetrator's influence they would be more willing to engage with the police and other agencies, that there was no intention to prosecute the survivor although they were reprimanded and received a formal warning which is now on their police record. We found no evidence to suggest that any further action was taken to try and engage with the survivor, or to safeguard them from the perpetrator. There was also no action taken to disrupt the perpetrator.

Disruption policing

Across Operation Linden we noted criticisms in complaints we received that SYP's response to CSA/E did not effectively disrupt CSA/E activity. This included:

- not serving abduction notices against perpetrators, warning them they were with underage children without their parent/guardian's consent³⁴
- SYP possibly conducting a joint operation with RMBC to stop taxi drivers and check their licences as well as visit takeaways known to pose a CSA/E risk
- SYP not appearing to target locations and premises, for example hotels – used by CSA/E perpetrators
- SYP not effectively monitoring potential perpetrators and considering using tactics such as risk of sexual harm orders (RoSHOs) or sexual offences prevention orders (SOPOs)
- SYP working with the Department for Work and Pensions for 'lifestyle' and financial checks on perpetrators' businesses to see if potential perpetrators' incomes correlated with their declared earnings

We upheld a number of complaints that the force failed to safeguard young survivors, found with known CSA/E perpetrators, because there appeared to be no evidence that the perpetrators had ever been issued with notices³⁵, (appropriate for harbouring or abduction), even though SYP knew perpetrators' names and addresses. We found that other SYP districts were using notices.

³⁴ By flagging the survivor's age this potentially prevented a perpetrator later claiming, in their defence, that they were unaware of the individual's inability to consent to sexual behaviour.

³⁵ How abduction notices were recorded was also an issue and any failings would have had an impact on how visible they were to SYP officers. For example, one was flagged on the Police National Computer (PNC) but did not appear on the force's own computer systems.

When notices were served, sometimes SYP did not appear to monitor compliance or consider their effect.

According to minutes of a 2009 strategy meeting about named survivors living in a children's home there were agencies that were worried that police were not following up on breached abduction notices.

The Rotherham PPU DS raised a concern about the force 'dishing out' abduction notices 'like confetti', which, they said, 'devalued them'.

A number of CSA/E perpetrators in Rotherham were connected to taxi firms and this included running them. A 2000 report to police about a sexual assault by a taxi driver was the first intelligence recorded about this, and the following year there were several new incidents recorded that linked taxi drivers to CSA/E in the area. The local authority was responsible for taxi licensing, and the Rotherham District Commander, who also started Operation Forced in 2001, worked with RMBC to get some taxi firms' licences revoked. Another District Commander lobbied the council to introduce cameras in taxis – this proposal was turned down, but we understand was later accepted.

From at least the early 2000s the force considered more tactical ways to tackle perpetrators and the minutes of a CSA/E meeting in 2002 include an officer taking a pragmatic approach by suggesting considering investigations 'in respect of drugs, vehicles and prostitution' as a means to an end to disrupt known CSA/E perpetrators.³⁶

We tried to clarify the date SYP started to focus on addressing the systematic approach specific perpetrators took to grooming vulnerable young survivors but we were unable to do so.

³⁶ These perpetrators were often mentioned at district management meetings and had multiple previous offences (mostly drug and vehicle related, but also related to violent crime).

Systemic issues directly affecting survivors

This section covers systemic issues that more directly affected survivors whose rights should have been protected at the time.³⁷

But we found that survivors, along with their families, did not always receive good levels of service from the police.

Independent Sexual Violence Advisers support role during our investigations

Our engagement with survivors during our investigations work benefited from the involvement of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) who gave survivors specialist support to help them cope with the impact of their abuse and exploitation and who assisted survivors with practical arrangements such as childcare. This helped relieve some of survivors' day-to-day pressures so that they were more likely to feel ready to speak to our investigators.³⁸

A dedicated ISVA team for Rotherham survivors was established in 2014, funded by the NCA as part of Operation Stovewood. ISVAs provide one-to-one specialist emotional support and impartial information to survivors. A CSA/E victim, or survivor, can benefit whether or not they have reported an offence, or made a complaint, to the police.³⁹

Victim care, support, and information

During the period covered by Operation Linden, several CSA/E-related criminal trials were held where survivors and family members appeared as witnesses.

Our investigations found there were differing views amongst officers, involved in SYP's Operation Central, about what information they could share with survivors giving evidence and family members who may have been witnesses⁴⁰. Overall, it seemed to us that officers did not want to disclose any information that might adversely impact a trial. However, survivors, and their parents, were expecting regular, informative updates, in line with *The Victims' Code*.

³⁷ This included by the *The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime* (commonly known as 'The Victims' Code' which became law under the *Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004* and existed, previously, as a 'Victims' Charter' (from the 1990s). *The Victims Strategy* was published in 2018 and was intended to strengthen the The Code. In July 2021, *The Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy* was published.

³⁸ The team was aware of survivors' personal circumstances and any particular health or legal issues that needed to be taken into account.

³⁹ Individual SYP districts have access ISVA teams, (Rotherham Abuse Counselling Service, Barnsley Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Service, Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre and Doncaster Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service).

⁴⁰ Witnesses' rights were, at the time, protected by the 2008 Witness Charter.

Officers' concern around tainting an investigation sometimes impacted their decisions about the amount and nature of contact parents should have with survivors who had been moved into care,⁴¹ away from Rotherham, for their own protection, before a trial commenced.

Complaint investigation A mother, (who was a witness), complained to us about not being allowed to see her daughter, also a witness in a trial, before an identification parade. We found that officers had followed correct procedure in making this decision, but that the mother had possibly misunderstood, or had not been made aware of, protocols for keeping witnesses apart to prevent them from communicating.

Our investigators did note, however, that despite a pre-trial briefing for families, when they were told someone from Risky Business would keep them updated, the police communication process had been unclear. We also understood that one PPU officer gave their telephone number to parents so that they had a contact for any queries, although this was not part of the individual's remit.

We tried to gauge how well officers engaged with CSA/E survivors and showed understanding, but we found that officers, even if they had more specialist CSA/E knowledge, were not always particularly empathetic which contributed to some survivors' mistrust in the police.

Not feeling safe to disclose details to officers about their CSA/E experience appeared to be a significant barrier to effective engagement, and this situation was compounded where an officer did not appreciate the impact 'grooming' had on someone.

Our investigators noted instances where officers were not mindful of considerations affecting engagement with them, for example the potential difficulty of a survivor speaking to the police in the presence of their parents, or a perpetrator.

Sometimes officers did not pick up on a survivor's concerns about possible reprisals – fearing perpetrators could stop them disclosing further incidents to the police. However, we also found examples of officers trying to proactively follow up on information about men survivors associated with, but whom had not been the subject of any survivor disclosure.

⁴¹ This decision was taken following multi-agency meetings.

Working with families

We were keen to explore how officers also engaged with families⁴² – they were often the first people to raise concerns about their child or young person possibly being sexually exploited, and sometimes they were also finding it difficult to cope with their child's behaviour.

We did find examples of some SYP officers developing good relationships with a CSA/E survivor's family, and this was particularly the case when they seemed to understand the challenges parents faced and wanted to assist because they were struggling to cope.

Despite this, a common allegation we considered was that families were not always made aware of specific CSA/E risks by the police. We found that the difficulties police faced obtaining a survivor's disclosure and their lack of awareness of CSA/E contributed to this.

Our investigations also considered what expectations relatives had of the police in relation to police actions in response to concerns that had been raised, or in the wake of information a family/family member had provided (such as details they had shared with the police and taken from a survivor's phone). Unfortunately, it seems they often felt let down and, as a result, were increasingly distrustful of SYP.

In some cases, it appears families tried to handle things themselves and, in doing so, did not always pass on concerns and information to the police. This was often in response to a previous bad experience with the police or because they feared a child being taken away from them or them being criticised by officers for attempting preventive actions (such as locking a survivor in the family home to stop them leaving or making threats at an address where the survivor was believed to be staying with a perpetrator). In a couple of cases parents were arrested in such circumstances.

Video interviews

A number of CSA/E survivor complaints we investigated had been video interviewed by SYP after reporting sexual, and other offences, or after being involved in a CSA/E-related incident.

During the period we investigated, officers were expected to follow specific best practice and guidance on interviewing techniques when questioning children and young people using video.

⁴² This could include families being involved in looking for a missing survivor or actively participating in their welfare by attending appropriate multi-agency conferences.

These included:

- interviewing a survivor as quickly as possible after allegations of sexual, and other forms of abuse, preferably in an informal setting, and by people with specialist training to talk to children in such a situation⁴³
- whether the interviewer should be male or female depending on decisions made based on earlier conversations with the child⁴⁴
- providing an impartial 'intermediary' to help a witness who might struggle to communicate their evidence and understand the questions they were asked⁴⁵
- potentially using a suitably trained officer, or social worker, to lead an interview⁴⁶
- allowing children and young people to have their statement video recorded and having someone present for support (and being told why not if police denied the request).⁴⁷

We found that, generally, SYP officers were keen to interview victims who were ready to speak to them, but that they did not understand CSA/E well enough, including the impact it had on the survivor, and the engagement work needed for a survivor to feel ready and able to be interviewed.

Some survivors told us they would have preferred to speak to a female interviewer about their experiences but that they were never asked and did not feel able to put their request forward to a male interviewing officer. They said that, as a result, they may have felt too embarrassed to share any intimate details about what had happened to them. When we asked officers about this during our evidence gathering they told us that there had been a shortage of female interviewers.

Appropriate protection

There appeared to us to be a culture where officers felt survivors often 'chose' to be involved in CSA/E activity, despite some having known mental health problems, repeatedly going MfH and experiencing difficulties such as self-harming. Some behaved more in keeping with a child much younger in age than their actual age.

⁴³ From a 1992 Home Office and Department of Health's *Memorandum of Good Practice* on video interviewing child victims and witnesses. A 1995 Home Office evaluation of the Memorandum's use found that, in most cases, the approach obtained a clear account from the child, but that interviewers did not always follow its recommendations on encouraging 'free narrative', and there was more emphasis on gathering evidence than providing support.

⁴⁴ A 1999 Policing and Reducing Crime Unit review of the earlier 1992 Memorandum included this additional guidance.

⁴⁵ This was one of the 'special measures' introduced under the *Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999* to help gather evidence from 'vulnerable and intimidated' witnesses and support them to give evidence – commonly known as 'Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) video interviews'.

⁴⁶ This was included in a 2011 version of the *2002 Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures*, (updated 2007, 2011, and more recently in 2022). The updated version covered any investigative interview, whether videoed or not.

⁴⁷ This was included in the 2015 version of *The Victims' Code*, along with other 'special measures' such as enhanced communication services.

There were occasions when officers did not respond to safeguard survivors, even though they knew there was a possibility that a survivor might be at risk of sexual exploitation. This included when officers found survivors in places – known for CSA/E activity – late at night, for example at Clifton Park and Herringthorpe Playing Fields, and sometimes while they were also under the influence of drink or drugs.

We also found examples of officers being dismissive of the potentially increased CSA/E risk to ‘looked-after children’ in foster or residential care.

A number of survivors were described by officers as having ‘chaotic’ family backgrounds⁴⁸ and displaying what was considered to be, at that time, ‘challenging behaviour’⁴⁹ – all factors⁵⁰ that are known as potentially linking a child or young person to grooming.

We found instances where personal protection⁵¹ was not always implemented by SYP for CSA/E survivors, (and their families), including when a survivor was, understandably, reluctant to give a statement until they felt effective safety measures had been organised.

Complaint investigation Our investigation into one survivor’s complaint found that, when they first spoke to SYP to provide evidence against a perpetrator, they also said they were scared for their, and their relative’s, safety and asked for protection but were told by the force that this was not possible, unless the survivor fully engaged with the investigation. This inaction initially put off the survivor further engaging with the police. However, they did later give evidence in the Operation Clover trials and SYP arranged security measures, including ‘tagging’ family addresses to ensure a prompt response to any calls to the police.

Witness protection that involves relocation to another part of the country, and perhaps even a change of identity, is generally only considered in very serious cases, when a witness’ evidence is crucial and there is a significant threat to a survivor.

⁴⁸ This usually meant they might live with different relatives at different times and might be moved into care on a temporary basis.

⁴⁹ We came across instances when it appeared that survivors wanted to be taken into care in the belief that it would give them more freedom, possibly encouraged to do so by perpetrators.

⁵⁰ ‘Chaotic lifestyle’ appears in the *Authorised Professional Practice (APP) Guidance* as a potential warning sign of CSA/E.

⁵¹ Survivors’ reports that led to arrests and prosecution cases could see them fearful of repercussions – sometimes they were threatened, or physically attacked, by perpetrators and their associates who were often involved in other serious criminal activities.

Our investigations identified decision-makers, involved in safeguarding survivors in difficult situations, were not fully aware of the lengths a perpetrator might go to remain in touch with a survivor.

For example, we found in our investigations that just moving survivors 'out of area' – an intervention agreed by multi-agencies as well as SYP – did not often prevent perpetrators staying in contact with survivors who were vulnerable to this because of the 'bond' they felt they had with perpetrators.

Some survivors recalled being taken to a police station despite not knowing why. This may have been because they had been reported MfH and the police station was wrongly seen by officers as a safe place for them while waiting for parents, carers, or social services to arrive to take them home.

Attitudes towards survivors and taking appropriate action

We saw examples of SYP officers not always acting when they saw survivors in an intimate situation with an older man, or men, and, in one case, where a survivor was involved in a sexual act with a perpetrator. We also found examples where officers were not always alert to safeguarding issues when responding to specific incidents that involved physical assault or antisocial behaviour, and our evidence gathering included survivors' accounts of incidents where officers, who were on routine policing duty, seemed to dismiss clear signs of sexual and physical abuse.

However, at least one of our investigations noted there were sometimes limitations to what an officer could do in the type of situations described above, for example we were told by survivors that:

- sometimes they would provide officers with false personal details, and instead, by providing an older relative's details, these would appear true to the officer who made a verification check
- through a sense of loyalty to perpetrators they would tell police that they were 'just mates'

Officers also told us that they sometimes, wrongly, assumed girls were older than they looked, or that the perpetrators were younger than they looked. And we were also told that while they sometimes officers took action this was not always obvious to a survivor, and included referring an individual to social services, or discussing their concerns about a survivor at a multi-agency meeting.

Some officers failed to apply relevant legislation, especially around consent issues, and it appeared to us that, too often, officers seemed willing to accept that teenage survivors were in a 'relationship' with perpetrators, overlooking any potential CSA/E offence.

We also saw specific examples of officers failing to follow guidance relating to interviews, and while searching for missing survivors, during the course of their police enquiries. Although some officers appeared to appropriately follow guidelines on investigating serious offences such as rape others did not, and often their professional curiosity limited their actions – for example by not considering other lines of enquiry, not collecting and preserving forensic evidence correctly, and generally just carrying out the minimum number of required actions.

Stereotypes and misconceptions

We found stereotypes and misconceptions relating to CSA/E survivors persisted amongst officers – police records sometimes indicated survivors were viewed as perpetrators’ ‘associates’. Officers also sometimes noted their reservations about a survivor’s ability to cope with any court proceedings when they were seeking CPS advice, even if there were no strong grounds for them to be concerned.

During a 2008 multi-agency strategy meeting, concerns were raised that the police had seen a survivor, in a stolen car, with a known CSA/E perpetrator. The survivor was treated as the ‘co-accused’, as opposed to a potential victim.

During one investigation a former DS told us they would treat survivors as victims but that ‘some of them were worldly-wise and not meek and mild victims’.

We noted instances when CSA/E survivors were arrested by SYP, (especially for offences relating to disorderly and aggressive behaviour, often under the influence of drink or drugs), but it was not always easy to tell from the evidence we considered exactly what the circumstances were that led up to the arrest.

Acting on intelligence

The question of how much the police already knew about individual perpetrators, and the CSA/E threat they posed to certain survivors, featured across many of our investigations.

Often survivors’ complaints that the police could have done more to protect them, were based on a belief that SYP had definite, actionable intelligence, about the risks individual CSA/E perpetrators posed.

To consider this our investigators examined:

- SYP’s Operational Intelligence System (OIS) records, and other police computer systems, to help identify what was known about perpetrators at a given time and who accessed what and when

- information about named perpetrators that was exchanged in conversation, or by email
- whether known risks, relating to specific perpetrators, were recorded and whether or not this should have happened, for example failure to record because of a survivor not feeling able to disclose specific information to the police

We found, from also talking to SYP officers, that many perpetrators, and their families, were well known to the police but mainly regarding concerns about drugs, violence and acquisitive offences.

Many survivors told us that they were stopped in cars with perpetrators, but we found many of their names were not linked with perpetrators' names on police intelligence systems.

We did find some early intelligence records regarding perpetrators, who were related, including concerns about them being seen with young girls and hanging around outside schools. However, SYP appeared to have not taken any action.

We compared intelligence records for perpetrators who were named as associating with each other, and entries regarding specific incidents – we had some concerns that some incidents only appeared on one perpetrator's record, meaning that information, and any understanding of risks, may have been missed at the point of SYP reviewing another perpetrator's file.

Responding to survivors missing from home

Many of the allegations Operation Linden explored featured repeated and frequent instances of CSA/E survivors going MfH, and the concerns parents and guardians had that the police did not always take these incidents seriously.

Our investigations found a lot of inconsistency in how SYP dealt with survivors who went MfH, especially if they did so regularly, despite there being clear guidance, (dating back to 1995), about what is required from the police response. Insufficient records sometimes made it difficult for us to reach definite conclusions about what action specific officers had taken in particular circumstances.

We received complaints about SYP giving poor advice to family members when someone was MfH and responding slowly to reports, or doing nothing. The guardian of two sisters, who were both sexually exploited, told us about numerous occasions when it seems it was left to her to search for them. We found there was often a feeling amongst parents, especially those making frequent MfH reports, that they were wasting police time.

Our investigations found that officers did not always understand that the circumstances they encountered survivors in put them at risk of sexual exploitation and that abduction was an issue. A poor understanding of the nature of CSA/E, and survivors' relationships with their abusers, might have contributed to this situation.

Police culture

We explored several allegations about particular officers survivors had come into contact with who they said actively supported individual perpetrators' CSA/E and criminal activities, or who were on friendly terms with perpetrators.

Sometimes these allegations seemed to stem from a general mistrust survivors and their families felt towards the police, along with frustration that SYP did not seem to be doing 'enough'.

We were occasionally told anecdotal information about officers commenting on a CSA/E perpetrator's race – like one mother who recalled an officer saying her daughter needed to stop associating with Asian males, (although the officer allegedly used an inappropriate term), as they were not good for her. Another parent told us that, when they raised concerns about their daughter being missing and concerns about older men, the officer said that it was a 'fashion accessory' for girls in Rotherham to have an 'older Asian boyfriend' and that she would grow out of it. Unfortunately, this was hard to investigate further without being able to identify the officer, and it was generally difficult for us to consider in some detail allegations where survivors, understandably, had been unable to recall a specific officer's details, such as their name and rank. This was particularly the case in relation to patrolling uniformed officers who had encountered a survivor with a perpetrator by chance, instead of as a result of responding directly to a reported incident.

Systemic issues: multi-agency working

Our investigators wanted a clear picture of how effective multi-agency working was in Rotherham – from personal contact between police officers and social workers, through to joint strategies and operations with SYP’s key partners.

We not only looked at how effective police co-operation and communications were with partners but also tried to consider what survivors, and their families, expected to happen around the sharing of information and evidence.

Culture, relationships and collaboration

A former RMBC chief executive told us that the relationship between the council and SYP at the time was generally good, with established and open channels of communication between RMBC and the Rotherham District Commander.

Despite this, we noticed conflicting cultures and different expectations between local authorities and SYP which adversely affected the multi-agency response to CSA/E. This was possibly a contributing factor towards the failure of joint agency initiatives such as Operation Czar. When we investigated the conduct of the Rotherham PPU officer who led the operation, a social worker on its multi-agency team told us the operation had been a good idea but just did not work in practice, ‘the police were looking for evidence and we were looking to build up relationships. We were just different in our approaches’.

A Sheffield social services manager told us there was never a formal agreement for how SYP would work with RMBC’s safeguarding children services to tackle CSA/E. They said the relationship they had with some SYP officers was not always positive.

We found examples of problems with collaboration between SYP and other agencies where national guidance was not followed, such as the government’s *Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, first introduced in 1991.

At a multi-agency strategy meeting (6 June 2000) a number of survivors were discussed who were being sexually exploited. It was agreed that two social workers and two SYP officers would develop a plan for inter-departmental co-operation specifically to stop abuse by taxi drivers.

We could not find the minutes from a proposed follow-up meeting that was scheduled for September 2000, nor any evidence it took place, although we noted we were told that the analyst thought they had met the nominated social workers informally, twice.

We considered National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) 2009 guidance on investigating child abuse and safeguarding children which said: ‘An important aspect of effective multi-agency working is that while some aspects involve joint decisions, others require separate decisions which enable agencies to challenge each other when necessary’. However, at least two Rotherham PPU officers told us that challenging social care in this way was not SYP practice at the time.

Whilst we discovered SYP was broadly failing to collaborate, and/or work effectively with partners, our evidence included some instances where individuals had initiated joint multi-agency working successfully. For example, a Rotherham District Commander, (in post during the early 2000s), deployed officers to work with the RMBC youth offending team and antisocial behaviour unit. Officers patrolled outside schools and targeted truants and had skills and experience in child abuse investigations and in supporting victims. A later District Commander continued to fund specialist roles despite budget constraints.

Information sharing

We investigated a number of allegations that SYP did not take action following concerns raised by partner agencies about survivors at risk and perpetrators, and did not share information effectively across the force, nor properly manage it in a way that could have helped it effectively deliver coordinated action against CSA/E.

In some cases an information vacuum existed – for example, we found evidence that the Rotherham PPU was not always represented on the main multi-agency working forums, Multi-Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

The following table summarises key partners we involved in our investigations

Agency	Our investigations
Risky Business	A number of complainants alleged that details provided to the police by youth services project Risky Business staff were not acknowledged.
RMBC	SYP’s main partner agency – the force worked largely with its social services and Risky Business teams. We obtained accounts from a number of staff who had supported CSA/E victims, and their families.
Education services	This partner’s role was largely reporting survivors’ absences from school and if they were regularly collected by older men.
CROP	Involved in our evidence gathering.

Agency	Our investigations
Local children's homes and services including Rush House ⁵²	A key source of information on how SYP worked with partners, but most minutes, taken from multi-agency meetings, were lacking in detail affecting our ability to use them as evidence.

A 2010 CSA/E problem profile produced by an SYP analyst proposed that the force should further develop its working relationships with partner agencies, noting that intelligence-gathering opportunities were being missed. It recommended that SYP's district PPUs could do more to help other agencies submit intelligence to SYP, and that a review of local data-sharing arrangements and processes would ensure all relevant intelligence was added to the police's relevant computer system.

RMBC social services records, and social care and youth support worker accounts, revealed a frustration with SYP – it was generally seen as not being proactive enough. It is unclear whether this commonly held view was communicated to SYP.

The minutes from a 2007 multi-agency strategy meeting about a group of known perpetrators, later targeted by Operation Central, noted that it was expected that the Rotherham District Commander ⁵³ attends the next meeting and that: '...The processes available via the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* should be more vigorously explored... as we cannot rely on/expect the young women concerned to make a formal complaint given the risks to them personally.'

Record-keeping and multi-agency meetings

Overall, our investigations found multi-agency meetings were infrequent and there was inconsistent record-keeping – these gaps meant we could not often use meetings' records as evidence in our investigations.⁵⁴

⁵² Formally known as the Rotherham Unit for the Single Homeless, young people over 16 benefited from the service, which was funded by RMBC, charities, and the council-controlled Bridges Project, (now known as Action for Children), which provided support to those leaving care.

⁵³ The then District Commander, although invited, did not attend the following meeting, but did ask the Risky Business representative to provide them with a package of information about these perpetrators. Our investigation found a record of this being delivered, but no indication of how it was recorded or used.

⁵⁴ Minutes from one meeting held in 2007 confirmed what we found during our investigations. It was noted in these minutes that there were communication breakdowns, a lack of clarity around roles, and issues with agencies not seeing the bigger picture.

SYP representatives did not always take notes of what was said and agreed for action, even if an officer was attending on behalf of a more senior colleague in a specialist role. This could lead to failings, for example, a DC from Rotherham PPU attended a multi-agency meeting, where two young survivors' disclosure was discussed⁵⁵ but, afterwards, there was no evidence that the details were added to SYP's computer systems, or that any action was taken by the force, and that this was often the case.

The following table sets out important multi-agency meetings attended by SYP relevant to our investigations

Meeting	Investigation findings
Key players meetings ⁵⁶	<p>Until 2002 these meetings allowed for strategic discussions about CSA/E concerns in South Yorkshire, and they were usually initiated as a result of information from the RMBC children and family's referral and assessment team, or because of an officer's concerns about a specific child.</p> <p>One of our investigations considered changes made in June 2002 by SYP to the structure of this meeting, and whether there was an intention to exclude or limit the input of representatives from particular agencies, including Risky Business.</p> <p>Our investigation evidence included us being told the change was made because meetings were too unwieldy, and that information was being shared that should not have been. We were unable to find the meeting's terms of reference and found only a couple of recorded minutes. An April 2002 social care staff meeting's minutes indicated that the change was made by SYP and local social and education services to gain a 'strategic overview' which could only be achieved with fewer participants. A new 'pre-meeting group', including Risky Business, was mentioned.</p>
Sexual exploitation forums	<p>From what we can tell, key players meetings were replaced in 2004 by monthly forums, with different agencies represented, and these forums were apparently chaired by a senior social care manager. We struggled to find meeting records covering dates after February 2006, although we know from other evidence that they probably continued until June 2010.</p>

⁵⁵ They disclosed they had been to a house where they had taken cocaine and were trying to pay off a debt for drugs.

⁵⁶ Key players included representatives from SYP, education, youth and health services, and charity NSPCC. They met to discuss children who were either at risk of CSA/E, or already being exploited, to 'take the lead in making arrangements for the identification, assessment, and planning for these children'.

Meeting	Investigation findings
Multi-agency child protection conferences	Conferences, also known as ‘case conferences’, provided opportunities for the police, social services, and others, to, among other things, discuss concerns about a particular individual, or family, and agree a course of planned action.
Area Child Protection Committee and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board (RSCB)	SYP was represented on both as well as, at management level. The RSCB sexual exploitation steering group oversaw the sexual exploitation forums. The DI of the PPU was a member. The officer who held the post told our investigators this forum was poorly attended and became defunct. They said its purpose was to consider policies and procedures relating to sexual exploitation, commission reports for RSCB, and deal with ‘anything that was strategic’ in relation to CSA/E. Although the forum should have been the right place to discuss and resolve problems around sharing information between agencies, this officer could not recall this being discussed.

Multi-agency agreements

We believe a protocol was produced by RSCB in 2006 on safeguarding children and young people from CSA/E,⁵⁷ and we obtained a later version of the protocol (2010), which covered additional CSA/E-related issues. However, our evidence suggests the protocol was not widely shared and it was only specifically mentioned to us by one subject officer, a DS, who had worked in Rotherham PPU.

SYP had working agreements with the Rotherham Missing Children and Young People’s charity SAFE@LAST and it also worked with the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), in Sheffield, until 2010.

⁵⁷ We could not find a copy, but it was possibly based on another document, apparently written by the Risky Business manager and the SYP strategic intelligence analyst who had previously produced problem profiles for SYP. This touched on what CSA/E was which included ‘forms of prostitution’, and procedures around tackling it.

Learning from survivors' experiences

This section is about the 'voice of the survivor' and also the challenges they faced being listened to by SYP and in sharing their experiences with us. It covers what survivors⁵⁸ told us during our investigations, providing a clearer picture of opportunities often missed by SYP to better safeguard children and young people. It also amplifies the importance of the College of Policing's continued action in embracing the formal recommendation⁵⁹ we directed at the police training centre last year that puts survivors' experiences at the heart of its CSA/E training and working with police forces to replicate this locally.

In this way we expect important CSA/E issues will continue to be brought to the surface to contribute to police officer and staff's understanding and awareness of these terrible crimes, which, in particular, includes the impact they have on survivors. There is no doubt that speaking out to us about their experiences and disclosing very distressing, intimate and personal details was a challenging time for survivors and sometimes came at a high personal cost.

'Although it's been a very hard journey to justice, I'm finally starting to see the light at the end and looking forward to moving on to the next chapter' – **a survivor regarding criminal NCA investigations**

'I am just thankful the IOPC got involved and listened to us' – **a survivor**

The legacy of what happens to a CSA/E survivor runs deep. Sheila Taylor MBE, CEO of the charity NWG Exploitation Response Unit⁶⁰ recently told us that the long-term effects of CSA/E can include any number of issues.

⁵⁸ Many of the complaints we investigated under Operation Linden were from survivors, who were all females, however the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013](#), refers to the existence of files of ten boys who were groomed and abused by a lone male, prosecuted and sentenced in 2007, and a further seven files of boys/young men who were his alleged victims.

⁵⁹ In our *Operation Linden – learning and Recommendations Report* (November 2021).

⁶⁰ A charitable organisation focussed on child exploitation and trafficking within the UK.

The impacts on CSA/E survivors



A mistrust in authority/
South Yorkshire Police



Impact on family
and other relationships



Trauma through
repeatedly having to
share their stories



Persistent fear
of abusers



Mental and physical
health issues



Criminal record
because of CSA/E



Recollection of events



Feelings towards
perpetrators

A disproportionate number of CSA/E survivors have experienced domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, suffered post-traumatic stress, and other mental health problems.⁶¹ Instead of being viewed as victims of abuse and exploitation, young people were seen, in the past, by some police officers as consenting individuals who chose to be in the 'relationships' they were in.

⁶¹ [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013](#), page 43.

Eight issues survivors told us about

Throughout our investigations some common experiences emerged that survivors told us about, and these are summarised below. They ranged from an understandable mistrust in authority, through to fearing perpetrators, to long-term health issues.

Mistrust in authority

Throughout our investigations, many survivors expressed a deep-seated lack of trust in authority. Survivors explained how they:

- were disrespected by SYP as victims
- were not safeguarded and, consequently, ended up substance abusing and having sex with older men
- did not tell anyone else about their abuse because of past experiences with SYP who they believed failed to safeguard them

Family members, as well as survivors, felt let down by the people they expected to protect them and frequently expressed disbelief at the police's failure to respond to what was happening. One survivor described officers watching when they and their friends were in parked cars with older men, smoking cannabis and drinking alcohol.

Many survivors and their families only recognised in hindsight that they should have received better treatment.

What we were told by survivors:

'I have never trusted the police since. I just think there is no point from my experience I had when I was younger.'

'I will never forget [DC X] for as long as I live. She was horrible and her attitude was very abrupt.'

Trauma through repeatedly having to share their stories

Although sometimes they received support from the police and other agencies, and an investigation led to their abusers' prosecutions, survivors told us that dealing with many professionals and being involved in a court case was in some ways worse than what happened to them – having to repeat their stories, relive the experiences and have yet more people knowing about their lives.

What we were told by a survivor:

A survivor described in detail how distressing a court case was, especially as it followed a lengthy police investigation where they were not supported. Their feelings of distrust towards the police eventually extended to other criminal justice agencies,

and the judiciary, 'I realised all of them were going to try and stop this trial going ahead, no matter what'.

Persistent fear of abusers

Perpetrators can maintain a hold over survivors for a long time after they have grown up and moved elsewhere, and, through associates, even when away from them in prison. Our investigations showed us that this was particularly the case when survivors had children by their abusers. One survivor was sexually exploited from the age of 12 and continued to be exploited by one of their long-term abusers when they was 18. They had a child by him. Social services helped the survivor move to a women's refuge far from Rotherham, but he found the survivor there. The survivor eventually left the country to escape him.

Survivors may remain fearful of a perpetrator(s) despite them being convicted of CSA/E-related offences. Their fears can be compounded by a persistent distrust of the police.

What we were told by a survivor:

A survivor told us how they felt about investigators and prosecutors involved in a police operation who could not tell them what evidence they had against some perpetrators, 'They also told me that they could not do anything to keep me safe, so I said that if they weren't going to support me I did not feel that I could make a statement. I didn't feel that they were taking it seriously enough.'

Mental and physical health issues

In some situations, survivors have sadly considered, or attempted, suicide. One survivor told us they never felt able to return to the house where they were living in after they had been raped there.

Low self-esteem put some survivors at increased risk of being vulnerable to CSA/E and this was exacerbated by SYP's response. We found, in some cases, survivors were vulnerable to CSA/E because they were growing up in circumstances likely to affect their physical and mental health, such as family breakdowns. Sometimes they also had existing mental health issues such as anxiety and eating disorders, or self-harmed.

One survivor visited a doctor about their memory problems and was told they might be suffering from a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. They had flashbacks from the time they lived at the home of a woman who possibly facilitated their exploitation. As a result of her poor physical health they had to have regular check-ups.

What we were told by survivors:

'I blamed myself entirely for the years of sexual abuse. On top of this I was told repeatedly by the police that I was responsible for my own actions... I hated myself...

I believed throughout my childhood that I was a target for abuse because I was ugly as well as evil’.

A survivor who finally withdrew their statement after hearing it was unlikely that a lengthy police investigation would result in a successful prosecution told us, ‘I went home and had a complete mental breakdown. I was taken into hospital for several weeks’.

Impacts on family and other relationships

Some families of survivors might already have been known to the police for different reasons and this contributed to dismissive attitudes from officers, adding to survivor and family mistrust of people in authority. Parents spoke to us about their frustration with SYP’s response to combatting CSA/E, and how they addressed the problem of children being persistently MfH. Officers, they recalled, would just attend the home of the survivor who had gone missing, take down a report and a photograph of their child, and leave. They told us that police dealing with their child who had returned home saw it as just a formality and this led to them not opening up about where they had been and/or what they had encountered whilst missing.

Criminal record because of CSA/E

The coercive nature of CSA/E was not always considered by the police when responding to survivors’ behaviour, instead they just viewed the survivor’s actions as criminal. We found instances of survivors:

- being arrested because of criminal activity, often directly connected to their exploitation
- being drunk and disorderly after being given alcohol by older men
- assaulting other survivors (often instigated by their ‘boyfriends’)
- fighting with parents and siblings
- shoplifting and carrying out vandalism
- being forced to carry and deal drugs for perpetrators

Survivors with convictions on their record, wanting to apply for a job, or visas to travel, could be prevented from doing so. Many survivors missed school and their education was badly impacted, further limiting their future work opportunities.

What we were told by a survivor:

Officers ‘basically put us down on paper as prostitutes’.

Recollection of events

Difficulty recalling specific, historic, incidents was a common issue for many survivors. Our investigators were sometimes asking survivors to recall events from 20 or more years’ ago and the abuse and disruption in their lives often made it difficult for them to recall exactly when and where things happened.

Feelings towards perpetrator(s)

Although they had the courage to make a complaint to us, some survivors still appeared to have feelings towards their perpetrator(s).

What we were told by a survivor:

One survivor told us that, at 13, they did not really know what was going on, and may have been given drugs at the time. They described 'feeling loved' by their abusers, wanting to protect them and being made to feel grown up.

The challenges survivors faced being listened to

Police engagement with survivors

One survivor unsuccessfully tried three times, between 2008 and 2011, to get SYP to investigate a rape they reported, aged 16. They told us that an officer in 2011 'was not as harsh' as the officer they had spoken to in 2009. However, given the poor attitude of the officer in 2009, this may not have provided the survivor with an accurate benchmark of what to expect.

Many survivors did not realise the implications of making a formal complaint about police conduct and that it would involve an in-depth, formal and lengthy investigation. It could take a long time for a survivor to recognise, and accept, that what happened to them was sexual abuse or exploitation before they were ready to tell their story or come forward.

Other challenges affecting survivors' sharing of their experiences

We sometimes identified witnesses, during our investigations, who we strongly suspected were CSA/E survivors but who never disclosed and reported an incident and may not have even realised they were a CSA/E survivor.

We tried to contact all survivors to offer the opportunity to speak to us, even if they did not want to be formally interviewed or provide a witness statement. We also tried to reach survivors through home visits, special delivery letters and text messages.

We sometimes had to put an investigation to one side if a survivor's health problems meant they could not, at that time, engage with us about their complaint.

Where a survivor's welfare could be significantly impacted, when sharing detailed recollections of what happened to them, we always considered alternative communication methods, such as asking questions in writing if that would make the process easier for someone.

Unfortunately, in some cases, we could not engage with survivors who we had lost contact with because of them moving home.

Survivor confidentiality

To maintain survivors' confidentiality we had to be mindful that:

- some survivors, and their families, remained in Rotherham and might know one another, but were still unaware they each had CSA/E experiences, or had each complained to us
- a number of survivors, who were either complainants or witnesses, or sometimes both, could be related – we could not assume this meant they had talked together about their experiences
- survivors could be estranged from siblings or friends who had also been sexually exploited, and we had to manage each survivor's investigation separately as a result, and carefully where individuals' accounts overlapped
- some survivors were not willing to share everything about their CSA/E experiences⁶²
- there could be issues between survivors – during one of our investigations some survivors were reluctant for us to contact estranged friends.

Our Operation Linden – Survivor Survey findings

It was important for us to fully understand CSA/E survivors' experiences of contact with the police, other professionals, and ourselves, and to improve the way complaints about the police, involving non-recent CSA/E, are investigated by us. We also felt that it is important for SYP and other professionals, to see how contact with professionals, including SYP officers, has impacted on survivors throughout their lives. The impact of CSA/E on a survivor, at the time and long-term, is often acknowledged, however the impact of investigations, interviews and hearings is something that can be overlooked.

In 2020, we asked 35 survivors/family members, (who were still in contact with us following the conclusion of their IOPC investigation), who had made complaints to us, to complete a survey. Eleven people fully completed, and two partially completed, the survey.

Ten of the 11 individuals had some contact with SYP over the period they were being sexually exploited.

⁶² One survivor kept diaries, but their solicitor was understandably reluctant to hand over copies to our investigator because they detailed much personal information. Instead, the solicitor reviewed the contents and reported there was nothing relevant to our investigation.

Of these:

- one found the police friendly and helpful, two were confident officers were there to help, two felt they were given the opportunity to talk about what was happening to them and two felt able to do so
- seven felt they were being an inconvenience or a nuisance as far as the police were concerned, and seven felt the police were reluctant to get involved.

We asked what stopped survivors from telling the police that they were being sexually exploited. Of the 11 survivors who responded:

- nine did not think they would be believed, and seven did not realise, at the time, that they were being exploited
- seven did not trust the police, four were scared of them and three did not want to go through an investigation or trial
- eight were scared of the perpetrators, seven were fearful that perpetrators might harm their friends or family, nine did not think the police could protect them
- five had mental or physical health concerns that affected their ability to talk about what was happening
- none said it was because they did not want their family to know about their experiences.

When asked if they had met any SYP officer or civilian staff member who they might have felt comfortable to talking to, none of the three survivors who answered this question felt they had.

One respondent said that 'no one was to be trusted', adding that how could anyone in the police be trusted 'when they treated us like child prostitutes and troubled children'.

Another respondent said during a review meeting that an SYP child protection officer made it 'clear to me I was a bad child. I was also choosing to be a bad child and I was fully responsible for my own actions'. They said they were told they should be put in a secure unit or detention centre to control their bad behaviour, and that this might be the 'shock to the system' needed to sort them out.

We also asked if respondents had been involved in any criminal investigation into CSA/E offences that the police had carried out at the time. Four replied that they had. Of these four respondents:

- none felt they had been treated fairly or kept informed about what was happening during the investigation
- two felt the police did not believe them, and three thought no action would result from the investigation
- three found the officers they dealt with neither polite nor friendly, and three felt they were not given the time to talk properly about their experiences

When asked if they received any support during the police investigation, or any resulting trial, three respondents said they did not. One described a lengthy investigation during which 'the police never referred me or offered any form of support'. Their survey feedback showed that this affected their confidence to proceed, and they withdrew their statement.

Another survivor described constantly having to chase the police for updates and being interviewed by a detective who 'seemed to lack common knowledge of child abuse laws and particularly what constitutes rape'.

They were also concerned by the officer's failure to ask questions relating to their care records which referred to them being seen with older men while drunk.

We also asked about the impact of our own investigations in the survey.

Of those that responded, seven felt it had affected them 'a great deal', and two 'a fair amount'.

Many had been affected by other investigations by the NCA or bodies such as RMBC.

One respondent felt all the organisations they had encountered were 'exactly the same' and 'working hand-in-hand to prevent justice'.

Some felt making a complaint to us had been worthwhile. One survey respondent said they had 'got the answers and support I should have got from the police'.

Others recognised our investigators had tried to get to the bottom of their allegations but found the whole process too much on top of their previous experiences.

We also asked what improvements respondents would like to help stop CSA/E.

Police listening more, greater awareness and understanding of CSA/E were key themes.

'[CSA/E victims should not] receive the bare minimum, at least not be dismissed, not belittled and humiliated, and not made to feel like a waste of time and space. I would like the police to receive training given by people who have been involved in both CSA/E and police negligence so they can see the impact they could have on people's lives'.

'Treat survivors with respect... don't look down at them as a minority... treat that child like you would want your child to be treated in a situation we were once in and many more are still in'.

Many felt forces should ensure officers have the knowledge, authority and direction to be more proactive in tackling CSA/E.

Better support and protection for survivors were also consistent themes. One called for the police to support survivors 'and actually investigate, don't keep evidence hidden', and to 'do their job and protect the victim whilst punishing the perpetrators – not the other way round'.

One respondent suggested police should actively seek and act on feedback from complainants.

Respondents also felt other agencies should listen more, including to each other, to obtain a joined-up picture and ensure better communication. Training involving survivors was seen as a way of improving understanding amongst the police and other agencies.

Survivors wanted to see more professional curiosity. One survey respondent said if there is the slightest risk a child is in danger, or being exploited, 'get to the bottom of it... that's your job – raise awareness, keep it in the public eye... If you get a little piece of information and you don't think it's enough, explore that information more because you will be surprised at what you find'.

One survivor felt some perpetrators were not arrested because they were Asian, and because the police feared accusations of racism. Another survivor said 'CSA/E will never stop but what they can do is help prevent it' adding that it 'doesn't matter the race it's just a colour'.

Our survivor engagement work

Our investigators initial contact with survivors was through their solicitors. This was intended to avoid ‘yet another organisation’ contacting them about their experiences. However, this arm’s length approach made it difficult for us to fully establish a proper rapport with survivors. Solicitors also told us that sometimes survivors were struggling and needed additional support.

Survivors found it traumatic revisiting events during our independent investigations, particularly after being involved in police criminal investigations against their abusers, and others, by the NCA. We had some form of contact with 75 survivors up until August 2020. Of those, 21 were witnesses. Two more survivors came forward to us recently (in 2020 and in 2021).

How we engaged with survivors

In 2015, we put in place a Witness Information Survivor Engagement (WISE) manager, and this was after we had identified it would be beneficial to have a full-time professional available to survivors as a single point of contact.

Shortly afterwards (in 2016), we implemented a WISE Strategy that considered what our investigators knew from their previous dealings with survivors, survivors’ feedback, and advice from others working for agencies tackling, and with an interest in, CSA/E. And, although the complaints were different in nature, colleagues working on our investigation into the Hillsborough disaster⁶³ shared with our investigators useful advice on how best to engage with a large number of complainants.

This Strategy has underpinned all our work to date, and ensured we always adopt a ‘survivor first’ approach to our investigations. The IOPC’s Survivor Engagement Manager (SEM) team was established in 2016 and is part of our Directorate of Major Investigations (DMI). The SEM team ensures survivors, and their families, are supported during investigations and signposted, or referred to, appropriate support. It advises our investigators on the best ways to engage with vulnerable people and is an important resource for understanding CSA/E.

In 2017, the SEM team’s role was expanded to offer support to all IOPC colleagues carrying out investigations involving vulnerable witnesses and survivors.⁶⁴

⁶³ The [IOPC Hillsborough investigation](#).

⁶⁴ This might include drawing up a personalised plan for a survivor to acknowledge that each survivor has a specific experience(s) and often this can result in complex needs. Plans can include a risk assessment and a care plan. SEM team members help and advise investigators to prepare for interviews and visits to potentially vulnerable people. They involve other agencies in our work, where this is appropriate, and signpost survivors to local and national support services.

Ongoing communication and support

When we receive a survivor's complaint, we immediately refer the individual to the WISE manager, and SEM team, whose first checks include whether the individual has had independent professional support and/or is known to the NCA. Where this is not the case, they consider the best way of approaching the survivor and how to explain to them what support they might benefit from, for example from the ISVA service.⁶⁵

We have, and continue to give survivors, who did/do not feel ready to speak to us straight away,⁶⁶ a letter explaining how our WISE manager, and specialist team, could help them, along with a leaflet about our role and how we conduct CSA/E investigations.

Our investigators contact survivors directly only after agreeing the approach with the WISE manager and their team leader.

For Operation Linden, those survivors who felt they were able to engage with us said they would feel more empowered if they were kept regularly informed and given choices – such as where and when investigation interviews took place, and how these were conducted.

The WISE manager met those survivors who wanted to, before an investigation interview, to discuss what they could expect, and to check whether the survivor wanted additional support that we could arrange.⁶⁷

We sent survivors monthly updates about the progress of investigations relevant to them, told them about planned media briefings, and about our plans for this report. We also organised several media briefings on Operation Linden's progress.

Sharing final complaint outcomes

Anyone who complains to us receives a detailed investigation final report/outcome letter with our findings. Once all interested parties have received their copy, we publish our findings' summary on our web site, unless there is a risk that a survivor's identity, and that of their families, cannot be protected.

For Operation Linden, we hand-delivered a personalised, explanatory letter⁶⁸ with a report covering the individual's investigation(s) and had a face-to-face conversation

⁶⁵ We were able to refer survivors to this support with their agreement.

⁶⁶ Some survivors preferred the contact to continue via their solicitor or a support worker, including an ISVA.

⁶⁷ This included an ISVA. While taking statements from family members, some explained to us that they felt like they had limited support and our response was to have a conversation with them about their needs and, later, refer them to appropriate specialist support, for example to PACE UK.

⁶⁸ The survivor letters included a summary of the complaint, an explanation of how we reached our conclusions and the outcome(s), how we carried out our investigation, what types of evidence we considered, who we spoke to for the investigation along with any identified learning and next steps.

with the survivor to explain our key findings. This was particularly important as some investigation reports were as long as 80 pages and could be complex.

Unfortunately, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic delayed our plans to hand-deliver some of these letters and meet survivors in person, however, our relationship with the ISVA service meant we continued to be updated on survivors' wellbeing and alerted to whether they wanted to 'meet' online with us.

Working with other agencies

Throughout Operation Linden we worked closely with other agencies⁶⁹ to gain from their existing relationships with survivors, and to try and streamline processes to minimise any distress.⁷⁰

During the early stages of Operation Linden, we often worked in partnership with SYP because several survivors who had complained to us, or who were witnesses, were also involved in SYP's Operation Clover whose objective was to tackle perpetrators, still remaining in the local community, to protect survivors.

⁶⁹ Primarily with ISVAs and the NCA. We learned a lot from ISVA and NCA safeguarding teams about how they worked with survivors for other police Operations – the NCA has its own victim engagement officers who work alongside ISVAs to help survivors through the prosecution process. Our engagement work included Barnsley Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Service that has a specialist team of ISVAs.

⁷⁰ We were aware that some survivors did not fully understand our role and had just been advised to complain to us by their solicitors, so we had to work carefully to not confuse and overwhelm them at a time when they had just felt able to come forward and speak about their experiences.

The outcome of complaints made to us

We have stayed in contact with survivors, where this has been possible, to ensure they are updated about the outcome of their investigation(s), and before any details are shared more widely. **We have taken the decision not to publish information relating to survivors, and their complaints, where, despite our best efforts, we have been unable to contact an individual to explain to them the final independent investigation outcome.**

Complaint

This complainant made two separate complaints about SYP's response to CSA/E. The complainant told us that she notified senior police officers in 2004, and 2006, that young people in the Sheffield area were being sexually exploited, raped, and trafficked to other areas in the UK for sex by groups of males.

The complainant told us that SYP did not act after it was told about the scale of CSA/E in Sheffield, following a presentation by Social Services about the problem, and had been given potential victims' and perpetrators' details (2004), and that it refused to discuss resourcing a special police operation to tackle CSA/E, despite earlier receiving the intelligence (2006).

Following our investigation, we concluded that SYP's inaction towards dealing with Sheffield's problem was a missed opportunity but that this stemmed from a lack of understanding and awareness of CSA/E at that time.

We also found that:

- there was no easy way for SYP to share policing issues and intelligence widely across the force, leading to intelligence never properly being analysed and used later to help secure convictions
- the decision not to allocate resources to a police operation, before the intelligence had been assessed using national intelligence standards, was sound

For these reasons **we did not uphold the complaints.**

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited by a convicted CSA/E perpetrator⁷¹ from 1999, when she was 14, to 2002.

During this time, the survivor was frequently MfH. They were in care as a 'looked-after child'.

This survivor made three separate complaints to us comprising ten specific matters against individual officers as well as the force. This resulted in four subject officers being identified, although one had since passed away.

The survivor reported that SYP did not deal properly with information that could have led to a CSA/E perpetrator being prosecuted earlier for their crimes. **We upheld this complaint.**

The survivor reported that SYP did not take safeguarding action despite officers regularly stopping a car she was a passenger in, that was owned and also occupied by a perpetrator. **We upheld this complaint.**

The survivor told us that they specifically recalled one PC talking to them, when they were in a custody cell and had been arrested. They said the PC implied that they knew the survivor was the CSA/E perpetrator's 'girl' and that, as a result, not to worry as they would look after her. The survivor also said that, on another occasion, she saw this same PC buying steroids from a CSA/E perpetrator.

The officer denied these allegations. Our decision maker concluded that the survivor and the officer were credible witnesses and therefore it was appropriate to **find a case to answer for gross misconduct**, allowing for a misconduct hearing to independently determine what happened. However, the officer had resigned from the force before the end of the investigation – meaning that, under the regulations in place at that time, they were not required to attend a misconduct hearing.

The survivor also reported that SYP did not investigate a CSA/E perpetrator after they were found half-naked in a bedroom with him. **We upheld this complaint.**

SYP records showed officers had searched and found the survivor, hiding under a bed in a friend's house, after they had been reported MfH. It was unclear from the notes whether the survivor was undressed.

Police officers arrested the survivor for possession of a truncheon to enable them to take the survivor to safety and speak to them about the incident more easily. However, the officers involved said they did not have enough evidence in the end to arrest the perpetrator, and, instead, passed their concerns onto the PPU. We found no evidence that these concerns were ever followed up.

⁷¹ They were later convicted as part of SYP's 2013 Operation Clover.

We also **upheld** the survivor's report that SYP did not respond appropriately in a child abduction case which ended with the survivor being handed over to officers by the CSA/E perpetrator as part of a 'deal' not to arrest him. We found no evidence the police ever issued the perpetrator with a child abduction warning notice, or harbouring notice, or that there were any specific concerns about the perpetrator's welfare.

We found SYP knew the perpetrator's name and address and the incident happened with the knowledge that the survivor had been found with the perpetrator on several occasions in the past. We identified that the incident was not fully recorded by the force, or added to its intelligence system, nor shared with other agencies.

The survivor reported that SYP's dealings with them were not in line with appropriate policy and guidelines. **We upheld this complaint**, noting especially a general failure by SYP to properly record information about the CSA/E risk to the survivor.

The survivor also reported to us that SYP did not respond to breaches of a non-molestation order they took out against a CSA/E perpetrator. We **did not uphold this complaint** because there was insufficient evidence. It seems the survivor obtained this court order in late 2001 after a CSA/E perpetrator had assaulted and threatened them but we found it had not been retained by the legal firm that made it, given its age, and there was no other recorded information we could find about any possible breaches.⁷²

It was not possible to fully explore the survivor's complaints that:

- police gave them a photograph of a CSA/E perpetrator from their records and, in doing so, breached data protection legislation
- that police behaved inappropriately towards the survivor while on duty

This was because the relevant officer had since died, and there were no witnesses or an audit trail allowing us to determine whether or not a picture had been printed from police computer systems.

A PC and DS in specialist child and adult protection roles were the subjects of our investigation into two further allegations made by the survivor about events in 2013, when they said they were approached to give evidence for Operation Clover after telling a social worker they had experienced CSA/E.

The survivor reported that they were told by a PC that it was impossible to guarantee their safety and that of their family's while they lived in Rotherham. They also said

⁷² This investigative action was completed before the General Data Protection Regulation legal framework was implemented. Before GDPR implementation, individual solicitor firms should have had data privacy and retention policies. As a result, the survivor's solicitor had destroyed records in line with their policies which was after seven years.

they could not tell the survivor what other evidence the police had against a particular CSA/E perpetrator until they gave a formal statement.

We found that in 2015 the force's PSD conducted a misconduct investigation into the above and found the constable and a detective had breached police standards of professional behaviour. The outcome recommended 'management action'.

Our conclusion was that the PC had **no case to answer** in relation to the survivor's allegations that had not been previously looked into by the PSD.

The survivor reported to us in their complaint that a DS recorded their conversation during a visit to the survivor's home, then pushed the survivor to make a formal complaint to try and prevent them talking to the press. They told us that the DS later made threatening comments after a news story was published and did this in an attempt to prevent the survivor making reports about individual officers to the press.

The DS's account to us, and notes they made at the time, indicated that the visit was pre-arranged to see if the survivor would make a formal complaint so that the police could start an investigation, and that it was also to offer reassurance about confidentiality and personal safety. The DS said the conversation about the media was intended to alert the survivor to any potential risk posed to a future trial. The social services CSA/E lead who also attended felt the detective had spoken out of concern for the survivor.

Our decision maker concluded that the DS had **a case to answer for misconduct** because, although it seemed there had been no intention to act in a way that might offend the survivor, their specialist role meant they should have been more aware of their responsibilities and behaviour in the situation. We felt 'words of advice' would be appropriate.

Complaint

This survivor was regularly reported MfH from 2002, aged 10 years old, and they were sexually exploited from age 11. The survivor was in residential care for some time.

They made a total of nine complaints, only one of which we upheld – that SYP failed to investigate MfH reports made by their mother and care home staff in line with appropriate policy and guidance at the time.

We found delays and inconsistencies in how officers had responded, including not always carrying out enquiries to trace her, or conduct 'returned home' interviews to discover where the survivor went.

We did not uphold two complaints about the police not responding, after the survivor's family received phone threats and despite them receiving information from Risky Business about survivors at risk of CSA/E.⁷³ This is because we found evidence that SYP did respond appropriately.

Two other complaints from the survivor related to threats the survivor received, and offensive social media posts, in 2010 – we found these incidents were recorded by the force, and harassment warnings were issued, and arrests made.

One particular complaint made which we did not uphold was due to human error which did not amount to misconduct. An officer had incorrectly believed human rights legislation meant they could not accept a list of men's names taken by Risky Business from the complainant's mobile phone. It appears these details were added to SYP's intelligence system by another officer a couple of months later.

We could not find evidence to properly consider the survivor's following complaints:

- the police intimidated their mother when she asked a local paper to run a news story about her missing child
- no action was taken towards a perpetrator the police, and other agencies, knew the survivor was associating with
- an officer made an inappropriate remark about the complainant at a meeting
- officers who stopped cars the survivor was in with older men never asked for the survivor's personal details or took any safeguarding action

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 2004, then aged about 14. They made three complaints, one of which overlapped with one from another survivor, leading to us jointly investigating the two together.

The survivor reported to us that, in 2008, two PCs found them at a house with some older men, along with another survivor (the other complainant), who had been reported MfH. They arrested the other survivor then took this survivor home.

We found sufficient evidence, including witnesses and notes, to conclude that these two subject officers had **no case to answer**, and this was because they had called on colleagues to take the survivor home, which demonstrated appropriate safeguarding.

It seems one of these officers gave the survivor advice about their personal safety at night and asked what they had been doing. Both survivors were later interviewed about the incident and said nothing of a sexual nature had happened at the house.

⁷³ This particular survivor was not on this list, possibly because she was over 16 at the time.

The complainant's further complaints were against the force generally. They said that the police often saw them in Clifton Park with their abusers but took no action to protect them. The survivor also complained that SYP promised them home security measures, such as a panic button, when some of the perpetrators returned to Rotherham on their release, but that this did not happen.

We did not uphold either of these complaints.

Based on intelligence gathered from police operations which focused on Clifton Park from 2004 to 2008, the survivor's school and social care files plus additional evidence we uncovered, it seems the CSA/E risk to the survivor was not known to SYP or other agencies which included Risky Business, and that this remained the case until 2008. We found the survivor's personal security was discussed in 2011 and window alarms installed at their home, with more security checks done in 2012. Our evidence suggests a range of professionals, including the police, were involved in ongoing efforts to safeguard the survivor and respond to their concerns.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 1999, aged 13, by two CSA/E perpetrators who were later convicted. They made two complaints:

- that SYP had enough information to realise they were at risk but took no action
- that police officers, who came into contact with them, did not follow appropriate SYP policy and guidelines

These complaints related to the police response to two separate incidents involving a CSA/E perpetrator. The first involved another survivor who was a passenger in his car, and the spraying of CS spray over the survivor. The second incident involved a gun that was pointed at the survivor, another survivor, and a CSA/E perpetrator, whilst in the perpetrator's car that was being chased by two vehicles.

The survivor recalled being interviewed by officers who took a statement following the first incident, and that they asked why the survivor was present at the other incident, but the survivor recalled no actions were taken as a result.

Police records show that the survivor was attacked with hairspray at a shopping precinct in August 2000.

The survivor told us that they had been fearful about telling the police, amongst other things, that the spray was actually CS spray because this could have got a CSA/E perpetrator into trouble. It appeared that the survivors involved in the incidents felt unable to disclose they were being exploited and/or did not recognise themselves as CSA/E survivors at the time.

We found that SYP had intelligence indicating the survivor was at CSA/E risk, and that they were amongst the survivors discussed at a June 2000 strategy meeting about a CSA/E perpetrator, but that there was no evidence of any police safeguarding action taken.

We did not uphold these complaints because there was no evidence the officers involved in the ‘hairspray’ incident breached expected standards, and they arrested the survivor who carried out the assault as expected. We could not find any police records, or any other evidence, that the car chase and gun incident had been reported to the police.

Our decision maker did note an **organisational failing** in that the survivor’s association with a CSA/E perpetrator was shared at meetings but not recorded on SYP computer systems.

Complaint

This survivor made two complaints.

They told us that SYP failed to give their parents appropriate advice when they repeatedly reported the survivor MfH.

From 2009, the survivor would often go missing with their older sisters who were known as possible CSA/E victims.

We did not uphold this complaint because police records indicated that officers acted in line with policies at the time, including talking to the survivor’s family about where they might have been and possible risks, searching for the survivor, and conducting ‘return to home’ interviews. They also made referrals to social care and shared appropriate information at multi-agency meetings. Child protection conferences about the survivor and their family, and discussions about out-of-area care placements went ahead. We were unable to engage with the survivor’s mother to check whether they felt they received the right advice because she chose not to engage with our investigation.

The survivor’s second complaint was that no convictions resulted from Operation Chard, based on disclosures made by the survivor’s older sisters about some older men who had sexually exploited a complainant. **We did not uphold this complaint** because we found evidence that SYP conducted a substantial investigation, including taking a witness statement from the complainant, as well as arresting and interviewing 15 perpetrators.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 1992, aged around 11 or 12, and made five separate complaints.

They complained that officers did not follow the right procedures when removing her from a CSA/E perpetrator's house in 1992. The survivor also complained that officers did not act appropriately when another man was questioned on their return from a trip with him in 1994. This included considering any intelligence that might have suggested at the time that he had sexually abused children.

The survivor told us that the force did not do enough to 'prosecute' the men who exploited them, or to obtain a disclosure from them about the sexual abuse, and that they could have been referred to skilled officers. The survivor further alleged that officers who responded to a 1999 assault they reported, did not take appropriate action, or follow the right procedures, when they told them their assailant had possession of a firearm.

We upheld these four allegations despite being unable to identify a large amount of evidence from SYP's records and this was because we did find evidence from other sources including from witnesses. We felt that, on the balance of probabilities, given the circumstances, SYP did not take appropriate action including not involving suitably trained officers. We could only identify one named police officer who had been involved in these incidents but found insufficient evidence to consider whether they had conducted their duties properly.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint that officers, who dealt with an incident in around 1997, did not take appropriate action when the survivor was pushed through a glass door and injured their leg, requiring stitches. This was because the lead investigator was unable to identify any records, or information, that referred to this incident.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from around 1998, aged 13. They made two complaints, with some slightly overlapping those made by another survivor.

The survivor complained that the police did nothing after approaching a parked car which the survivor and their sister were sat in with a CSA/E perpetrator. According to the survivor, the officer left them with the perpetrator, despite them giving their names and ages to the officers, and the CSA/E perpetrator mentioning that they had just had a sexual act performed on them by one of the survivors. **We upheld this complaint** because, although we found no specific record of this incident, this particular perpetrator was later convicted of two indecent assaults (including this one) against the survivor's sister.

The survivor's second complaint was that SYP generally failed to investigate suspicious activity, or prevent CSA/E, and in particular took no action after they and two other survivors were taken by a CSA/E perpetrator, and an associate, to a flat in Sheffield where several men sexually abused them. We decided **we could not uphold the complaint** because there was no evidence to indicate SYP knew about the flat or what had happened. It seemed the survivors did not tell anyone at the time about what had happened and only later felt safe enough to disclose details to the police.

The complainant only raised these two complaints with us. However, as part of our terms of reference we looked at what SYP knew about the survivor and known perpetrators. The evidence indicated although the police might not have had a full picture of the CSA/E risk to the survivor, SYP did not do enough given the information it had, which included other agencies' concerns that had been raised to protect the survivor. Also, the survivor's guardian told us that she was asking officers for help and raising concerns about older males, who the survivor was associating with.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited, aged 15, by two CSA/E perpetrators from 2000. They made two complaints about specific incidents.

They complained that the police missed safeguarding opportunities, including when a traffic officer stopped a CSA/E perpetrator's car, when the survivor was alone with him, but did not request the survivor's personal details. The survivor told us they were unsure what the police officers said to the CSA/E perpetrator, because they chose not to speak in English (the officer was described as Asian), but that the survivor got the impression they knew one another.

We upheld this complaint but were unable to identify the officer the survivor described.

Whilst we found no evidence in police records relating to this incident, there was no evidence to the contrary of the survivor's recollections. Despite the survivor not disclosing they associated with a CSA/E perpetrator to the police, or their mother, after going MfH, we felt that officer, at the time, had a duty of care to speak to the survivor, check on their wellbeing, and later record the incident appropriately as intelligence.

The survivor's second complaint related to SYP being aware of the risks the survivor faced from a second perpetrator (when they were 18), but that they took no action.

Two police officers spoke to the survivor in hospital after they had been attacked by this perpetrator. The survivor said they disclosed 'everything' to the officers, including

their fear of a perpetrator, who had previously tried to stop the survivor reporting an act of violence. The survivor did agree to give a formal statement shortly afterwards, but the same perpetrator then warned off the survivor, and, as a result, they told the police they no longer wanted to make a complaint.

We did not uphold this complaint because our evidence showed that the police did take action. A CSA/E perpetrator was interviewed but denied common assault. The attack was recorded as a crime, and, although it was also recorded that the survivor did not want to pursue the case, a link to the CSA/E perpetrator and assault was linked on searchable police systems. We found intelligence records about the CSA/E perpetrator's association with the complainant, and other survivors, plus concerns raised about him by social services and children's homes, but we found no evidence any of the survivors had made formal complaints.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from around 2003 and was frequently reported MfH. They made complaints, relating to one specific officer, who was a PC in a child protection role, and was made a subject in the investigation.

The survivor complained that the PC failed to do enough to help them between 2003 and 2006, highlighting two specific incidents – that the officer left the survivor at a woman's home where the woman was believed to be involved in grooming and exploitation, and that the complainant and another survivor were discovered locked in a house, and found in poor physical condition during a council house eviction.

We found evidence the PC attempted to build trust with the survivor (who was 16 at the time, and whose own account suggests they did not want to engage with the police) and attempted to get the survivor removed from the woman's home at least once. It seems officers, including the PC, carried out 'safe and well' checks on the survivor whenever they went MfH, in line with appropriate legislation. We did not discover evidence of any eviction.

We concluded that the subject officer had **no case to answer** but felt that their **performance was unsatisfactory** because they seemed unsure of their powers and were inconsistent in the safeguarding actions they had taken. SYP dealt with this officer by way of words of advice.

A summary of the further nine complaints reported by the survivor to us against the force were that:

- The survivor's father spoke to someone the survivor described as the 'chief constable,' (at a later date, the survivor's father referred to this individual as a chief inspector). We could not confirm who this person was, including their rank, but as we were told by the survivor's father that the officer had told him

this had been going on for 30 years and the police could do nothing because of racial tensions. **We upheld this complaint**, as even though it was not possible to identify the officer, on the balance of probabilities on the basis the father confirmed the conversation took place

- SYP was aware of suspects involved in CSA/E from the mid-1990's and, despite this, failed to adequately deal with the perpetrators, leaving the survivor exposed to abuse. **We upheld this complaint**, as we believed more positive action could have been taken by SYP and that opportunities were missed
- The survivor said they were befriended by an older woman who introduced them to older Asian men who sexually abused them. The survivor's mother reported to the police an incident of the survivor being sexually exploited by an older man and the survivor would often go missing for long periods of time and was known to be at the address of the older woman. **We upheld this complaint**, as the survivor identified they were only ever spoken to by the police in front of the older woman and were unable to say how they really felt
- The police discovered the survivor, aged around 13, in a house with an older man, and the police left the survivor at the address after they told the police they did not want to return home. **We did not uphold this complaint**, due to insufficient evidence to support the complaint
- The survivor's father went to the same house to try and recover the survivor but was turned away by police and threatened with arrest, and to stay away from the address. **We did not uphold this complaint**, as we identified evidence concerning a potential breach of the peace
- The survivor's father also recovered the survivor from a car park after being notified by the police of the survivor's whereabouts. There was no follow up action despite the survivor attempting to discuss their situation with the police. **We did not uphold this complaint**, as the survivor was unable to provide any details relating to this incident
- The police wanted the survivor to become an informant and offered them shopping centre vouchers to do this. The survivor met police at a local McDonalds and provided information but received no vouchers. The survivor was not accompanied by an adult and was 15 years old. **We upheld this complaint.**
- The police took insufficient action to prevent the survivor from harm. **We upheld this complaint**, as we believed that more positive action could have been taken by SYP to protect the survivor.
- In February 2005, whilst in local support service's accommodation in Rotherham, the survivor was driven to Bristol by two Asian men, together with another survivor. They were left at a Bristol car auction/dealership premises after refusing to engage in sexual activity. After telephone contact with Risky Business, the survivors were collected and taken to a police station. The survivor told us that Risky Business paid the return train fare to Rotherham and that the survivor was not contacted by SYP about the incident. **We upheld this complaint**, as we obtained evidence that demonstrated the survivor was taken to Bristol.

Complaint

This survivor made four specific complaints, and we upheld one of these, which was that the police took no action after their sister disclosed, in 2008, that she was being sexually exploited and had provided the mens' details. We found no evidence of a substantial investigation or safeguarding measures implemented in response to the disclosures. It seems from police records that, although the survivor's sister did not feel able to make a formal complaint, the information she provided including perpetrators' nicknames, locations, and partial car registrations, was used for SYP's Operation Carbine.

We did not uphold the complaint that, in 2007, SYP failed to act on the survivor's parents' concerns about them and their sister going MfH, as well as being picked up by Asian men. Our evidence shows the pair were unable to give the police the perpetrators' car registration numbers, and the only car registration number record we found were made by care home staff and an officer actively sought out and questioned the driver. We did find reports on SYP systems of the survivors being MfH, and about other non-related incidents, however, this was not related to CSA/E.

We did not uphold the complaint that SYP did not respond to reports (in 2008) that the survivor, and their sister, were at risk because of frequenting a taxi office and takeaway while MfH. From the little evidence available, we identified officers did follow policy when the survivors were reported MfH.

We did not uphold the complaint that no perpetrators were charged, despite the police saying perpetrators would be, after a further CSA/E disclosure by the survivor and her sister in 2010. We found that SYP conducted a comprehensive ten-month investigation, named Operation Chard, took safeguarding action, and arrested and interviewed 15 perpetrators. The CPS did not authorise any charges.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 1995, aged 11, to 1999, repeatedly went MfH, and mainly lived in children's homes. **They made four complaints about SYP and its officers; we were unable to uphold any of these** because of insufficient evidence.

Three of the survivor's complaints related to an unnamed SYP community officer who they said took no action after they told him about the sexual exploitation they had experienced. He did visit the care home where the survivor lived, and they told us he saw them drinking and taking drugs with older men.

The survivor complained that the community officer failed to safeguard her and behaved inappropriately towards another complainant and other residents of the

home, buying them cigarettes and being overly friendly towards the main perpetrator. The survivor further complained that after they told care home staff they had been sexually assaulted, in 1998, by an officer, the same person was tasked with taking them for a medical examination but, instead, warned the survivor off taking the assault further and persuaded them to drop the case.

We did not uphold the survivor's fourth complaint, about the police's inaction regarding an incident in 1995 when they said officers found them with another survivor, naked, and at the other survivor's 'boyfriend's' house. The first care home record of the survivor going MfH was not until 1997. And the other survivor, mentioned as being involved in the incident, who was a witness in our investigation, could not recall the incident.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 2000, aged 11, and was frequently reported as MfH. They gave birth aged 13.

The survivor made **six complaints, but we could not uphold any of them** based on the evidence we found and following the death of an officer. SYP appeared to have followed appropriate policy and procedures, albeit there were gaps in police records which meant that we could not review all the specific actions taken.

The officer whom the complainant identified as having taken no action after they were found locked in a house by their abuser, and again stopped them after they were reported MfH, had since passed away.

A second named officer was involved in two of the survivor's further allegations, namely they did not attempt to establish who the father of their baby was after being given details of five perpetrators, and that threats to harm the survivor and the child were ignored.

We found that the individual did arrest the five men for statutory rape, and obtained DNA samples, but that none were a positive match. It was unclear to us whether the complainant was offered enough support and properly updated on progress, although the survivor's mother felt the survivor had been. We found SYP discussed threats it was told about, with the complainant, and a resolution was made.

We did not uphold a complaint that the police informed the survivor's mother, who had reported the survivor MfH, that they would only be able to advise the survivor to return home if they saw her. We could only find one recorded incident of when the survivor returned home, and this was of their own volition after being missing for a short time.

The remaining complaint concerned a much older Asian man who had engaged in sexual intercourse with the survivor, but we were **unable to uphold** this allegation. We found that the police had arrested the individual and interviewed him, that he denied any physical contact with the survivor and was not a positive DNA match for the survivor's child. The police were unable to take any further action based on evidence.

Complaint

This survivor made two complaints about how SYP responded to their report of a sexual assault in 2003 when they were 14. These complaints included eight specific reports and we identified five subject officers as a result. **We did not uphold the survivor's overarching complaint**, that SYP officers did not follow appropriate force policy and national guidelines for investigating CSA/E and safeguarding.

We did not uphold the complaint that SYP wrongly classified rape as 'unlawful sexual intercourse', resulting in no full investigation being undertaken. The survivor had also reported that the force did not take into account the offending history of the 'sexual assault' perpetrators, but we found no evidence amongst SYP's records, or those of social services, to suggest the men had previously committed similar sexual offences. The survivor's report was recorded on the police's Crime Management System (CMS) as rape and investigated but filed as 'no crime' after the survivor withdrew their support for the prosecution case.

After considering the police's actions, **we did not uphold the survivor's complaint** that investigations were not conducted thoroughly and objectively. **We did not uphold the survivor's further complaint** that the police did not consider the survivor's age at the time of the sexual assault they told us about, and that this had had an impact on the decision not to take the case to court. Our evidence showed that SYP had acted to ensure all those named by the survivor were identified on police systems as being connected to undetected sexual offending crimes, for future reference.

We concluded that SYP had not dealt inappropriately with the survivor, and her family, and this included their concerns about the investigations. Therefore, there was **no case to answer**.

The subject officers identified during our investigation were the PC, who initially dealt with the report of rape, the CSA/E officer who supported the survivor at video interview and accompanied them to meetings, the DS in overall charge, the DCI who took the decision that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute the men for sexual assault, and the DC who seized clothing for evidence (that was later lost). We concluded **none of these officers had a case to answer** for misconduct, but that the CSA/E officer would benefit from words of advice because of unprofessional comments they made.

Complaint

This survivor made **four complaints, one of which we upheld**. This was that there was police inaction following the survivor's disclosure in 2008 that they were being sexually exploited and had provided details to the police relating to the exploiters.

We found no evidence of a substantial investigation or any safeguarding measures after the disclosure. It appeared that the formal complaint was not recorded on police records but that the information, provided by the survivor, was used to inform Operation Carbine.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint that, in 2007, SYP failed to act on their parents' concerns about them being MfH, and that they were picked up by Asian men, despite the survivor giving the police the perpetrators' car registration numbers. Although we found relevant reports on SYP systems of the survivor going MfH, and about other unrelated non-CSA/E incidents, the only registration numbers that had been recorded were by care home staff. There was also a record about an officer actively seeking out, and questioning, a car driver. Our evidence showed that the police responded to the survivor's parents' reports by providing appropriate advice.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint that SYP did not respond to reports in 2008 that the survivor was at risk when frequenting a taxi office and takeaway after going MfH. The evidence we gathered for the investigation showed officers followed appropriate policy and this included looking for the survivor, carrying out referrals, and raising their concerns about the survivor, including discussing a possible response(s) at multi-agency meetings.

We did not uphold a complaint that no perpetrators were charged following the survivor and her sister's further CSA/E disclosure in 2010, despite the police saying this would happen. We found that SYP carried out a comprehensive ten-month investigation (Operation Chard) and took safeguarding action and arrested and interviewed 15 perpetrators. The CPS did not authorise any charges.

Complaint

This survivor made four separate complaints about SYP's response to incidents in 2007, when the survivor was 13. We treated one DC as a subject officer and the other individuals we were able to identify as witnesses.

We **upheld** the survivor's first complaint about the DC's response to a crime report made by their mother. We found the DC did not take the opportunity to gather evidence, such as clothing, that could be used in the future should the survivor feel able to come forward themselves to the police to make a formal statement.

This was linked to her complaint that a DC also tried to discourage her from making a complaint against perpetrators. We decided the DC had **no case to answer**. This was because there was insufficient evidence showing the DC dissuaded her from making a complaint.

We could not identify a specific incident the survivor reported as happening, involving the police warning the survivor's mother of the consequences of locking them indoors to prevent them seeing their abusers after the survivor became aggressive. This complaint was **not upheld because of lack of evidence**.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint that the police showed no concern for their welfare, leaving them to walk home alone in the early hours, and after they had attended an incident where the survivor and a taxi driver had got into an argument. There were insufficient details for us to carry out a full independent investigation following this complaint.

The survivor's final complaint was that the police did not help when they called 999 to report their bag having been stolen at knifepoint and that they had been sexually assaulted on their journey home. **We did not uphold this complaint**. Our evidence included looking at the police's response to the emergency phone call. We found there was no record of a sexual offence reported to the police, although a bag theft had been recorded. We spoke to people the survivor knew and their parents, who were all involved in searching for the survivor, including checking local hospitals, and those who visited the survivor on their return home the next day, due to, as reported by the survivor, having stayed overnight with a friend.

Complaint

This complainant made three allegations, against a Chief Superintendent and a Police Inspector. They reported that SYP did not do enough with specific information, passed to it from Risky Business, about young people who were at risk.

The complainant reported that the chief superintendent was verbally aggressive towards them in an unprofessional way, and accused them of falsifying data, and also closed down key players' group meetings to stop sensitive information being divulged, criticising Risky Business staff for 'guesswork and speculation' and breaching perpetrators' human rights.

The complainant also reported that the inspector took no action in response to information they supplied concerning CSA/E in the Rotherham district.

We concluded that on the evidence available the officer had **no case to answer for any of these allegations, due to both insufficient and unclear evidence**.

Complaint

This survivor's three complaints were about separate incidents over a three-year period. They all related to their attempt to report a rape to police when the complainant was aged 16 (2008).

After the rape, the survivor went to A&E and hospital staff called the police. The survivor was too scared of the perpetrator to make a formal report of rape, stating at the time that the sex was consensual, and the two officers who interviewed the survivor said they could make a complaint later if they changed their mind. We found that these officers followed correct procedures. This included the CSE officer sending a 'concern for child' referral to Rotherham PPU. However, we felt that the PC who made further enquiries **had a case to answer for misconduct** because we found there was no evidence of further contact with the survivor, that no case conference had been organised regarding the individual, nor had intelligence been recorded as a result of what happened, to reflect that the perpetrator was a registered sex offender who had been warned to stay away from the flat where the rape took place. This officer was due to retire but received words of advice before leaving the force.

In 2009, the survivor learned the same perpetrator was in prison and felt able to arrange, through a hostel worker, an interview with the police. We found evidence the survivor initially spoke to a Sheffield PPU officer, who referred the case to CID, in Rotherham, where the offence happened. The survivor reported that the officer who spoke to them there was dismissive, rude, and aggressive, and told the survivor that there was nothing the police could do. We were unable to identify this person from evidence we had but concluded, if we had been able to, then we would have served a notice **for gross misconduct**. We could find no record of the survivor's visit to Rotherham police station or what was said between the two.

The survivor tried to report the rape again in 2011, this time to a specialist sexual offences support officer at SYP's Apollo Unit, but the survivor said the unit was unhelpful. **We upheld this aspect of the survivor's complaint.** Although we were unsure who the survivor spoke to and confirmed the Unit did not make decisions about whether an investigation should go ahead, we felt the level of assistance and support that was offered was below the standard that was to be expected.

Complaint

This survivor made three complaints about incidents in 1999, when they were aged 13 or 14 and regularly MfH.

Although we believed that the survivor was being sexually exploited, we did not have enough evidence to uphold their complaint about two officers, who said to the survivor's mother when the survivor returned home after being missing, that they could not take any action unless they were given perpetrators' names and an

account of what had happened, and that this was said when the survivor clearly appeared disheveled and in pain. We established the incident date from the survivor's diaries and medical records but were unable to identify the officers.

We upheld the survivor's complaint that the police did not do enough when they, and another survivor, ran away from two men who were being aggressive and followed them by car. At the time, the survivors were spotted by an off-duty officer who drove them to a police station and told colleagues what had happened. We identified the off-duty officer (now retired), and although they would not engage with us, the fact that they decided to intervene in the situation suggested to us that the survivors were clearly scared. We found no evidence of any further police action and therefore investigative opportunities were missed.

We did not uphold the third complaint, that officers should have known something was wrong, and intervened, when they regularly saw the survivor, and others, in parked cars with older Asian men, taking drugs, drinking, and playing music. Without the dates of specific incidents and details of police officers, we did not have evidence to properly assess the police responses.

Complaint

This survivor made four complaints about how SYP dealt with a man who sexually exploited them from 2001, when they were aged about 15. The perpetrator was convicted for drug trafficking in 2005.

The survivor told us that the police failed to stop the perpetrator offending, although he had been involved in CSA/E from the mid-1990s and Risky Business had passed on information about him. **We did not uphold this complaint** because of a lack of evidence. We could not tell if a letter by Risky Business to a social worker about the survivor had been shared with the police, or if a referral had been made to them. The letter named the survivor in a list of other young people in inappropriate relationships and noted the survivor was pregnant by the perpetrator and had moved in with him, although there was no mention of any safeguarding concerns. The survivor had been discussed at multi-agency 'key players' meetings in 2001 as being at risk of CSA/E.

The survivor's second complaint was that the police were called to domestic violence incidents, including one when the survivor needed hospital treatment, but that they took no action. **We did not uphold this complaint** because we could not find, amongst others, any police, or medical records, about any incidents, nor any police criminal records connecting the perpetrator with this survivor.

We were also **unable to uphold the survivor's complaint** that the house they shared with the perpetrator was under surveillance (regarding other possible offences) and, that when officers had witnessed anything concerning regarding CSA/E or domestic abuse, they should have acted. Our evidence included

information that the perpetrator had been prosecuted by another force, and SYP provided intelligence for this, but we could not find any further details about this because records did not go back far enough.

The survivor's fourth complaint was that an officer dismissed their mother's concerns after reporting the survivor MfH in 2001, and that they also commented that an Asian boyfriend was like a 'fashion accessory' for young girls. **We did not uphold this complaint** because we could not find any record of the MfH incident.

Complaint

This survivor who frequently went missing from the care home where she lived and was sexually exploited by a man who was later convicted under Operation Stovewood. The survivor made four complaints.

We did not uphold two complaints that SYP failed to safeguard the survivor from CSA/E, and especially from their main abuser's taxi driver friends. We found that, while the care home noted some incidents of concern, it was not always clear what, if any, details were passed to SYP. It appeared that where information was passed to the police it was recorded as intelligence. We identified officers who spoke to the survivor several times, including about injuries, but that the survivor did not feel able to disclose what had happened to them and declined a referral to Risky Business. SYP brought criminal charges against the perpetrator after care staff reported the perpetrator showed the survivor, and someone else, pornographic images.

We also investigated a specific allegation that a DS and a DC failed to investigate a report of rape by the survivor in 2007 and retracted it the next day. We decided the officers had **no case to answer**, but we recommended that the DC's performance was unsatisfactory which was addressed **by way of words of advice**. This was because we found that the DC had not taken into account the full intelligence picture about the survivor and had not interviewed the perpetrator before releasing him because the survivor retracted her statement.

The survivor complained that two PCs, who responded to an incident at the children's home, did not arrest their assailant because they were an asylum seeker. We concluded the officers had **no case to answer** because police records seemed to show that the survivor was satisfied, at that time, with an apology from the other resident after the police spoke to all parties involved. The officers, however, did not submit a crime report and, because of this, we recommended they receive **words of advice**.

Complaint

This survivor made two complaints. They were a looked-after child from a young age, frequently went MfH, and was sexually exploited from 2005, aged around 13 years old.

The survivor reported that police did nothing to protect them from CSA/E, especially whilst they were in care and MfH, and that SYP took no action when they associated with older men in Clifton Park, despite knowing the park was a CSA/E 'hotspot'.

We upheld the survivor's first complaint because we found the police actively recorded concerns they were at risk of CSA/E from 2005 but did not investigate a number of incidents they were aware of. The police response to MfH reports about her were inconsistent.

We did not uphold the survivor's second complaint because we could not find any records linking them to the park, and it was also not mentioned as a possible place to search for the survivor by care home staff who reported them missing. An officer with the safer neighbourhood team that policed Clifton Park said it was not particularly identified as a place of CSA/E concern until 2008.

Complaint

This survivor made four complaints about how SYP dealt with their reports of familial CSA.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint that a male relative was not properly investigated in 2000 after allegedly abusing the survivor between the ages of 11 and 15. We found that the investigation was proportionate, despite some aspects that could have been done better which were probably down to the PC's inexperience. As a result, we concluded there was not enough evidence to recommend performance proceedings for the officer, along with their supervising PS, and the DI and DCI.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint that the police did not respond to their numerous reports, from 2010 to 2015, that the same man was harassing and threatening them. We found police records about two incidents where, in each case, the SYP call handler offered the survivor safety advice and alerted local patrol officers to what was happening. The evidence showed officers did not speak to the man under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 because they may not have constituted an appropriate or required level of harassment, in order to issue a warning.

We upheld the survivor's other two complaints that the police disclosed personal information about them during a 2010 investigation into abuse of another survivor by the same man, and that when the survivor formally complained about this, they were assured the officer responsible would be reprimanded but that the survivor was not

advised this had happened. We found evidence of the breach, which seemed to us to have been unintentional but should not have happened. However, we could not confirm the officer's identity. We could not find any record of the survivor's complaint, or that anyone had been reprimanded.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited by a network of men from 2003, aged 12, until 2007, when social services moved them out of the area.

The survivor's main complaint was that SYP was aware of the CSA/E committed against them but did not protect them or do enough to stop the perpetrators. Our investigation focused on the police investigation of a rape report the survivor made against several men in 2007, and our conclusion was that we felt this was not conducted thoroughly.

We concluded that a DC, in charge of the investigation, had **a case to answer for gross misconduct**, which included not following available lines of enquiry. We found no evidence that the survivor's sexual offence reports had not been recorded as crimes.

We decided three other officers, involved in tasks related to the same case had **no case to answer**.

The survivor also complained about the police investigation into a rape report they made in 2003 or 2004. We found no evidence that the survivor had reported an earlier offence to the police, and we felt that this suggested the survivor might have been referring to the incident in 2007.

Much of survivor's exploitation happened in Clifton Park, and their final complaint was that SYP was aware of CSA/E activity there from 2003 onwards but did nothing to disrupt it. We were unable to find any evidence to support this complaint and **therefore could not uphold it**.

Complaint

This survivor made three complaints via their solicitor, and we were unable to engage with them directly as they did not feel able to meet us. Sadly, this survivor died in 2018.

Their main complaint was about SYP's inaction regarding men, known to the police, and who physically and sexually exploited them from the age of 14. The survivor provided specific details of the individuals whom the survivor described as their main abusers.

We did not uphold this complaint because we found evidence that the force had gathered intelligence about these men that formed the basis of Operation Forced. Our evidence also showed that officers responded to individual MfH reports and specific concerns about the survivor.

The survivor also complained that the police were called to a specific incident, where perpetrators took them to a hotel (along with a named friend) but took no action. In this complaint the survivor explained that the men had paid for the hotel room with fraudulently obtained credit cards which led to staff calling the police; that the men pressurised the survivors into having sex, and one perpetrator assaulted the survivor and the hotel staff had to intervene.

We did not uphold the allegation because we could not find any SYP record of the incident, although we are aware that this does not mean that the incident was not reported or recorded, and it could be that a record is no longer held of it.

The survivor's third complaint was that their foster carers, for a three-month period in 2001 – 2002 were aware the survivor was being exploited but did nothing. **We did not uphold this allegation** because our evidence showed that they had contacted social services when they became concerned there was a risk to the survivor of CSA/E.

Complaint

This survivor made seven individual complaints about SYP's response to their abuse by a network of men from 2009, when they were 16.

The complaint included the long-term impact the police's failure to protect them has had. **We did not uphold any allegations** due to insufficient evidence.

We found no recorded intelligence linking the survivor and two men the survivor named and, although the force was aware of the gang they belonged to, it had no intelligence about any connection to CSA/E.

The survivor told us that, when truanting from school, they regularly saw an SYP dog handler in Clifton Park, which the survivor said was well known as a place for CSA/E activity. They said the handler should have realised they were vulnerable but did not take any safeguarding action. We spoke to the police dog unit and park wardens but could not identify anyone, and we were left unsure whether police dog handlers used the park to exercise police dogs.

We found evidence to suggest officers did conduct a thorough investigation after the survivor reported a rape in 2011 which included arresting and interviewing the perpetrator. We considered a specific aspect of the investigation – that a potentially useful sample was not included with other forensic evidence sent for examination –

but were unsure the DC responsible for this had been made aware of its significance, and therefore we found they had **no case to answer**.

The survivor felt the police lost interest in pursuing their rape case once they learned of the survivor's medical problems, however, police records suggest that SYP sent a file to the CPS for review. SYP records showed that officers did make numerous attempts to update the survivor on the investigation's progress but sometimes the survivor was unavailable or did not feel able to speak to them. We identified a delay in the police informing her of the outcome.

Complaint

This survivor was a looked-after child, frequently MfH, who was sexually exploited from age 10. **They made seven complaints and we did not uphold any of them** because of insufficient evidence, which included witnesses unable to recall events dating back to the 1990s.

The survivor's overarching complaint was that the police knew about key perpetrators' CSA/E crimes, did not prosecute them for them, and did not protect the survivor in particular circumstances. We found no evidence any concerns about the survivor had been raised by social services until 1996, and these were in relation to other men. Although we could not uphold any of the survivor's complaints, we did question why an SYP rape investigation involved the survivor as a witness, and another survivor as a victim, and the reasons why this case did not proceed to court.

The survivor complained to us about police inaction relating to officers stopping a car for speeding the survivor was in, along with a CSA/E perpetrator, and, on a separate occasion, when police confiscated a perpetrator's knife they had in their possession when the survivor was also present. We found no evidence of any of these incidents, nor a further one they reported to us, about them needing hospital treatment after being assaulted by a CSA/E perpetrator.

Three of the survivor's complaints were about individual officers having unprofessional relationships with CSA/E perpetrators and committing sexual offences. In relation to this, we were unable to identify an officer the survivor said they exchanged packages and money with for a perpetrator.

We found no record of a 1995 incident when the survivor reported they were raped by a group of men with active encouragement of a police officer. They said they later recognised the same officer at an unrelated incident, but we found that the force's HR files showed no officer involved in any incidents relating to this complaint was employed at SYP before 2003 and therefore had joined the force after this date. The survivor also reported to us that a different officer took them from the care home at night, handcuffed them and raped them. We found no care home or police records of an incident, including the survivor being taken for police questioning.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 1995, aged 11, whilst living in a children's home and frequently being reported as missing. They made the following complaints – that the police had intelligence on key perpetrators but did not do enough to stop them, that on three occasions, the survivor was in a CSA/E perpetrator's car when he was approached by the police, and officers failed to safeguard them or investigate the incidents further.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint about police inaction regarding intelligence about the perpetrators because we did not find evidence about the force being aware of the perpetrator's links to CSA/E at the time – this only happened in 2000. They were only aware about their involvement in drugs.

We upheld the other complaints, although we could not find a record of specific incidents the survivor reported, identify individual officers, or establish exactly what police action had been taken.

Despite this, we found the survivor's accounts thorough, detailed, and credible, and concluded that the events happened as they described.

Complaint

This survivor was exploited by an older man from 2007, aged 14. They were a looked-after child, frequently reported MfH. They made five complaints about SYP but could only identify one specific officer they engaged with because of the non-recent nature of their reports.

The survivor complained that the police knew they were in a 'relationship' with their abuser, and that they were told later he was a registered sex offender, and the outcome was that police failed to protect them. **We did not uphold this complaint** as Police National Computer (PNC) records showed the man was not on the sex offenders register, and there were no records about convictions relating to sexual offences committed by the individual. We found evidence that, once SYP was aware of concerns the survivor was being exploited (in 2007), they actively engaged with the survivor and other agencies to address them. The evidence suggests Risky Business already had information about the CSA/E risk posed by this person to the complainant, and to others, but we could not identify if this had been shared with the police earlier on.

The survivor complained to us that, although SYP did later serve the abuser with abduction notices, it took no action when he breached them, including when officers found the survivor with him. **We did not uphold this complaint** because the evidence included records showing the police having arrested the offender for

breaches on numerous occasions, and the courts subsequently imposing conditional bail on those occasions.

The survivor complained that a female officer aggressively held them down, restricting their breathing, after they found the survivor at their abuser's home. The survivor also reported that the same officer, and a male colleague, used excessive force to handcuff and arrest them. **We did not uphold either of these complaints.** From the evidence available, including the survivor's interview with police afterwards, we found the survivor started kicking, biting, and throwing things when officers attempted to remove the survivor from the man's home. National, and SYP guidance, indicates that using handcuffs and the amount of force described by the survivor, could be considered reasonable in such circumstances. There was no evidence of any records detailing any injuries sustained by the survivor, supporting the amount of force used by the officers was reasonable. The survivor admitted assault and received a community order.

The survivor's final allegation was that SYP seized their abuser's phone and laptop that had content of a sexual nature that included them but, despite this, the police said they could not take any action because the survivor was not identifiable. **We did not uphold this complaint** because there was evidence the subjects of the images were clear to see. Although the survivor did not feel able to engage with SYP's investigation about this, the force found an alternative witness and produced a file for the CPS to consider.

Complaint

This survivor was abused from 1996, aged 11 or 12, until 1999. They spent some time in local authority care and was frequently MfH. They made six complaints about the police response, but we were **unable to uphold any of these** because of insufficient evidence.

The survivor reported that SYP took no action when it received information from Risky Business relating to the survivor being exploited by a CSA/E perpetrator's brother between 1995 and 2000 (they pleaded guilty to offences against the survivor in 2016). **We did not uphold this complaint due to insufficient evidence.** We found only one reference to the survivor in Risky Business' files which was on a social worker's contact sheet (2001). The first police intelligence about the perpetrator and their involvement in CSA/E was recorded on SYP systems in 2000, although not linked to this survivor. We found social care records indicating that the care home staff, where the survivor was living in 1996, were concerned they were associating with taxi drivers, but we were unsure if the police had been told this. In 1997, social care did tell SYP the survivor was in a 'sexual relationship' with a teenage boy, but no further details were provided, and this detail was insufficient to be logged as police intelligence.

We did not uphold the survivor's complaint that the police did nothing on many occasions after they stopped the abuser's car when the survivor was there, and failed to ask any questions, or remove the survivor when there had been earlier reports of them MfH. The survivor could not recall any specific dates, or locations, of these stop checks, or identify the officers involved. We found only two records of the perpetrator being stopped during the period the survivor said they were exploited, and this was for reasons unrelated to CSA/E. There was no mention of the survivor.

The survivor also complained that, although they were often reported MfH, the police only responded the first few times to reports. SYP could not provide MfH records from the 1990s, and although social care files did include dates the survivor was reported missing, we found that the police did find and return the survivor on occasions, but we could not tell whether their actions complied with appropriate policy because SYP was unable to provide the relevant documents. **We did not uphold this complaint.**

We did not uphold three further complaints about one incident in 1998. These were that the police used excessive force to arrest and handcuff the survivor, that a female officer assaulted them whilst the survivor was in custody in Sheffield, and that the survivor was told to make their own way home on their release. We could not find this incident in police records or be sure from the survivor's account and their social care file, whether they had been detained. Had the survivor been arrested, this would have been under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and they should have had, amongst other things, an 'appropriate adult' with them when they were interviewed. It was difficult to assess SYP's responsibilities on releasing her, but we felt, whatever the circumstances, it would have been good practice to have taken her home, either as a missing person or juvenile.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 1998, in their early teens, and was regularly reported MfH. They made four complaints, **all of which we upheld.**

The survivor complained that SYP knew the perpetrator was involved in CSA/E but failed to stop them. We found evidence the survivor's name was amongst others in CSA/E 'mapping' documents, and was discussed at strategy meetings from 2000, but it was not always clear to us how any information was recorded, shared and/or passed on at meetings, and this included when SYP had not attended.

The survivor also complained that police officers regularly saw them in cars of older men, but usually left them with them, sometimes in remote locations, unless the survivor had been reported MfH. A traffic officer told us they would frequently stop a particular CSA/E perpetrator and that he often had younger people with him but that they generally seemed older than 16. We found no evidence of any action taken against the men.

The survivor complained that sometimes when they were MfH, and found with older men, they were taken to the police station but without the men. They also said they were once put in a small room at the police station, which they described as a 'cleaning cupboard' and another time moved by 'riot van' from Rotherham to Doncaster and back when there was no room at Rotherham Main Street Station. This account was the same as one told by a family member who added that they found the police unhelpful in tracing the survivor when they went MfH.

A retired custody officer explained to us that it was normal police practice at the time to put children, who were MfH, in a custody suite at times when there was no other place of safety available, and that this was done for a short time as it was not regarded as best practice. **We upheld this complaint** on the grounds that it was reasonable to take a missing and vulnerable survivor to a police station if that was the only option, but we regarded it unacceptable practice to lock someone in a small room or transport a survivor in the manner described.

We also upheld the survivor's complaint that the police did nothing after approaching a parked car they were in, with another survivor, and a CSA/E perpetrator. Officers were told by the other survivor who had been present that the survivor had performed a sexual act on the CSA/E perpetrator. Although we found no record of this specific incident, this perpetrator was later convicted of two indecent assaults against the survivor, including this particular incident.

Complaint

This survivor made eight individual complaints about incidents that happened over a three-month period in 2000, when she was aged 14.

Five of these complaints were about SYP not acting to protect the survivor after they were sexually exploited by two men, after going MfH, and about the survivor moving in with a woman they told us was known by police to be linked to CSA/E. Among other things, the survivor complained that officers told their family, who repeatedly reported them MfH, that there was nothing the police could do to remove the survivor from the house and that they described her mother as 'a nuisance'.

The survivor's further complaints were about the police not recognising their vulnerability and safeguarding them when MfH, on other occasions, including taking them to the police station but allowing them to leave for home alone. On one occasion the survivor was arrested by police for criminal damage and being drunk and disorderly when in Rotherham town centre, but the officers failed to ask about the men the survivor was in company with.

We were unable to uphold any of these complaints, mainly due to insufficient evidence, including the availability of MfH and custody records. We either could not identify officers involved in incidents or they had since retired and would not engage

with our investigations. The survivor also found it difficult to recall specific details from long past incidents, making it difficult for us to be able to trace certain information. We found no record of police intelligence on the woman the survivor said they stayed with, although there was an anonymous comment in social care files that their address was used for 'prostitution and drugs'. One of the men who exploited the survivor did not appear on SYP systems until 2006 and was only later identified as part of Operation Stovewood.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 1999 to 2004. They regularly went MfH and came to the attention of social services and police in 1998 because of their offending.

They made two complaints. **We upheld the first complaint** that they were groomed and sexually exploited by a network of men, and that SYP did nothing to protect them despite the force knowing of some of the perpetrators' links to CSA/E. We found evidence that the survivor's connections to these men were discussed at multi-agency meetings, and as part of SYP's Operation Forced. An unidentified officer was also tasked with following up on information that the survivor became pregnant by one of the men, and the survivor recalled specific details of the perpetrators' cars.

We did not uphold the survivor's second complaint that SYP only visited them for information whilst investigating the men, between 1999 and 2000, but took no action to protect the survivor. We were unable to find any SYP intelligence that connected the survivor with the men, or records that identified the SYP officers contacting the survivor about an investigation regarding the men.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 2000, aged 11. They repeatedly went MfH and were involved with social services and referred to Risky Business.

We did not uphold some of the complaints the survivor made because of insufficient evidence. These included officers not taking the survivor home after they were found MfH, and the police's inadequate response after finding the survivor drunk and with older Asian men. The survivor also reported to us that two Asian officers bought them cigarettes on a couple of occasions, and that SYP knew of a man who tried to groom them and a friend (in 2002) but did nothing despite seeing them together on the street and in cars.

We found there was insufficient detail in SYP's incident logs to get a good picture of how officers responded to the survivor after they were found. Our evidence included concerns about the survivor and man's association being raised at multi-agency meetings, from 2004, but SYP was not alerted to the connection.

We upheld the survivor's third complaint about the same man, who was in custody for threatening the survivor in 2004. The survivor complained that police allowed the man to make a phone call from the police station and that he rang them, although their mother answered, and made further violent threats.

The survivor's mother's account of what happened was in the same vein as that of the survivor's. She confirmed the custody sergeant cut the violent call as soon as he realised who the perpetrator had telephoned, she said the sergeant then apologised to her. Social care records showed that SYP did gather evidence to prosecute the man for the initial threats, but we could not find any custody records, crime reports or intelligence on SYP's systems linked to the incident raised by the complainant.

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 2004, aged 12. They made two separate complaints.

The survivor complained that after they reported a physical and sexual assault to the police in 2007, and said they were reluctant to go to court to give evidence, the officer the survivor and their mother spoke to became angry and accused the survivor of time-wasting. They did not take down the report.

Based on the available evidence, **we did not uphold this complaint**. Police crime file records suggested to us there had been an appropriate police response to the report, and we found the officer had taken a statement, signed by the survivor and their mother. The statement included the survivor denying they had been sexually assaulted and claiming that they were 'very sorry' for any time they had 'wasted'. We do however believe the survivor's decision to revoke their complaint could have been because of fear or anxiety.

Complaint

The mother of a CSA/E survivor contacted the police in summer 2007 after their daughter disclosed they had been raped, aged 13, by an older man in 2006.

The mother made four complaints to us about this and SYP's response which we investigated. These all related to a PC who initially responded to the report of rape and who was later allocated the case by Rotherham PPU, and a PPU DI who was expected to support and supervise the PC.

We could not find any rationale for the PC to lead the case instead of the PPU that usually took responsibility for investigating sexual offences against children and

young people. There was no evidence that the PC received any support from the PPU.

The complainant stated that the PC appeared to have the intention of deterring her and their daughter from making a report against the perpetrator. The mother told us they felt that the PC was more concerned about the impact of an investigation on the perpetrator than the victim.

We discovered that the PC was, at the time, a probationary officer with 14 months' service and had not previously dealt with any sexual offence investigation. The complainant's daughter referred to the PC, within their statement, as saying, 'you do realise you could get him into serious trouble as this is classed as rape'. However, the officer did not recall saying this, denied knowing anything about the perpetrator before the report, and assured us their response to the survivor and their mother was intended to ensure they were certain they wanted to make a formal report.

We decided that the PC had **no case to answer** due to insufficient evidence about what exactly was said.

However, we felt that the PC had failed to effectively communicate to the survivor and their mother that what they wanted to formally report was serious. The officer should have been aware of this and therefore we identified that their performance was unsatisfactory, which SYP dealt with by way of words of advice. SYP, as the Appropriate Authority, suggested specific learning for the PC to develop their verbal and non-verbal communications in this type of situation.

The mother complained that SYP officers did not record the rape offence as a crime or conduct a thorough investigation in line with appropriate policies and procedures.

Our evidence showed that the PC did complete a PNC check on the perpetrator's previous convictions before submitting a report to the PPU, and that this was before being told to take ownership of the case with support promised from the PPU. When we interviewed the PC, they told us they did not conduct any further investigation work because they did not feel they had the right training or experience, or enough support, to do this

We decided that the officer had **no case to answer** – although we agreed the quality of the investigation was below the minimum standard expected, but we felt it would be unfair to expect a higher standard of work from an inexperienced, untrained officer.

We agreed with the Appropriate Authority that the officer had **no case to answer**, although it was unclear to us why they allocated a rape report to an inexperienced officer.

The mother also complained that she and her daughter were not updated on the investigation's progress, and this lack of communication meant they lost confidence in the police and decided not to continue with the case.

We found that the PC unsuccessfully attempted, five times, to contact the complainant over a six-month period, before visiting the family in early 2008. The complainant's daughter was not communicated with after this initial visit.

The complainant said they phoned SYP numerous times for a progress update but without any result. There was no evidence about the calls being made and the mother, when we asked, did not recall signing a statement withdrawing her complaint but accepted the signature in the PC's PNB was hers.

Given our investigation evidence, we felt that the PC had **no case to answer** but we suggested to SYP that the PC's performance was unsatisfactory and would benefit from **words of advice** in areas such as keeping victims informed and carrying out welfare checks.

We decided the DI had **no case to answer** because they could not be expected to micro-manage the PC, although their support or that of their unit (the PPU) might have led to better communications between the officer, survivor, and their mother.

Our decision maker suggested there might be a wider, systemic issue at SYP around effective case management. The AA responded that all its investigations of this nature would now be recorded on its Connect system within 24 hours of being reported, and that all victims could expect to be updated every 28 days, or more often, if they were identified as being vulnerable. The AA explained that changes had been made (2006) so that now regular supervisory reviews (every 28 days), and inspector reviews (every four months), should help identify if victims are not being updated properly.

The complainant's final complaint was that SYP provided inadequate safeguarding measures for her daughter after the report of rape had been made. We felt the complainant and the survivor (then 14), should not have been left for so long without any police contact, that opportunities were missed to put safeguarding and child protection measures in place and to conduct welfare checks.

However, we decided that the PC had **no case to answer**. We did note that the PC was inexperienced and lacking in confidence to proactively seek help, so we recommended training for them in the early identification of safeguarding arrangements, along with **words of advice** on the consequences of not making such arrangements to address the PC's performance.

We agreed with the AA that the DI had **no case to answer** on the grounds it was unreasonable to expect their investigation management responsibilities, at that time, to extend beyond the PPU where they worked. At the same time, the force accepted that some PPU safeguarding oversight had been needed because of the victim's age and vulnerability, and we felt if the DI was still serving, we would have recommended words of advice to ensure the same mistakes were not repeated in the future.

Complaint

This complainant made four complaints about how the police handled risk in relation to their daughter.

One complaint related to whether a search for their daughter was conducted properly after she had been reported missing before her murder in October 2010. Our investigation focused on a PC, two PSs, and a Police Inspector. The PC visited the complainant to take their missing daughter's details, the PSs supervised the search and identified risks at that stage to the missing girl, and the Inspector conducted a risk assessment review 12 hours after the survivor had been missing. One of the PCs had since transferred to another force.

We **upheld this complaint** because we found there was insufficient recording around the search and we found the search strategy lacking, along with planning and briefings/debriefings. As a result, incomplete, inaccurate, and contradictory information was recorded about the search.

We found the PC had **a case to answer for misconduct** and SYP, as the AA, decided that the PC's behaviour was unsatisfactory performance and this should be dealt with using management action following their move to another force. For one of the PSs, we found **no case to answer** but highlighted some performance which was unsatisfactory, which was handled by SYP using words of advice with a focus on learning. We found there was **no case to answer** for the remaining two officers.

We also **upheld the complainant's** other complaints. One related to the mother hearing about her daughter being at risk via social services as opposed to the police, despite the survivor being involved in SYP Operations. We concluded this happened because a breakdown in communications happened between the two agencies.

Another complaint was about SYP's inaction, such as a formal referral to social services, after her daughter was discovered by police at a house after they had responded to reports of a gunshot (in 2010). The survivor's safety was discussed at a multi-agency meeting shortly afterwards. **We upheld this complaint**, as we were unable to confirm whether a referral had been completed or not.

The mother's final complaint was about officers failing to recognise their daughter's vulnerability and therefore to submit 'concern for child' forms, to PPU, following incidents in 2008 (when the survivor was physically assaulted by their older sibling) and 2009 (when a man reportedly burned the survivor's stomach with a lighter while visiting the family home). This resulted in no auditable trail of concerns about the survivor that could have been shared with other agencies, for example, to better safeguard them. **We upheld this complaint**, as evidence showed that officers failed to submit the necessary forms related to these incidents.

Complaint

This survivor made nine separate complaints; some overlapped with complaints their mother made. The survivor, at age 13, was involved in Operation Central, and they gave evidence in a trial that followed and secured CSA/E perpetrators' convictions.

Most of the survivor's complaints related to specific incidents resulting from the Operation Central investigation, including how it was run and progressed.

The survivor explained that police did not respond immediately after their mother rang the police because they were MfH. They said their mother, and a friend, found the survivor at a nearby playing field being forced to perform a sexual act on a man who ran off when the survivor's mother shouted at him. The survivor stated their mother then rang the police, but that they did not respond immediately, and the first officer that arrived was aggressive and rude. **We did not uphold this complaint** because SYP records suggested there had been a prompt response, with only a slight, unavoidable delay, because the survivor's mother first contacted the children's home where the survivor was then living, and it was care staff who alerted the police to the incident. We found no evidence of complaints being made, at the time, about the officer's attitude or behaviour.

The survivor complained a PS and DS did not take them seriously when they handed four phones to them, which they said CSA/E perpetrators had given them. There was also a related complaint, and this was that police never charged the man the survivor's mother found abusing her daughter, and who was the owner of one of the phones. The man was later charged after they were identified by the complainant, however the man was found not guilty at court. Our investigation about this complaint concluded that the PS had **no case to answer**. We found that the DS would have had **a case to answer for misconduct** if they had still been serving but they retired before the new regulations regarding retired officers were put in place. We found the DC had **a case to answer for misconduct** regarding how the phones were seized, and we recommended a misconduct meeting be held for the DC. The outcome of this meeting was the DC receiving a written warning.

The survivor complained that when they reported being physically assaulted to the police in 2008, the PS told them that SYP were already aware of the perpetrator and had been for some time, and that the man's brother had also been investigated for child sexual offences (in 2002). The survivor said the perpetrator discovered they had spoken to the police and that this resulted in them being attacked once more, but no charges were brought against the perpetrator. The survivor also complained that their mother was not offered assistance or advice on keeping them safe from the men who were convicted in 2010 as part of Operation Central.

We concluded that had they still been serving, the PS would have had **a case to answer for misconduct** for not attempting to arrest the perpetrator after the first reported assault, or, at the very least, for not serving an abduction notice. We felt the other two subject officers had **no case to answer** because there was a delay

between the two separate assaults and when they received information relevant to the incidents. We thought the DS should face **unsatisfactory performance** proceedings for the way they handled material not used in evidence, but SYP, in its capacity as the Appropriate Authority, disagreed on the grounds the officer had since improved with their line manager's guidance.

The survivor also complained that the police offered no support or protection, nor took any action, when they moved out of area. Before any arrests were made under Operation Central, they and their family were threatened by the perpetrators, and faced further harassment on their eventual return to Rotherham.

We did not uphold these complaints against the force because we found no evidence to suggest the police did not safeguard the survivor and their family. Our evidence showed the police had 'tagged' the family home and the survivor's grandmother's address, so that any phone calls made from them would be treated as a priority. It also appears to us that the police were not told about the threats at the time.

The survivor said they did not receive enough advice or support from the police while involved in Operation Central.

We decided that the DS and DC, had **no case to answer** because their approach to engaging the survivors was the responsibility of all agencies involved, and not just that of the police. We identified one piece of evidence, raising concerns about SYP communications, about keeping survivors and their families updated on progress of the operation. This was from a meeting not attended by anyone from SYP. Our decision maker noted that the force had since worked with all staff on best practice and updating crime victims on the progress of investigations, in a timely way, and keeping records of communications.

The survivor also made a complaint about the police response to a threat they reported that they received via Facebook, in 2013. We decided the DC had **no case to answer** because they conducted an investigation, but they halted their enquiries into the source of the threats after receiving advice from a local authority employee who had incorrectly told them that it was not possible to find information about who had accessed the public library computer.

Complaint

This survivor gave evidence for Operation Central and made five complaints. We investigated one, together with another one from a different survivor because what they were complaining about overlapped. Another of the survivor's complaints was linked to a conduct matter referred to us by SYP.

The survivor complained that two PCs did not assess the risk to her, or take any action, when they found the survivor with an older man in a perpetrator's stolen car. He had indecent images of her on his phone. We found the officers had **no case to answer** because there was evidence they carried out an investigation, including having an expert examine the phone, and that they took appropriate safeguarding measures. One of these PCs was made a subject officer in one of our other conduct matters, involving this survivor, regarding information that they gave to the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) in 2012.

The survivor also complained that a DC and DS failed to preserve DNA evidence after they experienced a miscarriage in 2009,⁷⁴ and that they never arrested the man the survivor said they were pregnant by, enabling this man to freely move out of the area. We initially treated these officers as subjects of our independent investigation but there was no evidence that they breached any standards of conduct through their actions, so they were then treated as witnesses. Therefore, we **did not uphold this complaint**.

The survivor's sexual exploitation started in 2008, and they complained that the force should have done more to protect them earlier than they did, when they became a witness in Operation Central, because the officers were aware of the CSA/E risk to the survivor after they were sexually exploited in 2008. For this complaint we looked at, amongst other things, relevant incidents from the police call handling system, child concern referrals, multi-agency meetings' minutes, and police intelligence about the survivor where we found four entries concerning grooming and sexual activity. We noted that three men, who the survivor named as perpetrators, had records on both SYP and national systems, so were known to the police, however, they did not appear to have been served child abduction warning notices to warn them that they should not be with the survivor.

We upheld this complaint on the grounds that the force could have done more to gain a full picture of what risks of exploitation the survivor might face, identify risks, and put relevant safeguarding measures in place.

The survivor made a similar complaint against a Rotherham PPU DS. We found that this particular officer had **no case to answer**. Our evidence suggested they had no specific knowledge of the survivor, or the CSA/E risk to her, prior to December 2008.

⁷⁴ Healthcare and forensic professionals explained to us the process for collecting and handling this type of evidence. We found the detective had requested more than one forensic examination of the samples, but the experts told us there was a limited chance that material gathered at this early stage of pregnancy would help identify the father (who the survivor only knew by a nickname). The detective also arranged for the phone to be checked and identified an address in another part of the country for the man listed in her contacts and known by his nickname to the survivor. We found no record of the police visiting him, or any evidence they followed up information the survivor provided on his associates, workplace, and regular haunts.

The survivor's complaint, about two PCs taking no action towards three men they found in a house with them, when they were aged 13, overlapped with an allegation made by another survivor. The incident saw officers responding to a late-night call from a neighbour about 'noisy young children'. As a result, the officers visited the house, took down the details of people there, then realised the younger survivor had already been reported as MfH. It appears to us that they arrested the survivor for being drunk and disorderly, taking them into custody, but also submitting a 'child concern' referral that the survivor was the subject of a police strategy meeting the following week.

We concluded that the two PCs had **no case to answer**. We felt the incident justified further investigation, but there was nothing to suggest the two PCs could have done more in their response officer roles to immediately investigate possible CSA/E offences. Our evidence seems to show there was no recorded police intelligence on the three men, linking them to CSA/E, prior to this particular incident. One of the constables had recorded details of what happened on each man's intelligence record while also linking them to the two survivors.

Complaint

This complainant made a number of complaints to us. Some were linked, or similar to, allegations made by survivors who complained to us. Others related to incidents involving survivors who had not, at the time, complained directly to us.

One of the complaints we investigated separately became the basis for our investigation into SYP's response to 'problem profiles' that had revealed the scale of the CSA/E issue in Rotherham. SYP's response appeared inconsistent at a local level and lacked co-ordination.

Some of the broader complaints made by this complainant related to systemic issues we found, and these included:

- SYP's failure to make the most of information other agencies provided, including during Operation Central
- Poor multi-agency working, for example, not recording or acting on details shared at strategy meetings
- Missed opportunities to gather additional intelligence on key perpetrators.
- Insufficient resources allocated to tackling CSA/E
- Limited awareness, and a poor understanding, of CSA/E across the force and dismissive attitudes to survivors at risk, including those repeatedly going MfH

We identified 11 subject officers in relation to specific incidents (below), that happened from 1999 onwards, whose conduct contributed to the above.

The complainant stated that a DI knew how much CSA/E-related information was coming into Rotherham PPU but failed to act on this, and that the DI did not instigate further investigations based on these details. We found that the DI had **no case to answer**, as we found no evidence to support the suggestion that the DI was aware of specific information regarding CSA/E that the DI then subsequently failed to act upon. We accepted SYP's evidenced response, as the AA, that any unsatisfactory performance issues had since been addressed by further training and experience gained.

The complainant made five specific complaints against a DS. We found this officer had **a case to answer for gross misconduct** for not sharing key CSA/E-related information, including disclosures from professionals from other agencies, and associated links between victims and perpetrators with the right agencies for a response.

We identified the DS also had **a case to answer for misconduct** for not responding – by speaking to the survivor or trying to identify the perpetrators – to a 2009 support charity's (CROP's) referral which came about after a 15-year-old survivor disclosed a sexual exploitation incident. Instead, the officer made a further referral to social services, and closed the incident on police records. The officer could not recall why they decided to do this and agreed with us that there was nothing to suggest there were any other lines of enquiry that could have been considered. This matter was referred to a gross misconduct hearing, however it was found that the allegations were unproven and therefore the case was dismissed.

We decided from the evidence we had that the DS had **no case to answer** regarding a further three complaints that related to their inaction when they had information about a man later convicted of CSA, a youth worker suspected of inappropriate relationships, and about a police officer who may have been corrupt.

We found **no case to answer** but **unsatisfactory performance** against a PC who left out the names of three CSA/E perpetrators who had been identified from inclusion in National Intelligence Reports (NIRs), based on information from Risky Business in 2009. We concluded that this was a result of human error because the officer had previously submitted NIRs naming the same men.

We decided that a second DS had **no case to answer**. The complainant had reported to us that this DS failed to act in 2011 on a CSA/E disclosure, and secure potential forensic evidence (relating to a MfH case involving two survivors, aged 19 and 12). Our investigation concluded that opportunities for gathering forensic evidence would have been limited. The police were aware the older survivor had intimated something had happened to them, although this was based on information passed to them from Risky Business. Risky Business told the police that, on returning home, the survivor had intimated to someone there that something had happened to them, although not to the younger survivor, but did not feel able to tell anyone that they had stayed at a hotel with an older man.

We also found **no case to answer** against a second PC, who had specific MfH responsibilities. The complainant made three complaints against the PC which were:

- They had failed to investigate a report of rape and called the child victim a liar
- They had not secured evidence for a Risk of Sexual Harm Order, or generally conducted sufficient enquiries, after a survivor had gone MfH
- They acted inappropriately at a training event and offended a CSA/E survivor

Our evidence did not identify these reported failings. Two people directly involved in the latter allegation, who were involved in the conversation exchange, described it as being cordial.

The complainant made four complaints against a third PC (in a child protection role). Three of these were that the officer did not:

- properly record information from Risky Business about a survivor at risk
- explore investigative opportunities, or put safeguarding and evidence-gathering strategies in place
- follow appropriate policies and guidelines, and in 2014 failed to report allegations of abuse at a children's home, and instead shared details about this with the media

The fourth complaint involved a third DS and the third PC and was about them not respecting youth workers and CSA/E victims and their families, in addition to not being mindful of their dignity or treating them with fairness. We concluded the PC had **no case to answer** but that their performance was unsatisfactory as they failed to ensure information was recorded on the police system. We found the DS had **no case to answer**.

The complainant, and another professional, jointly made five complaints against an Inspector. They said this officer did not do enough with information passed from Risky Business, and from a 'mapping exercise' (2001), and 2005 'audit' report of young people, that all related to CSA/E. The latter had been discussed at sexual exploitation forum meetings because it raised issues about safeguarding CSA/E victims and included opportunities to further investigate and secure evidence regarding named perpetrators.

The complainants also said that the Inspector shouted and was verbally aggressive towards them, accused them of falsifying data, and that they stopped key players' group meetings to prevent sensitive information being shared. They said that the Inspector criticised Risky Business staff for their 'guesswork and speculation' and for breaching perpetrators' human rights. We concluded that evidence, largely drawn from minutes of meetings and witness accounts, showed the Inspector had not acted aggressively and therefore we found **no case to answer**.

Complaint

In 2015 this survivor complained that, aged 14, they reported to the police they had been raped at knife point. They said that they were interviewed by police, and afterwards, an officer dissuaded them from formally making a report. The survivor said that they never heard from the police again about the matter. Around a month after the report of rape, the survivor reported to the police that the same man had attempted to run them over because they had reported him for rape.

We investigated a DC in relation to the matter and for this we obtained SYP ProCAD records (between 2003 and 2015), which are phone call records of members of the public who have reported a crime. The only related report of rape or sexual assault we discovered was from January 2011 when the survivor's mother telephoned SYP to tell them their daughter had disclosed a while ago that they had been raped, aged 14. In February 2011 the survivor did report that the man attempted to run them over.

We considered information taken from the report of rape, including the transcript of the survivor's interview with two PPU DCs.

When we interviewed the survivor, they explained that, following the interview, the DC told her he did not think there was enough evidence for an investigation, but that he would do what he could.

We reviewed CATS records, where the DC, and their supervisor, said they recorded their enquiries relating to the reporting of rape. We found they included details of a conversation between the officer, the survivor, and their mother, and this included the pair telling the DC that they did not want to continue with the report. The DC had noted that he had told the survivor they could make the report at a later stage should they change their mind.

The supervisor, it seemed, advised the DC to contact Risky Business to ask if they could encourage the survivor to continue with making a formal report about what happened. The DC recorded the conversation with Risky Business, but they were unsuccessful in re-engaging the young woman. A Risky Business file also included notes about the DC's calls to them. The young woman's mother declined to speak to us, which meant we could not ask her if she recollected withdrawing the report.

After considering all the evidence, we decided that the DC had **no case to answer** because we felt that the DC's comments, as they were described by the survivor, could not reasonably be considered as dissuading them from continuing with a formal report. When the survivor withdrew their complaint, the evidence indicates that the DC sought Risky Business's support and their supervisor had recorded they were satisfied with the DC's actions.

During our investigations into the above we identified a conduct matter relating to one incident, where the survivor's parents called the force after their daughter came home after being missing and they found sexually explicit messages on the survivor's

phone. We found evidence that the initial response to this was by two PCs who seized the phone and noted the survivor's disclosure of 'sexual activity' with several young men. Afterwards they referred the case to Rotherham PPU where it was allocated to the DC.

Although, it appears the DC did not speak to the survivor alone, or arrange for the phone to be examined, supervisory officers raised no concerns, which indicated to us the DC's actions were accepted practice. We also considered what impact protocols and standards in place at the time should have had on decision-making around not to 'crime' the report of rape early on, or any decision to pursue the case without a formal complaint. On these grounds, we felt the DC had **no case to answer**.

Complaint

The mother of a survivor, who was a witness in Operation Central, made nine complaints about the force and six subject officers. One complaint overlapped with a separate one by their daughter.

One was about SYP's lack of communication with survivors and their families during Operation Central, meaning that they were not warned arrests would be made and were not told about the outcome of the arrests, later learning about this in the media.

Based on multi-agency strategy meeting minutes, held two years before the trial and arrests, concerns about police communications were raised once but SYP was not at the meeting, and it was not clear whether any issues were shared with them. Our evidence showed that social services were responsible for updating survivors and their families and that this was supposed to happen before any perpetrators were charged at which stage, a specialist witness care team took over. We noted that the police had to consider that the complainant was also a potential witness and therefore they did not want to give the complainant particular information that might prejudice the case. They also needed to consider the survivor's wishes about what details should be shared with their mother.

We decided that a DC and a DS, involved in Operation Central from early 2009, had **no case to answer**. We did suggest that, in future, officers should make detailed notes of the updates they provide to survivors, and their families, for a clear audit trail. We understand from speaking to SYP that this change has since been made.

The complainant made five allegations linked to them calling the police, after they and their friend saw her daughter sexually abused by a man in a local park in 2008. This incident prompted her daughter's voluntary move to an out of area care placement and their involvement in Operation Central.

The complainant stated that the first officer to arrive, following a call to the police after the incident in the park when her daughter had been sexually abused, was rude

to the survivor and physically rough. We decided to treat the officer as a witness. **We did not uphold this complaint** on the grounds we found no mention of unprofessional behaviour in our evidence, including in witness statements taken at the time, and in multi-agency meetings the following day.

The complainant made four specific complaints about another PC who dealt directly with the incident in the park and her daughter's move out of the area for her safety. They said they were dismissive and insensitive at a meeting the next day to discuss the survivor going into care, and also did not let the survivor pack clean clothes or allow them to see their daughter before they left.

The complainant said the PC was also rude and 'clever' and 'cocky' whilst taking their statement about the incident. She said that the PC suggested that her words, which the complainant used to scare off her daughter's abuser that night, could affect her credibility as a witness if they used the exact words in her statement (as they could be considered as racist). A further complaint was that the PC rang to ask the complainant's permission to retrieve the perpetrator's mobile phone which she kept hidden in her underwear, but did not offer the complainant, as an alternative, the opportunity to retrieve it herself from her daughter at the care home. The complainant also alleged that, although she gave the PC her friend's details, and had asked the previous DC and DS a few months later about them interviewing her friend, no one took a statement from her until one year after the incident.

In 2008, Operation Central began and the survivor became a witness in the operation. We considered the role of the safer neighbourhood team (SNT) PS involved with Operation Central before it was transferred to Rotherham PPU, at the end of 2008, this included the investigation into the sexual assault. We concluded that the PS had **no case to answer for any of these allegations** but would have recommended **unsatisfactory performance** proceedings for the PS for failing to take the friend's witness statement as soon as possible, but this was no longer possible as the PS was no longer serving with the police.

During the Operation Central investigation in 2008 the complainant gave two PCs notes from her daughter's room but, she told us, the police officers did not act on the information that included the names of survivors and perpetrators and descriptions of sexual activity.

We concluded that one of the PCs had not been further involved in any investigation and therefore had **no case to answer**. We decided the other PC had **a case to answer for misconduct** for not reviewing the information, and not including it in evidence given to the CPS. However, we felt the officer had otherwise followed correct procedures throughout Operation Central. There was no training requirement, and, because of this, we recommended 'management action'.

As a possible witness for the prosecution, while involved in Operation Central, the complainant was asked to participate in an identification parade (in 2009), and they complained to us that an officer they named stopped them speaking to their daughter

who was there for the same purpose. We found no evidence the officer, who has since died, was present on the day. Even if this had been the case, there would have been **no case to answer** because the correct course of action would have been to keep the two witnesses separate during a formal identification procedure.

The final complaint related to the four mobile phones originally seized from their daughter and returned after the Operation Central court case had finished. The complainant said the phones were given back by a DC who suggested she keep the one, they had noticed, that belonged to the perpetrator who abused her daughter. The complainant told us that they felt this remark indicated it had not been used as evidence in the trial. Our independent investigation found that all phones had been examined by SYP's high-tech communications unit. However, it seems that there were problems accessing this phone, leading to the Unit's examination report arriving under separate cover and not being included in the trial 'exhibits,' and therefore not sent to the CPS. We concluded that the phone's significance had not been fully recognised, and therefore not fully explored as evidence that could potentially be used by prosecutors. We found the DC had **a case to answer for misconduct**, and this progressed to a meeting, with the outcome being a written warning. The DS would have had a **case to answer for misconduct** for failing to provide appropriate supervision, however they had already retired.

Complaint

This survivor made three complaints. One they made directly to us and the remaining two were about two officers' conduct and came to our attention during another of one of our investigations about SYP's response to information provided by Risky Business.

The complaint addressed to us was that a DS did not record and investigate CSA/E incidents they disclosed in 2010 and 2011. We felt the officer had **no case to answer**, after evidence found demonstrated their actions were in line with SYP practices at the time, although this way of working did not always comply with wider national policing policy. For this reason, we would have expected a more detailed rationale for the DS's decision-making, but it was clear to us that they did not pursue the 2010 incident any further because there was insufficient evidence. They did file the 2011 rape report as 'undetected' because there were factors that would have undermined a prosecution case.

We decided that a DC had **no case to answer** for their decision not to investigate the 2010 incident, although we noted systemic issues around record-keeping – where there were questions to be asked about how and when the incident should have been recorded and about the perpetrator's name not being added to police intelligence.

The survivor's final complaint was that she was put with a female associate of the CSA/E perpetrator whilst she was under police protection and following an allegation of assault against a family member. We found that SYP had first tried, and failed, to place the survivor with family members, but that social care and environment checks had been carried out before the green light was given to allow the survivor to stay at the individual's home. There was no evidence SYP was aware of any risks to the survivor, given our evidence, therefore, **we did not uphold this complaint.**

Complaint

This survivor was sexually exploited from 2008, aged 13. From 2009 onwards, they were often in children's care homes and frequently reported as being MfH.

The survivor complained to us that SYP did not take appropriate action to stop them being abused.

Our investigation into this found, with respect to six individual officers, that there were 21 separate instances where there was an indication of a breach of police standards of professional behaviour, and that the breaches mostly happened between 2010 and 2012 when the survivor was being groomed and sexually exploited by named and unnamed men.

Our investigation outcomes, in summary, were that:

- A PC had **a case to answer for misconduct** for failing to thoroughly investigate four incidents, take safeguarding action and record intelligence appropriately, but that they had **no case to answer in a further six instances**. This was because, on further investigation, we found some of the PC's tasks in question had been re-allocated to someone else
- A DS, responsible for supervising one of the PC's cases, had **no case to answer** for missing opportunities to investigate a crime scene and possible CSA/E (after the survivor was found at an older man's home following going MfH for two days). However, we would have recommended management words of advice if they had still been serving with the police
- The other four subject officers (two DCs and two DSs) **had no case to answer** in relation to the standard of their investigations into incidents and the level of supervision provided but would benefit from management action regarding their performance which was unsatisfactory. Three of these officers were retired

We upheld the survivor's complaint that police did not conduct an effective investigation into their suspected rape in 2009. At the time, the survivor did not disclose many details about what happened to the police, nor feel able to make a formal complaint. Our evidence did not show that the police considered, or conducted, an investigation involving the perpetrator, nor that they pursued

opportunities to potentially gather forensic evidence from the survivor's clothing that the police did have.

We upheld the survivor's complaint that an unidentified officer told the survivor's father that she might 'learn her lesson' after the suspected rape had happened, although those officers who engaged with the investigation could not recall this comment. **We also upheld the survivor's complaint** that SYP did not do enough to find them after they went MfH because there was evidence there was often insufficient police action organised to find the survivor. **We upheld a further complaint** that the survivor felt 'blamed' by officers they came into contact with. We felt that the cumulative effect of persistent police involvement in the survivor's life, and their inaction, may have caused this survivor to believe that they were bothering the police.

We did not uphold three of the survivor's complaints because of insufficient evidence. These were that SYP did not properly respond after the survivor had received threatening texts, that the survivor was deliberately locked in a police station overnight, and that officers used unnecessary force when they arrested the survivor for being drunk and disorderly.

Complaint

In June 2018, we received a complaint that SYP officers had failed in their statutory duties to protect children in relation to CSA/E in Rotherham between 1999 and 2011.

We reviewed thousands of SYP documents relevant to this period and looked at:

- what SYP previously knew about 18 perpetrators who were eventually convicted of CSA/E offences
- whether this intelligence was properly recorded
- what action the police took in response to the above, such as strategies to prosecute the men
- if there was a concerted and joined-up multi-agency approach to stop the perpetrators

We found some examples of good practice by some SYP officers in their attempts to tackle CSA/E, for example, launching Operation Forced and Operation Central. But the overall response appeared to us to have been lacking, especially in the early years. We felt this was due to the force's limited understanding and awareness of CSA/E (as per the national picture at that time). It is clear some police officers were concerned about children being exploited, but there was no consistent, sustained approach to tackling the problem during the time frame we investigated.

We investigated what actions SYP officers took as a result of three 'problem profiles' (produced in 2002, 2003 and 2006 by an SYP analyst). Given the passage of time, it

was difficult to identify who at SYP received and read these reports, but action was taken when the 2006 profile became available with SYP launching an operation to tackle some of the issues raised. However, this was not followed up consistently in the following years and a number of survivors, in their accounts to us, identified that abuse had continued in areas where the police had taken action. Clifton Park in Rotherham was one example.

We considered whether SYP officers followed local and national policies and guidance and if their strategic decisions, such as where resources should be allocated, were affected by what were regarded, at the time, as force priorities and other targets, such as local priorities and national KPIs. These we found were a contributing factor – force priorities and KPIs focused more on violent and acquisitive crime such as assaults, robbery, and burglary. There was confusion about which team had responsibility for non-familial sexual abuse investigations, and it seems to have been become part of the PPU’s work, despite its small size, and it is well documented that the unit’s officers found it difficult to manage the volume of work and information they had.⁷⁵ SYP officers from the PPU told us they made many requests for resources, which were not met. This has been refuted by SYP who explained that they did not know about CSA/E, and the scale of the problems in Rotherham. Those that confirmed they were aware of the issues took some action to address it, but these actions were limited and piecemeal.

Additionally, we found an absence of requests to prioritise CSA/E at pan-force level. This action would have enabled SYP officers to direct the right resources to better combat the crimes.

We found there was a clear absence of any ‘sponsorship’ from SYP, who were equally responsible for discharging statutory duties to safeguard children and young people.

However, one positive example was the advent of the dedicated Sexual Exploitation Officer (SEO) role, but, whilst this was heralded as a new post, it was bolted onto an SYP officer’s existing duties, so that the impression given of a new standalone role was inaccurate, and the development saw the SEO performing many tasks.

Our decision maker felt that greater leadership and co-ordination to tackle the CSA/E problem in Rotherham could have seen a more rounded, fully resourced SYP response that tackled the CSA/E issue and prevented further offending in-line with statutory obligations.

This investigation was not into the conduct of any individual officer. We upheld the complaint because the evidence was that while some efforts had been made to respond to instances of abuse, there was an overall failure by SYP to understand CSA/E and take action to address it more strategically and consistently.

⁷⁵ This was evidenced in accounts provided by both serving and retired officers.

Conduct matters we investigated

Conduct matter

In September 2014, a survivor⁷⁶ asked us to investigate a conduct matter about a DC after an item of their clothing had been lost.

The DC told us they handled the evidential item in line with the force's *Exhibit Handling Policy* and this included them telling their supervisor where they stored the evidence.

We could not obtain a copy of the 2003 Policy and found no record of, nor enquiries made about, the lost item. We did see a letter from SYP to the family offering compensation for the loss but, given the evidence we had, we could only conclude that someone working for SYP had misplaced the item, but we could not attribute this to one individual. Therefore, we considered the subject officer had **no case to answer**.

Conduct matter

In September 2014, SYP referred a case⁷⁷ of reported rape to us, that had occurred in 2006, on the basis that there could be an issue with the standard and length of the investigation.

We found it took seven months for a DC to start the investigation, following the report, and to submit a management report that proposed filing the crime as 'undetected'. The DC told us that the investigation delay was partly because of their unfamiliarity with using the crime management system and said that they had just returned to mainstream CID duties after 11 years working in other roles.

They also explained to us they had repeatedly tried but had been unsuccessful in interviewing the survivor, using video,⁷⁸ to take down their complaint. And, additionally, they had pursued all other lines of enquiry, including viewing CCTV footage of where the survivor met the perpetrator, but had found insufficient evidence.

⁷⁶ This individual complained to us about how SYP dealt with their report of rape in 2003.

⁷⁷ From Jay OBE, A. (2014): *The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, 1997–2013*.

⁷⁸ Without the complaint being formally recorded, any forensic submissions could not be considered for the investigation.

Our investigation found the subject officer had **no case to answer** because their decision to file the crime as undetected complied with NCRS standards and was therefore reasonable given the circumstances.

We identified two areas of learning for the force. One recommendation was about how it archives sensitive, undetected crimes, to help with any future reviews – in this case, it would have been helpful to be able to look at the full file, including any unused material and the officer's daybook,⁷⁹ to help fully understand the subject officer's decision-making process and whether there had been any missed opportunities for them to do more.

We also recommended the force ensures officers returning to investigations are re-skilled.

Conduct matter

In 2014, a survivor told us that SYP took no action against a 24-year-old man who was arrested with them after traffic officers found them together in a stolen car, in February 2008. The survivor had been aged 12, and alcohol was in the vehicle.

The lead PC had been sufficiently concerned to submit a 'notification of child concern' form to Rotherham PPU which included their belief that the complainant was at risk of being groomed.

We decided that both officers **had no case to answer** because, on the balance of probabilities, they did what was expected of them at that time, flagging the concern about grooming to the right team for the continuation of an investigation/safeguarding enquiry.

Also in 2014, SYP referred a conduct matter to the IPCC, that was about the same incident but regarding the Chief Constable's actions. It appeared that the Chief Constable had provided inaccurate information about this incident to the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, October 2012.⁸⁰

We examined information that had been shared in relation to this incident, to identify how the Chief Constable had provided inaccurate information at the HASC. As such, we arranged for a search of the lead PC's email account. In March 2008, the lead PC emailed the Rotherham District Commander and told him about the arrest, and that

⁷⁹ A book used to record information, including messages, about what has happened during a 'shift' that is handed on to colleagues on duty afterwards to help keep them informed.

⁸⁰ SYP took this step because it appeared to the force that incorrect information had been shared about the incident with a House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee in 2012. This happened after an earlier committee briefing by the lead PC who had said there was 'adult pornography' on the man's mobile phone and 'nothing of concern'.

they had looked at the man's mobile phone and found a video of the young girl who had been found in the car, lifting her top and exposing her bra.

In January 2009, officers from Operation Central emailed the lead PC to clarify what was on the mobile phone. The lead PC replied that there 'wasn't anything of concern' on the phone. In October 2012, the lead PC wrote a report in which he detailed the circumstances of the arrest of the man and the young woman and confirms that the phone had 'a video of a scantily clad adult female dancing', that the footage was 'not indecent' and although the female could not be identified, she was not a child. This report was used to assist in the preparation for the HASC meeting. In interview, the lead PC did not provide an explanation to us for the disparities in information we identified.

We concluded that had the officer still been serving there would have been a case to answer for gross misconduct. However, the lead PC retired in 2013, before the regulations changed and proceedings therefore could not be instigated.

The other PC who was also involved in the original investigation was not under investigation regarding this conduct matter.

Conduct matter

This matter was referred to us by SYP in September 2014 and was about whether an officer had dealt appropriately with a 2003 problem profile they received, as well as whether they had followed up on any CSA/E-related intelligence it revealed.

This was also the subject of allegations we received from several individual complainants.

The subject officer did concede they received a copy,⁸¹ but we found that they had been under no legal obligation to respond to it in any particular way and therefore there was **no case to answer**.

Conduct matter

This conduct matter was identified from the Jay report and was referred to us in September 2014 to consider whether SYP failed to recognise CSA/E by a group, or gang, after indecent images were found by school staff on a 12-year-old Rotherham child's phone (in 2013).

⁸¹ We found no strong evidence about who the profile had been sent to across the force, although the profile author told us it had been circulated to all DCs, along with others who had contributed to it being developed.

We identified two subject officers in this investigation – a PC (a CSE officer), who was in charge of the case, and the supervising DS.

Police investigations resulted in the PC seizing two phones and a computer and sending them for forensic examination. As a result, five suspects were identified who had sent, or received, indecent messages and images using the devices. Only one, a 17-year-old female, lived in South Yorkshire. She was cautioned for ‘causing or citing a child under the age of 13 to engage in sexual activity’ and was put on the sex offender’s register. The remaining suspects were dealt with by other police forces.

Although the DS told us they did not directly instruct anyone to look into whether there was any group offending, they told us that their investigation into the devices’ data showed there was no indication that the South Yorkshire perpetrator was operating as part of a group, or that their activity was typical of gang grooming. They also told us the police knew that the suspect had befriended the survivor online through a mutual contact at the survivor’s school.

In 2016, Lincolnshire and Hampshire police forces successfully prosecuted the suspects in their respective areas – they concluded the perpetrators were generally regarded as ‘loners’ with no known links to South Yorkshire.

We concluded that the subject officers had **no case to answer**.

Conduct matter

SYP voluntarily referred six matters to the IPCC in April 2015 following a BBC news report about CSA/E in Sheffield and it was decided to independently investigate four of these.

The report⁸² claimed SYP failed to act on a document on its intelligence database – used for Operation K-Safe – with details of more than 200 possible CSA/E victims and more than 300 possible perpetrators, and that it also ignored an SYP officer’s recommendation that there should be a full investigation into the special operation.

We identified the local authority had compiled the document for a 2011 Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre scoping exercise and that it had been sent to SYP for the force to identify if any potential names had been omitted.

We concluded this action was taken for information only and that the document had not been sent as new intelligence for SYP that needed to be acted upon.

⁸² A retired SYP officer and the Head of the SSES were included in the news report which focused on police operations including Glover and K-Safe.

Our investigations determined Operation K-Safe had been threatened with closure⁸³ but that this decision was overturned, and the operation eventually proved to be the basis of successful prosecutions made under Operation Alphabet⁸⁴.

The BBC had also alleged that a prolific female perpetrator's name was given to SYP in 2009, but that they were not convicted until 2014.

We found the police had taken action against the perpetrator, including gathering forensic evidence and arresting her several times for child abduction. We also found that a good relationship built between SYP and survivors, because of Operation K-Safe, meant these survivors' evidence helped to secure her conviction.

Finally, there was also a claim in the news series that a retired SYP officer said during police Operation Glover that a DI ordered him not to talk to possible victims unless they were prepared to make a formal complaint(s) because it wasted money. We could not find any evidence that showed this was the case, and the individual's prepared statement for the investigation did not mention this conversation.

Our investigations found that **no officers had a case to answer.**

Conduct matter

This conduct matter was referred to us by SYP in October 2015 when a former Risky Business worker withdrew their complaint that the force's PSD had failed to look into their claims⁸⁵ that an SYP officer had behaved inappropriately towards two teenage survivors in 2004.

Based on entries in PSD computer logs, we concluded that the Department had actively investigated the report after a meeting with Risky Business, and that this included speaking to the two survivors.

No officers were found to have a case to answer. One officer, who the Risky Business worker claimed behaved inappropriately, did not engage with us and had retired from SYP prior to our investigation commencing.

⁸³ The BBC had been told by a retired SYP analyst that there was a report proposing Operation K-Safe's expansion but, instead, SYP had shelved the initiative.

⁸⁴ Operation Alphabet was a 2012 SYP investigation which led to the convictions of two perpetrators in 2014 for CSA/E-related offences.

⁸⁵ It was reported by a victim, who also made a disclosure to Risky Business that, during a meeting with the organisation a PS Intelligence Development Unit DC said he had been ordered not to pursue an investigation into whether an officer had indecently assaulted two survivors. The officer had visited them to discuss a phone theft.

Conduct matter

This matter stemmed from a case in the Jay report and was referred to us by SYP in October 2015. It concerned a PC in a child protection role who failed to respond to information about a possible CSA/E incident.

In 2005, an anonymous 999 caller reported that a man was 'picking up' young girls from a Rotherham school and had been seen undressing one child at their home. The caller provided the name of the man, the school and the child, and the child's home address. The call handling team told the Rotherham PPU child protection officer about the incident two days later. The control room operator told us, that in hindsight, someone should have gone to the address immediately.

We found no record of this incident on any SYP systems.

The PC gave us a prepared statement explaining they had had limited training and, in the absence of a formal child protection officer role profile, felt their main duty was to gather intelligence to share with other agencies and attend case conferences about individual children at risk. The officer said they received a lot of 'tags'⁸⁶ and routinely removed these after making a note of an incident, but that the child protection officer role was not an investigative one.

We concluded the subject officer had **no case to answer** on the grounds that without a clearly defined SYP tags policy and role profile, and any specific request to take action, they acted appropriately.

Conduct matters

These two conduct investigations, comprising six different potential failings by the subject officers, were referred to us in August 2016 following a NCA review⁸⁷ of SYP Operations Central,⁸⁸ Czar and Chard⁸⁹ as part of the NCA's Operation Stovewood.

The NCA's review report included three misconduct allegations against an officer because of perceived failings during police operations that it felt left survivors unprotected. These were that:

⁸⁶ Tags are alerts on a police computer system. Call handlers were able to tag a department to alert them to an incident, for example PPU. It was also possible to tag an incident for the attention of a specific officer. Then, when the officer logged in to the police system, they could view anything that was marked for them.

⁸⁷ The NCA's review report (March 2016) made a number of recommendations, in addition to allegations against two officers – the subjects of conduct matters 9 and 10.

⁸⁸ All SYP officers involved in Operation Central were commended following a court case where significant prison sentences resulted.

⁸⁹ The Jay report criticised all three operations and concluded that lessons should have been learned from them, while the Casey report, (commissioned by RMBC), noted a lack of scrutiny.

- An officer involved with Operation Central did not maintain specific records that would have significantly contributed to the operation's effectiveness. However, an experienced SIO told us, amongst other things, that given the officer was temporarily promoted it was unlikely they were fully trained for the job. Based on all the evidence we gathered, we concluded the individual had **no case to answer**
- The officer did not pursue known perpetrators, or sufficiently engage with known CSA/E victims during Operation Central. The officer told us that the operation was a 'reactive investigation', dealing with specific CSA/E disclosures about nine perpetrators, and that 'every effort' was made to make arrests. We found no evidence to support the idea that the operation did have a wider remit to investigate CSA/E across Rotherham, or that the officer should have been actively involved in proactively widening enquiries. We concluded the officer had **no case to answer**
- The officer helped lead the joint police and social care Operation Czar and that it was inadequate for the scale and nature of the CSA/E complaints it was investigating. During our investigation, we noted that the operation investigation plan, which the NCA had criticised as amounting to a 'cold call' of potential victims to see if anyone would engage, might have been seen as acceptable practice in 2009 and we concluded that the officer had **no case to answer**

The NCA made the same three allegations of possible gross misconduct against the second subject officer, who was involved with Operations Central and Czar. We found they were not involved in the management or supervision of Czar because of their ongoing commitments to Central.

The officer could not provide evidence of their rationale for decisions they made during Central because their diary entries, notes and PNBs were no longer available and, while at hand, undated 'daybook' entries did not show clear reasoning for the officer's actions. The officer gave examples where they had proactively engaged with other possible CSA/E victims, such as referring two survivors mentioned by a Central witness to social care staff and raising concerns about them at a strategy meeting. As a result, we concluded the officer **had no case to answer in relation to any allegations.**

Conduct matter

This conduct matter was referred to us by SYP in July 2016 following work, which was being undertaken by the NCA,⁹⁰ identified potentially insufficient safeguarding action by an SYP Inspector.

The allegation reported was that the Inspector attended a review meeting in January 1999, when the matter of a 14-year-old victim, in full time care, was discussed but took no action. Social care records showed the Inspector did attend.

We found it had been discussed that the victim was in a 'relationship' with an older man and there was concern about his age, and that this conversation included the police being aware that the survivor spent time at the man's house when MfH, and that officers 'used discretion' when considering removing her. Social care records showed that the discussion did not include mention of any unlawful sexual relationship between the survivor and the man, and other evidence said that the children's home knew that the survivor was sometimes staying with their 'boyfriend' and that they had agreed to the 'overnights'. There were social care reports that indicated the officer afterwards liaised with the survivor's children's home staff about concerns they were being targeted by Asian men.

We concluded the inspector had no case to answer because there was no indication that any comments/actions noted in the relevant meeting's minutes were attributable directly to the Inspector, there was also no reference to any unlawful sexual relationship having taken place.

⁹⁰ The NCA, as part of Operation Stovewood, reviewed this particular survivor's social care file, and, as a result, referred a potential misconduct matter, involving an identified SYP officer, to SYP, who subsequently referred the matter to the IOPC.

Annex A: An overview of police operations relevant to Operation Linden

Operation Forced (2001/08)

This ran for nearly seven years and tackled 'forced sex'.

Operation Chaperone (date unknown) may have been linked to this operation because updates on each were apparently given at a 2002 meeting on CSA/E, although we have no further evidence regarding Chaperone.

Operation Glover (2006)

This focused on the trafficking of young survivors by a group of Iraqi-Kurdish men, and six were eventually convicted. Glover appeared to us to have stemmed from information gathered by SSES.

Our investigations located a confidential finalisation report (June 2007) which, amongst other things, identified learning, including the need for SYP to improve its awareness and how it combatted CSE. The operation resulted in successful prosecutions.

Operation Carbine (2008)

Launched by Rotherham PPU officers to provide 'a central referral point' for intelligence relating to CSA/E. However, the officers mentioned in the Carbine Operational Order told us they did not recall Carbine.

Operation Central (2008/10)

This was started by Rotherham Central (Wharnccliffe) Safer Neighbourhood Team to gather intelligence about suspected CSA/E activity in the town's Clifton Park. Central was taken over by Rotherham PPU in early 2009. We understand it was the force's first major CSA/E investigation, leading to five men being convicted of rape and other offences against four survivors (2010).

K-Safe (2009) and K-Safe 2 (2010)

Sheffield's District Commander secured social services funding to support this, and it involved some officers gathering information from many sources and working closely with the SSES to talk to CSA/E victims. It also disrupted perpetrator activities through using abduction notices and worked with the 'guns and gangs team' to target specific perpetrators.

Although survivors, identified during the Operation, remained too scared to formally complain, the local SYP sexual exploitation officer encouraged them to be video

interviewed to capture their accounts for future use, for example, to use them as evidence for investigation purposes.

Operation K-Safe 2 reviewed the original Operation's intelligence folder and considered how best to use this. In part, it was the groundwork for a later Operation, Alphabet.

Operation Czar (2010)

Police-led by the SIO DI of Rotherham PPU, but a joint initiative with the local children's social services. It focused on twenty CSA/E survivors identified by Risky Business youth services. The intention was for multi-agency teams to visit individuals to try to build up trust and encourage disclosure of offences committed against them, as well as to assess their vulnerability and safety. Some survivors were taken out of their homes under PPOs but, unfortunately, survivors found themselves unable to engage with the Operation.

However, Czar did disrupt multiple perpetrators using abduction notices and SYP revoked some perpetrators' taxi licences, however, no arrests were made, and the Operation ceased.

Operation Chard (2010/11)

This Operation was expected to secure perpetrators' convictions, and Rotherham PPU established a dedicated Major Investigation Team (MIT) to run it. It was started after a survivor reported a rape to their social worker. They, and their younger sister, later disclosed they had been sexually exploited by a number of men and agreed to be interviewed by the police about this.

Chard was discussed at multi-agency strategy meetings and action plans were agreed which included tasks for Risky Business.

After some groundwork, that involved social services and other SYP districts, in April 2011, eleven men were arrested, and the DS leading the Operation told us they believed more arrests were made later.

Operation Alphabet (2012)

This operation was carried out in Sheffield and was prompted by a 2010 SYP problem profile on CSA/E. It also drew from Operation K-Safe's intelligence.

Two perpetrators were convicted as a result of Alphabet, and this included a woman accused of grooming. Interviews previously videoed by the sexual exploitation officer for K-Safe were shown at the trial to explain the hold the perpetrator had, at the time, over survivors who had since broken away from the perpetrator's influence and felt able to appear as trial witnesses.

Operation Clover (2013/15)

This was a major investigation into non-recent CSA/E, dating back to 1998. It was prompted by information from Risky Business and disclosures made to *The Times* journalist Andrew Norfolk. Fourteen men were convicted as a result of Clover.

Annex B: Investigative challenges

Specific challenges we came across whilst evidence-gathering.

<p>Non-recent nature of allegations</p>	<p>This could make it difficult to identify a subject officer(s), and for those giving evidence to, understandably, not remember an incident(s), or specific details for our evidence gathering.</p>
<p>Missing, and poor quality, information</p>	<p>We experienced difficulties in finding details of officers' responsibilities, and training they had undergone, at any given time, and this meant we could not always properly assess their conduct and performance. Job role and descriptions we did find were too generic to be really useful. This issue was compounded by changes seen nationally and at a local level, that affected staffing levels, legal powers, police policies and procedures.</p> <p>PNBs were not always available if serving officers did not disclose them,⁹¹ or they had been lost along the way when someone had retired or were not available from police storage. Our managed investigation noted that SYP officers were supposed to retain their PNBs until retirement, and after that, return them to the local administration department.</p> <p>Expert witnesses – often former SYP officers or other officers from other forces or agencies – helped us with some knowledge gaps, where evidence was non-existent or scarce, explaining how the police might have applied certain guidance in practice, and what was expected of people in particular roles.</p> <p>Whilst investigating more recent events – for example, the handling of a rape report in 2011⁹² – we could not find any relevant paperwork.⁹³</p> <p>As Operation Linden progressed it became clearer that SYP had not kept copies of its policies pre-2014, although a policy author for SYP corporate services department explained the force's current, more rigorous approach to policy retention.⁹⁴</p>

⁹¹ A serving subject officer gave us a prepared statement but would not answer questions about where the remainder of their PNBs were, (whilst we were looking into a range of allegations, we had discovered only four of their PNBs, covering 2000/08). A survivor had told us the officer wrote down what they had told them about their sexual exploitation, (the only officer the survivor disclosed the abuse to), but that the officer had never taken any action. The survivor described in detail the PNB and this matched what it would have looked like at the time.

⁹² SYP should have been following 2010 ACPO guidance on the management of police information records (to be held for at least six years).

⁹³ In 2013, SYP was directed not to destroy anything in its possession, in light of the enquiries that had begun into CSA/E in Rotherham.

⁹⁴ That policies are reviewed every two years and, when a policy is revised, archive and retain the original version electronically for seven years.

Familiarity due to media coverage	Sometimes it was difficult for subject officers, and witnesses, to differentiate between whether they had personally known a perpetrator or whether it was because they ‘remembered’ them from media coverage. It was important for us to establish which of these it was because many allegations focused on whether a named SYP officer had taken action/what this action was, based on their knowledge of an individual and the CSA/E risk they posed.
Avoiding prejudicing others’ cases	Sometimes we had to suspend an investigation, ⁹⁵ for example, where a subject officer, complainant, or witness was involved in an agency or prosecution case, although we did sometimes benefit from this afterwards. ⁹⁶
Considering how SYP worked across all its districts	Our investigators had to undertake a further layer of work considering what was happening in other SYP districts (largely Sheffield), to draw comparisons and successfully identify any inconsistencies/failings in SYP’s work, as well as learning.
Expediency	<p>We were acutely aware of a survivor’s wish for closure and therefore the importance for us to investigate complaints as quickly as practicable, and there were three further reasons for this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We wanted to take down evidence from police witnesses whilst they were still serving because our powers to compel police witnesses to attend an investigation interview do not apply to someone who has left service • Once police officers have left service they can only be subject to disciplinary proceedings in limited circumstances • Some officers had been suspended from duty or put on restricted duties pending our investigation outcome of a misconduct complaint, and understandably we did not want this to be the case for longer than it needed to be.

⁹⁵ This included the NCA’s ongoing Operation Stovewood and SYP’s Operation Clover (two complainants in our managed investigation gave evidence during the Operation Clover trial).

⁹⁶ Evidence gathered for these operations, including witness interview notes, could be helpful for our investigations.

Complex complaints	<p>The complaints we received were complex, largely because they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were often about someone’s attitude and/or conduct, so, where possible, our investigators compared individuals’ accounts of past behaviour with what was officially recorded in documents • referred to many incidents, sometimes spanning years, and under changing circumstances (for example where there had been a key change in policing policy) • were often about conversations and police ‘knowledge’ that was not formally recorded • often involved many witnesses we needed to trace and take down statements from.
Our powers	<p>Some officers at SYP would not fully engage with us⁹⁷ and we have limited powers to compel former or retired officers to do so unless there is an indication of a possible criminal offence.</p>
Multiple ICT systems	<p>SYP’s ICT systems had evolved over years, making it difficult to find exactly what we needed.</p>

⁹⁷ We always gave officers, named in allegations, the opportunity to respond to us but some were unwilling to do so.

<p>Range of evidence</p>	<p>Evidence we gathered for Operation Linden came from many different sources⁹⁸ and included using forensic CCTV analysis.⁹⁹</p> <p>One survivor’s allegations formed part of Operation Stovewood, and, as a result, the NCA gave us access to review 3,100 of its documents that it was felt might relate to our investigation work.</p> <p>One of our investigators carefully considered the entire contents of four paper file boxes that had been prepared for Operation Central, (at NCA offices), and also searched exhibits and examined their labels for dates and signatures.¹⁰⁰</p> <p>We considered evidence including school records, and occasionally we approached childcare providers, housing associations, and housing and mental health support services that had engaged with survivors, but with varying degrees of success.</p> <p>For the same purpose our investigators looked at evidence from RMBC, and Risky Business files, including what was shared between the police and individuals.</p>
<p>Identifying SYP officers</p>	<p>It was sometimes difficult to identify a specific subject officer(s) even when complainants were able to give us some information about them, but we always tried to do this. We sometimes upheld a complaint against the force without knowing who the individual(s) were.</p>
<p>Tracing and speaking to witnesses</p>	<p>We could not always trace all possible witnesses, particularly if they had moved without leaving anyone with a forwarding address or would not respond to our attempts to make contact with them. Some had passed away.</p> <p>Some people refused to talk to us because they had already provided evidence to other investigations, and others were unable to help because they could not remember details because of the passage of time.</p> <p>It could be a challenge to engage with survivors’ families, or we might only be able to speak to one or two family members, meaning we could not get a fully rounded picture of past events. At least one survivor specifically asked us not to speak to their mother.</p>

⁹⁸ This included PNBs, communication record books, social care records on individual survivors including ‘leaving care’ diaries, custody records, national intelligence reports, medical notes, criminal case files, multi-agency strategy meetings minutes, official plans and logbooks from specific operations, internal reports, as well as various, unlogged SYP paper files.

⁹⁹ Operation Linden mainly considered evidence from a time before body worn video was widely used.

¹⁰⁰ Comparing others’ files with those of SYP, for example, from the property management system, helped us check facts.

Difficulties with disclosing information and poor health

Many survivors were reluctant to disclose details or engage with our investigators. Even when survivors wanted to it could understandably be hard. One survivor we hoped to interview as a witness told us that, although they were now 'in a good place', they were not ready yet to talk about her experiences because they feared this could set them back emotionally.

Annex C: Glossary of terms

Account

An account is someone's spoken or written report, (or description), of an experience or event.

Our investigations consider complainants', witnesses' and subject officers' accounts.

Achieving best evidence (ABE) interview

Achieving best evidence interviews were introduced to help vulnerable and intimidated victims and witnesses to give better evidence to the police, and in court.

ABE interviewers are specially trained and include some IOPC investigators.

Agency

In this report, an agency refers to a public body other than the IOPC. For example, the police, local authorities, the NHS, the probation service and fire and rescue authorities.

Allegation

An allegation is a claim, or assertion, that someone has done something wrong or illegal. Allegations can be brought to us by a victim or a survivor. They can also be brought to us by another person on the victim's behalf, for example a relative or third party..

Appropriate adult

An appropriate adult will safeguard the interests, rights, entitlements and welfare of children and vulnerable people suspected of a criminal offence. They do this by ensuring that the individual is treated in a fair and just manner and can participate and communicate effectively.

Appropriate Authority (AA)

The Appropriate Authority for a person serving with the police is:

- for a chief officer or an acting chief officer, the local policing body for the area of the police force of which that officer is a member, or
- in any other case, the chief officer with direction and control over the person serving with the police

In relation to complaints not concerning the conduct of a person serving with police, the Appropriate Authority is the chief officer of the police force with whom dissatisfaction is expressed by the complainant.

Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)

Assistant Chief Constables form part of a chief constable's team, ranking below the deputy chief constable and the chief constable. Each police force has between one and five assistant chief constables.

Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)

Until 31 March 2015, the Association of Chief Police Officers was an independent professional body coordinating the development of police services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. ACPO is now known as the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

Audit and Governance Unit (AGU)

The police force's Audit and Governance Unit enforces the National Crime Recording Standard and Home Office Counting Rules.

Authorised Professional Practice (APP)

Authorised Professional Practice, (created by the College of Policing), is police operational guidance about how to deal with different types of crime or incidents.

Balance of probabilities

To reach an investigation conclusion it is necessary for us to analyse and evaluate all the evidence we have gathered. We apply the balance of probabilities standard of proof when deciding whether something is more likely than not to have happened.

This process involves us looking at all the evidence we have, and the weight that should be attached to it. Our decision about this is reflected in our findings and final investigation outcome.

Basic Command Units (BCUs)

South Yorkshire Police had four Basic Command Units, or local policing areas. These are Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield.

Care plan

This is produced by a local authority before a child is taken into care and is subject to review. It proposes, amongst other things, how a child's health and educational needs will be met and the best way for family members to be contacted.

Case Administration and Tracking System (CATS)

South Yorkshire Police's Case Administration and Tracking Computer System was created in 2006. It includes records on actions and referrals about vulnerable adults and children.

Case to answer

The Decision Maker will apply the following test when reaching their case to answer determinations. Whether there is sufficient evidence, upon which a reasonable misconduct meeting or a reasonable disciplinary hearing panel, could find misconduct or gross misconduct proven on the balance of probabilities.

Chief Officer or Chief Constable (CC)

Chief Officer means the Chief Officer of a police force. For most police forces this will be the Chief Constable, for the Metropolitan Police Service and City of London Police it is the respective commissioners.

Chief Superintendent (CS)

Chief Superintendent is a senior rank within police forces in England and Wales. Chief Superintendents lead multiple, large and/or complex, areas of command.

Child

A child is anyone below the age of 18 in England and Wales.

Child Abduction Warning Notice (CAWN)

Child Abduction Warning Notices are issued to a potential perpetrator and are for helping to prevent an abduction. They provide details of concerns along with the child's name, who is potentially at risk, personal details, and a copy of their photograph. The notice warns the potential perpetrator that they can no longer communicate or associate with the named child. The notice is served on the individual by a police officer.

Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU)

Until 2006, South Yorkshire Police had central Child Abuse Investigation Units in Sheffield and Doncaster. These also covered Rotherham and Barnsley areas.

Child at risk of significant harm

The term 'harm' relates to the 'ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of the child' (*Section 31, [Children Act 1989](#)*). You can [read more information on charity NSPCC's website](#).

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child criminal exploitation is the grooming or coercion of children into criminal activity.

Child in need

A child is defined as being in need if:

- they are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health and/or development without the provision of services by a local authority
- their health and/or development is likely to be significantly/further impaired without the provision of such services
- they have a disability.

Child protection plan

When a child protection case conference determines a child to be at risk of abuse, the child will become a 'child subject of a child protection plan'. The plan outlines what each agency will do to help ensure the child's safety.

Children's home

Any private, public or charitable establishment which provides accommodation for children away from home.

Children's social care team (CSC)

The team within a local authority social care department that deals specifically with children who are in need, or at risk.

Child sexual abuse (CSA)

This is forcing or coercing a child to participate in sexual activities including penetrative and non-penetrative acts, as well as non-contact activities. For example:

- looking at or producing sexual images of children
- children watching sexual activities
- encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways
- grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

CSA can be perpetrated by men, women and other children.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a type of abuse. It occurs when an individual or group take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce a child into sexual activity. Often in exchange for something the victim needs or wants. The victim is sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears to be consensual. CSE includes non-contact sexual activities.

Complaint against the police

This is any expression of dissatisfaction with a police officer or force that is expressed by or on behalf of a member of the public.

Continuous personal development (CPD)

Continuous personal development is a learning activity used by professionals to develop their specialist abilities.

County lines

This describes gangs and organised criminal networks that export illegal drugs into the United Kingdom by using dedicated phone lines or another form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store drugs and money that has been obtained.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

A police department that investigates crimes requiring specialist skills.

Criming

Criming is classifying and recording a reported incident as a particular type of offence within categories set out by the Home Office. For example, the general category of violence includes several different crimes based on the severity of the violence used.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

The CPS prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. The CPS makes decisions independently of the police and government.

Decision maker

All investigations are undertaken on behalf of the Director General (DG). Staff taking decisions on behalf of the DG are referred to as DG delegates, or decision makers, and they provide strategic direction and scrutinise an investigation undertaken by IOPC investigators.

The 'decision maker' can:

- direct a force to take certain actions during an investigation
- make directions to the Appropriate Authority about what should happen after an investigation through learning recommendations
- make a referral to the CPS if they believe an officer, who was the subject of an investigation, may have committed a criminal offence

Prior to 2018, when we were the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), lead investigators could decide:

- whether a subject officer(s) had a case to answer
- whether there was evidence of unsatisfactory performance or whether or not to uphold a complaint.

Detected

Detected crimes are crimes that have been resolved by the police. However, not every case where the police know, (or think they know), who committed a crime can be counted as a detected crime.

For a crime to be counted as detected, sufficient evidence must be available to claim a detection and specific conditions must be met.

Detective Constable (DC)

A Detective Constable is an officer who has undertaken the National Investigators' Examination.

Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)

Deputy Chief Constable is the second highest rank in the police in the UK. With the exception of the Metropolitan Police Service, where the equivalent rank is Deputy Assistant Commissioner, and City of London Police where the equivalent rank is Assistant Commissioner. The DCC supports the Chief Constable to lead the force.

Detective Inspector (DI)

A Detective Inspector is trained in criminal investigation and part of, (or attached to), a police force's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), or other investigative unit.

Detective Sergeant (DS)

A Detective Sergeant investigates rank above a Detective Constable and below a Detective Inspector. A DS is the first of the supervisory ranks and hold supervisor responsibility for DCs.

Direction and control

Direction and control means the general decisions about how a police force is run, as opposed to the day-to-day decisions or actions of people serving with a police force.

Director General (DG)

The IOPC is led by a Director General. The DG leads the executive team, and chairs the Unitary Board of the IOPC, which includes six non-executive directors. The DG is also supported by two Deputy Director Generals – the Deputy Director General (Operations) and the Deputy Director General (Strategy and Corporate Services). By law, our DG can never have worked for the police.

Discontinuance

The power to discontinue an IOPC investigation was removed on 1 February 2020. It was replaced by the power to stop a complaint investigation, if the complainant wishes, but only if no potential misconduct has been identified.

Previously, a discontinuance ended an ongoing IOPC investigation into a complaint (in some circumstances). For example, when the complainant no longer wished to be involved and the IOPC had no evidence available to continue an investigation without their account.

Disciplinary proceedings

Disciplinary proceedings involve either a meeting or hearing that has the power to issue disciplinary action, such as dismissal, reduction in rank, warnings and final written warnings.

Filing/Filed

A police term that means an investigation has been closed and no further action will be taken. Crime reports will show that the crime report has been 'filed'. However, this does not mean that the case may not be reopened. All cases of crime can be revisited.

Force Crime Bureau (FCB)

A department usually found within a police force's Communication Department. The Force Crime Bureau is responsible for:

- recording crimes in accordance with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS)
- initial assessment, the filing of crimes at first point of contact and the allocation of recorded crime
- the administration of crime updates (for example, suspect status and property lists) and requests from the investigating officer or member of staff
- the filing of crimes following investigation and appropriate authorisation

Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB)

A police force department responsible for managing all intelligence that enters the police intelligence system.

GEN forms

GEN forms are general information reports or forms used by South Yorkshire Police to pass on information, internally, to the relevant departments. Each GEN form has a different title. For example, (and specifically relating to CSE/A and Operation Linden), a GEN117 is a child protection referral form that was completed when a child had already come to some harm and the police needed to carry out further investigation.

The GEN118A form was for sharing information if an officer did not suspect a crime had been committed but believed there was a real risk to the child.

These forms have now been merged by SYP to avoid confusion and ensure that all information is passed on.

Grooming

This is when an offender builds a 'relationship', trust and an emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative. Children and young people can be groomed online, in person or both – by a stranger or someone they know.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which came into force on 1 May 2004, section 15 introduced the offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming. Prior to this grooming was not an offence that police could consider in CSE cases.

The introduction of this offence was intended to protect children from adults who communicate, (not restricted to online communications), with them and then arrange to meet them with the intention of committing a sexual offence against them, either at that meeting, or subsequently.

Gross misconduct

A breach of the Police Standards of Professional Behaviour that is so serious as to justify dismissal.

Harbouring Warning Notices

Harbouring Warning Notices were given to suspected perpetrators informing them that the child they were associating with was under 16, and they did not have permission from their parent/guardian to be with them.

There was no legislative provision for the issue of these warnings and a suspect could not be arrested for breaching them. However, they could be used as evidence that the offenders were aware that the child was under 16.

Harbouring warning notices have since been replaced by Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs).

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

Previously known as HMIC, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services independently assesses, and reports on, the effectiveness and

efficiency of police forces, fire and rescue services. In 2017, HMIC took on inspections of England's fire and rescue services, inspecting and reporting on their efficiency, effectiveness and people. To reflect this new role, their name changed to HMICFRS.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales is an on-going inquiry examining how the country's institutions handled their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse. IICSA was set up because of serious concerns that some organisations had failed, and were continuing to fail, to protect children from sexual abuse.

Independent investigation

An investigation carried out by the IOPC.

An independent investigation by the IOPC is often for the most serious incidents and/or those with the greatest public interest. For example, those that cause the greatest level of public concern, have the greatest potential to impact on communities, or have serious implications for the reputation of the police service.

Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)

The IPCC was set up under Part 2 of the *Police Reform Act 2002* and began operating on 1 April 2004, replacing its predecessor, the Police Complaints Authority. It was created to increase public confidence in the police complaints system in England and Wales. It also investigated serious complaints and allegations of misconduct against the police and handled appeals.

Independent sexual violence adviser or advocate (ISVA)

Since 2005, ISVAs have been working in local areas across England and Wales to provide a service of continuous support, advice and help for victims and survivors of sexual violence. ISVAs play an important role in providing specialist tailored support to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

An ISVA works with people who have experienced rape and sexual assault, irrespective of whether they have reported this to the police. They can be based within a variety of organisations, including specialist sexual violence and abuse organisations and Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs).

Intelligence

Intelligence is information that has been analysed and evaluated to assess its reliability. It should be presented in a way that can be understood and used effectively in an investigation, prosecution or wider operational and strategic activity.

ITrace

From 2006, iTrace was South Yorkshire Police's Missing Person's system. Records prior to 2006 were not transferred onto the iTrace system. The destruction of this data means there is no missing person's data available to SYP before this date.

COMPACT, South Yorkshire Police's new missing person's system, replaced ITrace on 2 November 2021.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Key Performance Indicators measure how projects, individuals, departments or businesses perform in terms of strategic goals and objectives.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)

A JTAI is an inspection framework for evaluating the services of vulnerable children and young people. It is conducted jointly by Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). Each JTAI includes a specific 'deep dive' safeguarding theme.

Law enforcement agencies

Statutory agencies with responsibility for policing and intelligence, including police forces, the intelligence services and the National Crime Agency.

Lead Investigator

Each IOPC investigation has a Lead Investigator (LI) appointed. The LI is responsible for the investigation, carrying out appropriate lines of enquiry and writing an investigation report. This report must summarise all the relevant evidence to allow decision makers to form a conclusion about how issues raised in the report should be handled.

Local Authority

A local authority is an organisation that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area. For example, in Rotherham the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) is the Local Authority.

Looked after child or children in care

A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a 'looked after child' (although some children prefer the term 'children in care').

Management advice

Management advice is a sanction from misconduct proceedings.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

MAPPA is the process through which agencies such as the police, the prison service and probation work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community.

The agencies share information about offenders under MAPPA in order to assess the level of risk they pose to the public. There are three categories of MAPPA offenders.

Management action

The purpose of management action is to:

- Deal with misconduct in a timely, proportionate and effective way
- Identify any underlying causes or welfare considerations
- Improve conduct and to prevent a similar situation arising in the future

When appropriate, managers in the police service are expected and encouraged to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent misconduct occurring and to deal with cases of misconduct in a proportionate and timely way through management action. Even if the police officer does not agree to the management action it can still be imposed by the manager providing such action is reasonable and proportionate.

Management action may include:

- Pointing out how the behaviour fell short of the expectations set out in the Standards of Professional Behaviour
- Identifying expectations for future conduct
- Establishing an improvement plan
- Addressing any underlying causes of misconduct

Misconduct hearing

A misconduct hearing is held in cases where someone's conduct would, if proven, amount to gross misconduct. This is a formal event that determines whether a person has committed gross misconduct and what, if any, sanction they should face.

In the case of a police force, the officer must attend the hearing. The qualified, independent, misconduct panel decides what action to take if the offence is admitted or proven. This could be a written warning (or final written warning if the officer has had one already), or dismissal with or without notice. The IOPC can direct a police force to hold a misconduct hearing.

Misconduct in public office (MiPO)

Misconduct in a public office is where a 'public officer' intentionally neglects their public duty or does not conduct themselves properly. To the extent that their actions/behaviour abuses the public's trust in their position, and there is no justification for what they have done. MiPO is a criminal offence.

Misconduct meeting

A misconduct meeting is held in cases where someone's conduct would, if proven, amount to misconduct. This is a formal event that determines whether the person has committed misconduct and what, if any, sanction they should face.

Missing from home or care (MfH)

A child may be reported to the police as missing from home (MfH) by a parent or carer. A 'looked after' child may be reported as missing from care if they are not at their residential or foster care placement, or somewhere else they are expected to be, (like school), and their whereabouts is unknown.

Missing person

A missing person is anyone reported as missing to the police, whose whereabouts cannot be established and:

- the fact that they are missing is out of character
- there is a possibility they may be at risk of harming themselves
- there is a possibility they may harm someone else
- they could become a victim of crime.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Many areas in the UK have established MASH teams to mitigate the risk of anyone slipping through the safeguarding net. The hubs bring together professionals, from a range of services, that have contact with children, young people and families, making the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep children and young people safe from harm.

National Crime Agency (NCA)

Established in 2013, the NCA is a national law enforcement agency in the UK and can be tasked to investigate any crime. However, it is the UK's lead agency against organised crime, and human, weapon and drug trafficking, cybercrime, and economic crime that goes across regional and international borders.

The NCA has a strategic role in which it looks at the bigger picture across the UK, analysing how criminals are operating and how they can be disrupted.

National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS)

All reports of crime, which come to the attention of the police, must be recorded in compliance with the National Crime Recording Standard. NCRS aims to promote greater consistency between police forces in the recording of crime and to ensure a more victim-oriented approach to crime recording.

National Decision-Making Model (NDMM) or National Decision Model (NDM)

The NDMM/NDM is a police framework designed to standardise the police decision-making process. It should be used by all officers, decision makers and assessors who are involved in the decision-making process. It is also used to assess and judge decisions, improve future decisions and help to create techniques and methods for different situations.

The NDM is specific to policing. It considers the police force mission statement and the Code of Ethics.

The Joint Decision Model (JDM) has been developed for use when officers and staff are making decisions jointly with other partner agencies.

National Intelligence Model (NIM)

In 2000, ACPO introduced the National Intelligence Model to help managers use intelligence to set priorities, decide resourcing, formulate tactical plans and coordinate resulting activity, and manage associated risks.

No crime

When the police establish that no recordable offence has been committed it is referred to it as 'No crime'.

No further action (NFA)

No further action is where there is not enough evidence for a police force to send a case to the CPS to prosecute. This results in a decision not to take the investigation further because of a lack of evidence to proceed with a charging decision.

Non-recent CSA/E

This refers to offences of child sexual abuse and exploitation that have happened, but are not currently being committed.

Notice of investigation

People subject to an IOPC investigation will be served a formal notice explaining what the investigation is looking into. It also sets out their rights. These notices are often referred to as regulation notices.

Operational Intelligence System (OIS)

Operational Intelligence System's 'all data' reports showed all the intelligence information submitted and recorded about a person, including criminal activity and associations to other 'persons of interest'.

OIS records migrated to a new system, OIS2, in 2007/08.

Operational Order

An operational order is a document that links basic information regarding an event or incident(s) with the police response and, primarily, the operational resource requirement.

Operation Hydrant

Operation Hydrant is a police coordination hub. It was set up, in June 2014, when it became apparent that forces around the country were investigating a significant number of non-recent allegations of child sexual abuse involving persons of public prominence or within institutions. There was a risk that investigators were looking at the same individuals and institutions and it was also clear that officers dealing with these complex cases required support and guidance.

Operation Stovewood

Operation Stovewood is the single largest law enforcement investigation into non-familial child sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Kingdom. Led by the National Crime Agency, it investigates allegations of abuse in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013.

Operations Manager (OM)

IOPC Operations Managers support and line manage Operations Team Leaders and, in many cases, will also be involved in assuring the quality of investigations.

Organised Crime Group (OCG)

An organised crime group is defined as planned and co-ordinated criminal behaviour and conduct by people working together on a continuing basis. Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain.

Outcome

An outcome refers to the findings of an investigation, and any performance, disciplinary or criminal proceedings associated with an investigation.

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

A Police and Crime Commissioner is an elected official in England and Wales responsible for overseeing police forces.

PCCs aim to cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service within their police force area. They hold Chief Constables and the force to account, making the police answerable to the communities they serve.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

PCSOs work with police officers and share some, but not all their powers.

Police Constable (PC)

A Police Constable is the first rank in all police forces in the United Kingdom. All police officers are sworn in as, and hold the basic powers of, a constable.

Police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL)

The PEEL programme was established in 2014 by HMIC (now HMICFRS) and assessed the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. The aim of PEEL inspections was to allow the public to see clearly how their local force performed.

Police Inspector

Police Inspectors, senior to Sergeants and junior to Chief Inspectors, are directly concerned with day-to-day policing.

Police National Computer (PNC)

Police National Computer is a computer system that stores and shares criminal records information across the UK. Law enforcement agencies use it to access information that will support national, regional and local investigations.

Police National Database (PND)

The Police National Database is currently available to all UK police forces and selected law enforcement agencies. It allows these organisations to share intelligence and other information captured in local systems, nationally.

Pocket Notebooks (PNBs)

A police notebook or pocket notebook is a notebook used by police officers to officially record details and incidents while on patrol. Its use is controlled by several guidelines, as information entered into an officer's PNB is admissible in court, and the officer will use it to refresh their memory whilst giving evidence, and to support their statements.

During the period investigated by Operation Linden PNBs were paper notebooks, but most forces have now replaced paper books with electronic devices.

Police Protection Order (PPO)

A Police Protection Order is an emergency measure taken by the police when a child is considered to be at immediate risk of harm, such as physical or sexual abuse. The order is not a court order, it is approved by police inspector grade. The order allows children to be placed under police protection for up to 72 hours in a safe location, under the Children Act 1989.

Police Professional Standards of behaviour

Police officers are expected to follow certain standards of professional behaviour as part of an agreed code of conduct. These standards were first set out in the *Police (Conduct) Regulations 2008*, (and subsequent amended versions), as rules governing how serving police officers and civilian staff should behave at all times.

Any failure to do this may be seen as misconduct and can lead to disciplinary proceedings. Civilian police staff have their own standards, as stated within their own contracts of employment or staff code.

Problem profile

A police force may commission a 'problem profile' to gain a better understanding of a particular problem identified locally.

Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) qualifications

PIP qualifications are a national development programme for the police service, used to progress their staff through different levels of service and skills.

Prosecution

Prosecution is the act of officially accusing someone of committing an illegal act and bringing a case against that person in a court of law.

Police Officer

A Police Officer's job is to enforce laws, investigate crimes, and make arrests.

Police Sergeant (PS)

A Police Sergeant is a first-line supervisor within the police. They perform all the duties of a police officer as well as supervise, coordinate, and guide police officers and other department employees in their daily activities.

Public Protection Unit (PPU)

Public Protection Units' role has evolved and they are now regarded as specialist units within police forces. They deal with safeguarding adults and children in the areas of high-risk domestic abuse and violence, sexual violence, child abuse, vulnerable adult abuse and registered sex offender management.

Public service agreements (PSAs)

Public Service Agreements, first introduced by the Home Office in 1998, detailed the aims and objectives of UK government departments for a three-year period, up until June 2010.

Professional Standards Department (PSD)

A specific department within each police force that deals with complaints and conduct matters.

Safeguarding

Protecting children from maltreatment and preventing impairment of children's health or development. Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

Safer neighbourhood teams (SNTs)

Also called neighbourhood policing, Safer Neighbourhood Teams comprise police and partner agencies who work together with local communities to identify and tackle issues of concern such as tackling anti-social behaviour, graffiti, disorder or other quality-of-life issues.

Serious case reviews (SCRs)

Serious Case Reviews were established under the Children Act (2004) to review cases where a child has died, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. SCRs could additionally be carried out where a child has not died but has come to serious harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

Sexual Assault Referral Centres are specialist medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted. They are designed to be comfortable and multi-functional, providing private space for interviews and forensic examinations, and some may also offer sexual health and counselling services.

SARC services are free of charge and provided to women, men, young people and children. They have specialist staff who are trained to help victims make informed decisions about what they want to do next.

Sexual Exploitation Service

In 2011, the local authority's Risky Business Programme was restructured and became the Sexual Exploitation Service, co-located with the Rotherham Public Protection Unit.

Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO)

A Sexual Harm Prevention Order, previously known as a Sexual Offence Prevention Order (SOPO), is a court order that can be requested by the police, or court when there is a specific concern about an individual. This court order will be requested to prevent a person from engaging in a particular activity.

Sexual Offences Act

The *2003 Sexual Offences Act* was introduced into UK legislation, on 1 May 2004, to make new provision about sexual offences, their prevention and the protection of children from harm from other sexual acts, and for connected purposes. This act replaced the *1956 Sexual Offences Act*, and other legislation.

South Yorkshire Police (SYP)

SYP is the territorial police force responsible for policing South Yorkshire in England. The force is led by a Chief Constable and oversight is conducted by a Police and Crime Commissioner. The force is made up of four districts – Rotherham, Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley. SYP headquarters are in Sheffield.

South Yorkshire Police Authority (SYPA)

From 1964 until 2012, South Yorkshire Police was accountable to the South Yorkshire Police Authority. Local authority members were elected to the role and were joined by independent members, for example, magistrates.

Police Authorities ceased to exist from 22 November 2012. Police and Crime Commissioners are now responsible for setting the strategic direction of local policing.

Special measures

Special measures were first introduced under the *Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999*, to help gather evidence from 'vulnerable and intimidated' witnesses and support them to give evidence in a court case. This includes any witness under 18, seen as vulnerable because of their age, and witnesses with any physical or mental health problems that may impact on their ability to give evidence in court. Special measures, in a child's case, focus on making decisions in their best interest.

Specialist Child Abuse Investigator Development Programme (SCAIDP)

This national, police service, course provides police officers with specialist skills in investigating serious offences against children. It allows students to work towards professional registration as a specialist child abuse investigator and includes level two specialist interviewing of children.

Subject officer

This term refers to any individual(s) who is the named subject(s) of a complaint. This may be a police officer of any rank, a member of police staff (including community

support officers and traffic wardens), a special constable, or contracted staff designated by the force's chief officer as detention officers or escort officers. If no 'special requirements', or 'special procedures', have been identified then the officer becomes a witness, not a subject.

Supervised investigation

A type of investigation carried out by the appropriate authority under IPCC/IOPC supervision, prior to 31 January 2020.

Suspect

A suspect is a person believed to have committed a crime or have carried out a wrongdoing.

Suspended from duty

A suspension is when a police staff member remains employed by the force but are asked to not attend their place of work or to engage in any work at all (such as working from home).

Suspension

Any type of IOPC investigation into a complaint may be suspended temporarily if continuing it might prejudice a criminal investigation or criminal proceedings.

Terms of reference (IOPC)

Terms of reference set out the scope and objectives of the IOPC's investigations.

Undetected

Undetected crimes include criminal cases when 'no further action' (NFA) was agreed because the police were unable to prosecute.

Unlawful sexual intercourse

Unlawful sexual intercourse, commonly referred to as statutory rape or sex with a minor, is sexual intercourse with a person who is under the age of eighteen, who is not the spouse of the perpetrator.

Upheld

If a complaint made to us, or individual allegation(s) included as part of the complaint, is not about the conduct of an individual (a subject officer), our decision maker will consider, based on all the available evidence, whether to agree with (uphold) the complaint/complainant.

A complaint/allegation is upheld where the decision maker decides someone has received a service from the police that was below the standard that could reasonably be expected.

ViSOR

ViSOR is a national multi-agency database recognised as a key tool in the effective management of offenders and other persons posing a risk of harm to the public. ViSOR was initially an acronym for the Violent and Sexual Offender Register but was expanded by the police to record information on some non-convicted subjects

(known as potentially dangerous persons) and terrorist offenders. ViSOR is no longer an acronym but is the formal name of the database.

Withdrawn

A complainant may decide to withdraw one or more allegations in their complaint (we are looking into), or they may wish no further action to be taken in relation to their allegation. This results in the allegation being recorded as withdrawn and may mean no further action being taken. A complainant can only withdraw their complaint if the IOPC has not identified any potential misconduct.

Youth Offending Team (YOT)

Youth offending teams work with young people who get into trouble with the law.

They look into the background of a young person and try to help them stay away from crime.

How to make a complaint – a guide to the police complaints system

You [can read more information about how to make a complaint to the police on our website](#).

Information and support services

General information

Crimestoppers (www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

If you have information that may help the police you can contact Crimestoppers.

Know About CSA/E (www.knowaboutCSA/E.co.uk)

An agency that provides advice on child sexual exploitation to victims, families and professionals.

Lucy Faithfull Foundation (www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk)

A UK-wide charity dedicated to tackling child sexual abuse.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

(www.nspcc.org.uk)

Support and information for children and anyone worried about a child, and resources for professionals.

Rape Crisis – Live Chat Helpline

(<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/live-chat-helpline/about-the-live-chat-helpline/>)

A free chat helpline providing confidential emotional support for women and survivors aged 16 and over who have experienced sexual violence.

Rape Crisis – South London National Telephone Helpline

(<https://www.rasasc.org.uk/>)

Confidential emotional support, information and referral details.

Respond (www.respond.org.uk)

Services for people with a learning disability, autism, or both, who have experienced abuse or trauma.

Samaritans (www.samaritans.org)

Samaritans are open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk.

Stop It Now! (www.stopitnow.org.uk)

A confidential helpline available to anyone with concerns about child sexual abuse their own sexual thoughts or behaviours.

Survivors UK (<https://www.survivorsuk.org/>)

An online helpline and database of specialist support services for men and boys.

Victim Support (www.victimsupport.org.uk)

Emotional and practical support for people affected by crime and traumatic events.

For children and young people

Children's Society (www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

Runs services for children and young people across the UK.

Childline (www.childline.org.uk)

Support for children and young people in the UK, including a free helpline and 1-2-1 online chats with counsellors.

FACE (Fighting Against Child Exploitation) up 2 it (www.faceup2it.org)

An organisation set up by young people with an awareness of the dangers of grooming and sexual exploitation to help other vulnerable young people.

Adult survivors

Help for Adult Victims of Child Abuse (HAVOCA) (www.havoca.org)

Information and support for adults who have experienced any type of childhood abuse, run by survivors.

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)

(www.napac.org.uk)

Supports adult survivors of any form of childhood abuse via a helpline, email support and local services

Support for Survivors (www.supportforsurvivors.org)

Support for adult survivors of child abuse.

Parents and families

Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE) (<https://paceuk.info>)

Supports parents and carers whose children are being exploited by offenders outside of the family.

Professionals

Mind – Blue Light Programme (<https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/blue-light-programme/>)

Support and information for staff, volunteers and employers in the emergency services to help you and your colleagues to cope during the pandemic and beyond.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

(<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/recognising-and-responding-to-abuse>)

Guidance for professionals on recognising and responding to abuse.

NWG Exploitation Response Unit (www.nwgnetwork.org/)

Support and advice to those working with children and young people under 18 who are affected by abuse through exploitation.

Oscar Kilo (<https://oscarkilo.org.uk/>)

Home of the National Police Wellbeing Service that brings assessment, learning and conversation about emergency services' wellbeing into one place.

Other useful resources

NHS – Help after rape and sexual assault

(<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/>)

Provides details of information, advice and support available to people affected by rape and sexual assault.

The Survivor's Trust (<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/find-support>)

Provides a list of national and regional services.

GOV.UK – Safeguarding children

(<https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children>)

Useful information and resources for schools, colleges and children's services.

GOV.UK – Report child abuse (<https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse>)

How to report child abuse.

Published June 2022

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We welcome telephone calls in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn y Gymraeg