

**Barnardo's Scotland response to the Petitions Committee
Inquiry on child sexual exploitation (tranche 1)**

Barnardo's Scotland introduced a petition to the Scottish Parliament's Petitions Committee in June 2011 calling on the Scottish Government to do more to tackle child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Scotland.

The committee's current inquiry into CSE is as a direct consequence of that petition and Barnardo's fully supports the work of the committee and the aim of the inquiry.

Barnardo's Scotland would like the committee to focus on achieving five key commitments from the Scottish Government, which we believe would make a significant difference to how Scotland tackles CSE.

1. The Scottish Government should develop a National Strategy for tackling CSE (similar to 'Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation'¹ in England). This will put in place a framework for a co-ordinated national approach to tackling and preventing CSE and supporting the victims. The Scottish Government will be required to report to Parliament on its progress.

In our experience there is often a disconnect between key players at a local level including social, work, health, education, Child Protection Committees, the police and the third sector when it comes to effectively addressing CSE in many areas across Scotland. There are a number of examples of good practice, but many areas are not in a position to respond effectively to CSE.

A Scottish strategy should include approaches to multi-agency information sharing, guidance on tackling CSE and robust data collection systems, as well as look to delivering a network of direct services, and a focus on awareness raising work for practitioners, parents and children. It should also explore training provision for key workers directly working with children and young people.

Barnardo's Scotland believes that effective local strategies within the framework of a national action plan would bring the level of coherency that is required to ensure that there is a more effective response to CSE in every part of the country. The national action plan for England has proven to be effective since it launched in 2011. The strategy in England also highlights a number of examples of good practice that

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<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/safeguardingchildren/a00200288/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation>

could easily be rolled out across Scotland, for example a step-by-step guide to identifying and tackling CSE for frontline practitioners.

2. That every CPP area should be able to provide an appropriate service response to the victims of CSE. This network of professional services will ensure that all victims of CSE receive appropriate support and treatment.

It is crucial that strategy is matched by delivery. At present there is patchy provision of services to address CSE across Scotland. There is a clear need for service provision to ensure that victims and those at risk in each area have the support they need. This provision could take a variety of forms, including but not limited to dedicated CSE services.

3. There should be a nationwide education programme, with support materials, delivered in all high schools. This would substantially increase the awareness of all children and young people about the dangers of CSE and how to access support.

A lack of awareness of CSE was highlighted in the Scottish Government's research published in October 2012. Children and young people need to know the signs of CSE and how and where to ask for help in order to raise the alarm and get the support they need.

Barnardo's Scotland has shown that school CSE programmes can be successful with our work in Glasgow and Dundee.

In Dundee our 'Nae Danger' DVD is used in every school. The DVD was made by young people who have been affected by sexual exploitation and looks at issues around risk and keeping safe. It is designed for use with 11 to 16 year olds to explore issues around sexual exploitation, internet safety and a variety of related issues and includes an animated film (DVD), a selection of games and activity sheets to help get across the messages.

Our in-school programme in secondary schools in Glasgow is a targeted (4 week) prevention programme aims to make and sustain contact with young people aged 12-18 in order to divert them away from sexual exploitation, substance use and associated risks at an earlier age. The specific outcomes of the programme are:

- Young people will have an increased awareness of sexual exploitation and associated risks.
- Young people will know and understand the health risks associated with CSE, such as substance misuse.
- To empower young people and assist them to identify ways in which they can keep themselves safer.
- Young people will be aware of where and how they can access support.

Last year 128 pupils participated in the programme, which has been shown to achieve positive impact on all of the outcomes above.

4. The Scottish Government should undertake post-legislative scrutiny of the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 and set out proposals for new legislation or guidance, if necessary, to ensure that the intention of this legislation is being delivered and that all perpetrators of CSE crimes are being prosecuted.

Many organisations that Barnardo's has worked with on CSE have raised questions about the use of existing legislation to tackle CSE, particularly around the number of people charged and convicted under the 2005 Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act, which was introduced to address crimes relating to child sexual exploitation.

Written Questions to Parliament in 2011 revealed that there has been only one conviction of CSE offences under the 2005 Act. However, the Scottish Government response highlighted that it only counted cases where the relevant charge was the sole or most serious offense.

This lack of convictions may be because perpetrators of such crimes are being charged under different legislation for different crimes, or simultaneously charged with more serious offenses. The result, however, is that the legislation is clearly not having the desired effect. It also helps make it difficult to ascertain the level of the problem of CSE in Scotland. The ability to identify gangs and organised child sexual exploitation is also diminished if the police are charging under other offences and not under the 2005 Act.

We suspect that post-legislative scrutiny may reveal that there is often only partial understanding of child sexual exploitation within the criminal justice system, and that the police are not always aware of the legislation and what they can do under the 2005 Act. This may be an opportunity for the new single police force to look at how it can inform and support officers and those working on such cases with the powers of the Act.

We are also concerned that many children who are victims of CSE do not see themselves as victims. This can have an impact when cases are brought to trial as those children and young people are not seen as credible witnesses. The experiences of those services that work with victims see children that are 'prepared to sacrifice' their bodies in order to get what they want/need such as drugs, alcohol, 'love' and attention, and become convinced that they are not victims.

For other victims the experience of going to court and sharing their experiences and facing their abusers can be very traumatic. Many

young people, as a result, avoid giving evidence. There is a particular need to minimise the difficulties faced by young victims within the criminal justice system.

The Scottish Government should consider how to ensure that in such instances prosecutions can continue.

We hope that post legislative scrutiny will also ascertain if any amendments to the legislation are needed and establish if there is a need for additional specific offences covering CSE, and if this is the case that such changes are made quickly.

5. There needs to be a consistently high commitment to disrupting perpetrator activity and identifying those at risk. Police Scotland should work with relevant agencies to develop protocols to achieve this. This will help all agencies to disrupt perpetrator activity and identify those at risk.

Prevention is much better than prosecution. We believe that more needs to be done to disrupt and prevent perpetrators from committing acts of child sexual exploitation.

Many of the agencies that work on CSE are aware of the different ways and methods that adults engage with children and young people and how they facilitate it. For example, from the work of services we know that late night social hubs and businesses such as taxi offices and take-away food outlets have often been identified as places where young people have come into contact with groomers/abusers. We know the police in some areas have targeted venues known to be associated in these crimes. One of the effective ways of doing this has been by withdrawing or refusing licenses of associated venues, as this encourages managers and proprietors to tackle the activity. For this to work the police need to share information it has with Licensing Boards and such information exchanges do not always happen.

Many different agencies working in this area work with or come into contact with victims and perpetrators for different reasons. The information they gain when added together can build a comprehensive picture of what is happening regarding CSE in those areas. For agencies looking to disrupt CSE activity they need to build a picture and profile of the perpetrators and victims and what they are doing across the area as this will enable an effective multi-agency response.

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