

Sarah Champion MP's five-point plan for addressing Child Sexual Exploitation & Abuse



Reasons: Child Sexual Exploitation/Abuse (CSE/A) is endemic in the UK and needs to be recognised as a national priority. It is clear that the public distrusts Governments and Authorities when it comes to preventing and prosecuting child abuse. The statistics on these crimes show the scale of the problem; the high level of public concern and mistrust only emphasises why addressing it must be a priority.

These recommendations to the Government are to be run concurrently, though by their nature one will feed into another. Transparency, accountability and justice need to be embedded into this process, with victims and survivors sitting at its heart.

1. The Government to implement the IICSA inquiry recommendations with a timetable and ring-fenced resources. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and the forthcoming Crime and Policing Bill provide the legislative opportunity to implement about half of the recommendations. Many of the others require guidance or secondary legislation.

2. Are 'grooming gangs' still happening, or have cases been missed. Require all Local Authorities and Police to audit child protection referrals linked to CSE over the last ten years (post-Jay inquiry into Rotherham). This would be UK wide, and the results analysed by an independent panel. Areas would be given a series of standard 'canary' questions which would highlight any areas of concern, for example; "*Detail the cases of CSE and how you responded to them.*" An area saying they do not have CSE would trigger an immediate inquiry.

3. National inquiry – locally led. Local inquiries do not have the power to compel witnesses/evidence, nor would they satisfy the public concern of cover-ups. There needs to be a national "Telford style" model which is nationally resourced, and victim centred. The hub-and-spoke inquiry would be rolled out by the Home Office to areas that trigger the threshold for greater scrutiny. Triggers would be victim and survivor reports, self-referral by Local Councils or Police, or concern raised from the independent panel. The findings from the inquiries would then be fed back to the Home Office for a national response. Of course, on-going prosecutions, risks and disciplinaries would run parallel.

4. New commission work into the motivations of grooming gang members. Whilst we know about the crime, we do not know about the reasons for the crime. Is it just power and opportunity, or is there something deeper we are failing to address?

5. Review if the law is fit for purpose to protect children and prosecute abusers. There needs to be a specific audit of legislation to make sure it is appropriate to secure convictions for child abuse. For example, The Crime and Disorder Act established a framework for local collaboration to reduce crime and enhance community safety, emphasising protective measures based on systematic analysis of crime patterns. With many areas of Licencing now falling to Local Authorities, and the Act being updated by subsequent laws, is community involvement and co-ordination still in place and able to spot grooming gangs?