

Chapter Four

Key Achievements of the Home Office Pilot

4.1 The location of the Pilot

In order to properly contextualise the results of the Pilot, it is necessary to know a little about the area in which the research took place. Out of respect of the wishes of the local authority and in recognition that identification may result in danger to the Project and young women involved in the research, the names of the town and Project have been omitted from this report.

In the period immediately preceding the Pilot (2000-2001) the town, situated in South Yorkshire, had a population of 253,000. Of that 66,000 were children. 39,700 were of compulsory school age. 1,013 enquiries had been made to the Child Protection Register and 1,399 referrals made to the Children and Families' Services. 288 of the referrals were classed as sexual abuse cases.

404 children were classed as 'looked after' by the Local Authority. A further 103 had been offered respite care by the local authority. 258 children had been placed on the 'At Risk' Register. The Area Protection Committee Report 2000-1 shows that one in three registered children were re-registrations.

Unemployment in the area was at 5.7%, above the national average, which in July 2001 stood at 3.6%. The local authority ward was the 50th most deprived ward out of 150 nation-wide. The town also had issues with teenage pregnancy and school truancy, these being above the national average.

The town is made up of several different areas, some rural, and each having a distinctive 'village' identity. The population is mainly white British, although there is an established British Asian population.

The town has no distinct red light area or street scene, so it is not immediately obvious that there is an issue of young people being abused through prostitution. There is however a history of exploitation in the town, which led to the establishment of the Project and the application for funding to the Home Office for the Pilot. In 1996, following concerns expressed by local authority workers and staff at a local housing project, an informal investigation was conducted by social services into this issue. The investigation uncovered concerns that young people were being coerced into prostitution by a small group of men, and on regular occasions were being collected from residential homes and housing projects.

After the Project was established, an inter-agency network was developed by voluntary and statutory agencies. In 1998 a small survey distributed by this network identified 70 young women and 11 young men under 18 who were involved in prostitution. ACPC protocols were drafted and two regular meetings established to share information and decide on strategies for intervention. Both were later merged into a group known as 'Key Players'. ACPC training on sexual exploitation was first delivered following the launch of the procedures in November 2000 and has continued approximately once every four months since.

Despite this, the early assessment of the Pilot was that the majority of work around sexual exploitation was being conducted by a small group of individuals. General awareness of the issue, and effective interventions was not widespread. This extended to senior managers. Some professionals were still attempting to address the issue individually, rather than seeking an interagency dialogue and solution. It became apparent at an early stage that the Pilot's aims regarding the detection, investigation and prosecution of offenders would not be realised without first assessing the exact level of awareness and secondly encouraging multi-agency communication. The concept of enhanced evidence could not be advanced where agencies were not sharing information with the police. This issue and further difficulties faced by the Pilot is discussed at 4.11.

4.2 Mapping & profiling

4.2.1 Suspected Perpetrators

As described above suspicions had already been raised concerning a group of men thought to be responsible for the majority of sexual exploitation in the town where the Pilot was located. From the case studies 8 possible perpetrators were identified, 5 of whom were historically identified as being responsible for

exploiting young people in the town. The mapping and profiling aspect of the Pilot gathered and cross-checked the information previously recorded so as to build up a profile of suspected abusers in the town.

Analysis of the Project's records and Key Players minutes contained a great deal of data concerning the activities of these men, their involvement with groups of young women, their associates and their suspected links to other forms of criminal activities. This data was checked, cross-referenced and shared with the police. Data from police files was shared and added to the profile. As the case studies were developed, data from interviews and written records was collected from social services, health, education, and local non-statutory projects. Data was also obtained from the probation service. As the Pilot progressed, a mapping exercise was added to develop as rounded a profile as possible.

In October 2001 the map was handed to the police. It received a poor reception and was criticised as containing unsubstantiated information. It was not however an aim of the Pilot to conduct a formal investigation into the information gathered, this being a matter for the police and social services.

After some discussion, a joint investigation between a designated police officer and social worker was conducted. The results of this were not shared with the Pilot, however information shared at Key Players suggested that an investigation into some of the men was taking place. The Project received word following the end of the Pilot that three of the men suspected as being the main players had been arrested, although the exact details remain unknown.

The mapping exercise collated and cross-referenced a large source of information for the first time. The resulting profile showed that the men linked to the majority of the young women on the Project or known to Key Players were members of one family. Typically they had a number of aliases, were all in their twenties and British-Asian. Their father ran a local business from which they purported to receive an income. All lived in two family homes, and some were married with young children. Their associates were from a range of backgrounds including White-British men and women.

The family was also alleged to be responsible for much of the violent crime and drug dealing in the town. They were believed to have access to untraceable mobile telephones, which were often also provided to young women. They seemed to have access to a number of cars, some sporty and distinctive in design.

There were numerous suggestions that the family had linked to taxi firms. This had been a concern for some years. Taxis were suspected to be involved in the targeting of young women, and the transport of them to private residences and other towns for prostitution-related purposes. The use of hotels, flats and homes; and the trafficking of young people to other areas explained to a certain extent the lack of a street scene in the town.

The data gathered also suggested that takeaways had been used as locations where runaways and young women out socialising had been targeted. Young women had also been targeted and collected from outside schools, residential homes and homeless projects. The bus and railway stations were also suspected to be venues where young people were targeted.

The men also appeared to have involvement with bed and breakfast lodgings, sometimes used to house vulnerable young people. Young women staying there would complain that shortly after their arrival at the accommodation, men would call asking them to go to a flat where they would be paid to have sex with a number of men. Two young women missing from home for extended periods of time were disclosed at these lodgings.

In total, as at October 2001, 54 young women had been linked to the family. 18 young women had identified one member of the family as their 'boyfriend' to Project workers. Several had been pregnant underage and he was the suspected father.

Although the suspected perpetrators had been charged with different criminal offences on many occasions, the charges related to violent crime, and driving offences. No charges for exploitation related charges had been brought. 4.11 considers the reasons for this.

4.2.2 Profile of young women accessing the project

Data was also collected to profile the lives and issues of young people either involved in prostitution or at risk

of being sexually exploited. This was in addition to the ten case studies, which were designed to consider qualitative data in telling the young women's stories, and monitoring their lives during the Pilot.

The issue of 'pimping' or coercion into prostitution was explored and validated through the data obtained from files; and numerous interviews with Project staff, other professionals and with the young women themselves. Of those young women involved in prostitution, only one was not under the influence of a pimp.

Quantitative data was collected from March 2001-2002. Analysis in showed that at the end of this period, 268 young women were accessing the Project. A further 63 young women not accessing the Project but believed to be at risk of exploitation, were identified by cross-referencing data from the Project with data provided by social services, health, education and analysis of Key Players minutes. Although there were concerns about young men being exploited in the town, the Pilot was established to investigate the issue for young women. The above figure therefore relates to young women exclusively.

Of the 268 young women accessing the project, 244 were white, 2 were black and 22 were British-Asian. The numbers of British Asian women increased steadily during the life of the Pilot. This caused surprise at first as there had been an assumption that the coercers would not target their own 'community' and 'culture'. The British Asian young women were extremely reticent to discuss their exploitation and at the end of the Pilot it remained unclear how they were becoming involved in prostitution. The most common explanation offered by the young women themselves seemed to be that they were being targeted, enticed into a sexual relationship and then abandoned. The consequences of this were that often they were then isolated from their families, and consequently left extremely vulnerable to approaches from men who would attempt to coerce them into prostitution. Drugs also seemed to play a part

From the Project 124 records were studied in detail. The Project had been without an administration assistant for some time at the start of the Pilot and consequently some records were not up to date. In order to provide consistency only records that were fully completed were analysed in order to extract quantitative data _

The 124 records showed that the largest age group of young women accessing the project were 14-15 years of age. 87 young woman had been reported as missing from home on a regular basis. 52 had experienced homelessness.

The local authority had accommodated 45 young women . Although not quantified, further analysis showed that over half had not been known to social services prior to their identification as being affected by sexual exploitation issues. Analysis of social services files in the ten case studies showed that the majority of young women made repeated requests to be taken into care. Other young women were evicted from the family home due to their parents' inability to cope with their behaviour or involvement with their coercer. Although without further investigation it is impossible to say, this does raise the issue of whether the young women were coached to ask for local authority accommodation as part of an established coercer's strategy to make them more accessible than they would be from the family home.

The young women referred to the Project could be divided into three categories. Firstly those 'at risk' were identified as young women vulnerable to abuse as a result of experiencing mental health issues, self-harming behaviour, eating disorders, substance abuse, difficulties in forming friendships with their peers, or traumatised through domestic violence or family break-up. These factors were identified as potentially leading to isolation and low self-confidence, leaving some young people vulnerable to the attention and displays of affection commonly used by abusive adults in the grooming process. An additional element might be new friendships with young women in the remaining categories. Typically this would lead to an introduction to one of the suspected perpetrators. Young women 'at risk' formed the smallest percentage of referrals to the project.

The second category was the young women already involved in an exploitative relationship, and where the relationship was obviously an unhealthy one for the young person concerned. This would apply where there was a marked age difference; where the young women as being pressurised into certain types of behaviour, for example substance misuse; or where there were existing concerns about the adult concerned and his previous involvement with other young women. Young women in this category appeared to be involved in a grooming process. It was suspected that some had very recently been coerced into prostitution. This category represented the largest number of referrals to the Project.

The final category of young women was those actively involved in prostitution.

In early 2002 the letters were presented to the Policy and Practice sub-group of the ACPC. There were three letters in total- one for use by police, one for use by social services and one for use by solicitors consulted by the young people or their parents.

The idea behind introducing a standard letter was that it would result in consistent practice and deter some potential abusers by warning them of the consequences of their actions. The letters contained a statement concerning the child's age and that the 'relationship' is taking place without the parent or carer's consent. Both of these issues had caused difficulties during previous prosecutions for child abduction and unlawful sexual intercourse.

At the conclusion of the Pilot, a decision was made to adopt a letter used by another local ACPC to ensure cross-region consistency.

4.8 Keepsafe

The Keepsafe project was established in 1992 as part of the local Crime Reduction Programme. It is a registered charity that was established by the local Domestic Violence Forum. Its remit is to reduce fear of crime by making houses safe. A free service is offered to houses in crime hardened areas. All contractors and fitters are police checked.

The pilot provided a bank of equipment so that Keepsafe could offer the same service to young women at risk, their families and specialised foster carers. The equipment obtained consisted of bars, kick boards, mobile alarms, smoke alarms, chains, spy holes, plug in sensors, locks, tower bolts and window locks. The fitting of the equipment would follow an assessment. In referrals from the project, an assessment would take place within 24 hours, the fitting within 48. A telephone follow up would be made 7 days later.

Keepsafe fitted equipment to the four specialised foster carers, and three young women's homes. Evaluation sheets showed that all felt safer as a result of the work carried out. Each assessment and fitting cost £250. The Pilot although limited by financial restraints, demonstrated the positive outcome a provision like this could achieve at a relatively low cost.

4.9 The Foster Carers scheme

Four foster carers were recruited from existing local authority provision. The recruitment process was a collaboration between social services, the youth service, and the Pilot. Due to funding restriction, recruitment was staggered over the life of the Pilot.

The original concept was to provide four homes where young women accessing the project could be placed, and receive specialist care. One foster carer was originally intended to keep a bed free for emergency provision.

The training and support received by the carers would give them specialist skills whereby they could be an equal professional partner in discussing strategies for intervention in that young person's life. The relationship would also empower the young person to challenge negative issues in their life and move forward. Finally the foster carer could be a resource for police intelligence. The diary kept by the carers would, when analysed, reflect some of the frustration and realities of caring for young people in these situations.

Two training events were held. The training events were designed to raise their awareness about the project, Pilot, and issues of exploitation through prostitution. Additionally the training courses were designed to offer practical advice and support on their roles and how they could contribute to safeguarding children in their care.

The first training session included a talk by a young woman who had been coerced into prostitution. The event was facilitated by the Research and Development Officer from the Pilot, a development worker from CROP, a youth officer and a manager from social services. The event informed them about different agency roles, and ACPC procedures. Case studies were used to explore different situations and difficult issues. The carers were provided with a pack, which was built up over the day, a diary, and a list of emergency telephone numbers.

The foster carers were asked to maintain the diaries. Throughout the life of the Pilot regular contact was maintained by telephone calls and arranged visits. Support and advice was given when required.

The second event was held to inform the carers of the results from the Pilot. A workshop was also held so they could comment on the positive and negative aspects of being involved in the Pilot. They were also asked to contribute to recommendations for any future foster carer scheme.

4.9.1 Negative aspects of the scheme

The original concept was to create four new posts, advertise and recruit new carers, but because of the time restrictions imposed by the Pilot, and the need to obtain the approval of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, this was not possible. Recruitment was therefore made from existing carers. As a result the carers could not be used as an exclusive resource for the Pilot. Often placement with them was not possible as they had no spare capacity.

In August 2001 the foster carer scheme formally became part of the Research and Development role. It was immediately apparent that key issues had not been considered. Some thought also needed to be given to a recruitment criteria for future carers. The two carers already recruited were both single mothers. Was the ideal placement a family placement or one where the young women placed had the sole attention of the carer?

Families might already have a young woman placed with them who was involved in prostitution. What if there were teenage boys in the household or vulnerable teenage girls? On the other hand, would a sole placement give a distorted view of family life?

A meeting was set up with the manager of the Family Care Team and a manager from social services. The decision reached was that there was no such thing as an ideal placement and what mattered more was the carer's personal ability to provide a loving stable home and the appropriate support to the young women placed with them. The way forward was to ensure that the foster carers were trained, and therefore well aware of the issues that could arise. It was also essential that they were properly supported.

Initially a 24-hour telephone help line for the carers was intended, staffed by volunteers from the Project, residential homes and social workers. This was based on the concept that with issues of exploitation, most emergencies arose out of office hours. As a result of lack of interest however this was never formed and the Pilot remained the only source of out of hours support and advice.

4.9.2 Positive aspects of the scheme

Through the Pilot, a better understanding was gained of the difficulties and frustrations faced by foster carers looking after young people involved in exploitation. Regular sources of complaint by all carers were the advice given by the Emergency Duty Team; the lack of understanding of abuse through prostitution from social workers; and the way the police responded to missing person reports. This was passed on to the relevant managers with the assistance of the Key Players group and Project's Steering Group.

The foster carers involved in the Pilot formed a support group and frequently met in person, or talked over the telephone. The carers noticeably gained confidence, and disseminated advice to other carers and agencies. An additional carer considered for respite care attended the training events. She went on to raise awareness in her local school. This in turn resulted in copies of *Fiona's Story* (Ivison, 1998) being bought for the school library, and the Project being asked to deliver its preventative programme in the school.

Most importantly, the specialised foster placements were a positive experience for the young women involved. In one case, a young woman was encouraged and supported by the carer in ending the abusive relationship. Out of four long-term placements, two young women were motivated to end relationships; one young woman with multiple needs continued to be exploited but formed an attachment to a carer which will hopefully result in her exit from prostitution; and a fourth young woman was the subject of strategy meetings aimed at devising a multi-agency plan for her protection.

A limited relationship with an out of area scheme was also established. In addition to sharing initiatives, in the future out of area emergency housing as well as permanent supported placements might be available through

this. This is particularly important where a young person may be prepared to give evidence against an abuser and needs to be moved out of area for her protection.

In retrospect, the scheme would have been more successful if recruitment of new private carers could have been made. This way a clearer recruitment criteria could have been determined, more placements would have been available, and young women accessing the Project would not have been competing with other children in need for placement. Although all carers were provided with Keepsafe equipment, all felt threatened at times and would have preferred to have a designated police and social worker to feed information back to. All carers voiced the need for 24-hour support, particularly when circumstances were traumatic.

The work of the Pilot has however been valuable in showing the potential of this work. It has shown that supportive and understanding placements can have a significant impact on protecting young people from abuse.

4.10 Analysis of legislation

The original bid to the Home Office proposed an analysis of the Child Abduction Act 1994. As the development aspect of the Pilot began to attempt to encourage police investigation; and delivered training to multi-agency audiences, this scope was widened to offer as wide as advice base as possible.

In its final format the analysis considered existing sexual offences and proposed reform; offences against the young; offences against young people with learning difficulties; offences against the person; offences against property; offences related to prostitution; and other criminal offences that may have relevance in cases of sexual exploitation. The lack of availability of police surveillance however dictated in most cases the need for a complainant. Most young people were unwilling to make a formal statement against their abusers although some had indicated their willingness to speak informally to the police. The only piece of legislation which avoiding this was child abduction. This as age limited, applying to young people 16 and under.

Additionally, therefore civil legislation was considered and remedies under the Family Law Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and Children Act 1989 considered. In one young woman's case a Family Law Act injunction with a power of arrest was obtained. Despite concerns that the making of a complaint to a civil court might have made her a target, the abuser abided by the injunction and it expired without incident.

Anti-social behaviours orders were also considered. The possibility of obtaining an exclusion order from areas around schools and young women's homes was explored. Finally Human Rights legislation was considered. This was particularly important given the considerations of necessity and proportionality given to requests for surveillance. The analysis of legislation is to be reproduced in full in a publication available through CROP next year.

4.11 Difficulties faced by the Pilot

The aims and objectives of the Home Office Pilot were ambitious. In order to achieve them there needed to be an established foundation of work around sexual exploitation in the town. It became apparent at an early stage however that many professionals were unaware of the issue, that despite ACPC procedures, there was no consistent way of addressing the issue and that many agencies were failing to share information with the police. Additionally as detailed above, the practice of some key agencies needed urgent redress.

In particular there seemed to be culture of fatigue among some agencies when raising issues with them. Interviewees spoke of increasing targets and pressure; lack of resources; and the struggle to incorporate new policies into their work. Performance indicators, which did not include sexual exploitation, were directly linked to budgets.

The Pilot was therefore hindered from the start by a lack of awareness and interest among the statutory professionals. The majority of the work on the Pilot was conducted by one person, and the Pilot was therefore limited in how much it could address these issues.

As detailed earlier in this chapter, information which could have assisted the police in launching an investigation was not passed to them. Apart from Key Players and committed professionals, agencies tended to be cautious about working together regarding this issue. Some workers were concerned that identifying

this issue and following ACPC procedures would increase there already over-burdened workloads. The lack of understanding of this issue also meant that some professionals made personal judgements about young women involved in exploitation. This was particularly true of the police, who continuously sought evidence from young women, requiring that they 'help themselves' before proceeding with any investigation.

Additionally different departments in key agencies were unaware of what the other was doing. The issue was therefore not only one of multi-agency but inter-agency communication. Although the police suggested morning 'rolling' computer briefs to address this, information later received from community police officers suggested that had never been implemented. A meeting with Intelligence officers revealed that they had never heard of the Pilot. The result was a reactive rather than pro-active culture in which it was impossible to achieve a major investigation of the suspected perpetrators. There seemed to be a reluctance to think creatively around obstacles. Responsibility was continuously placed on young people's shoulders, rather than with the suspected abusers. There was also a resistance to any suggested change in policy or practice. The Pilot attempted to address some of these issues with senior personnel. The response was defensiveness and hostility. Any interventions following those consultations were conducted in secrecy. Information fed to Key Players was later contradicted by information from other sources. This report is therefore unable to say with confidence what the response of key agencies to those consultations were.

Additionally when data was sent to the Home Office evaluation team, the hostility increased and became personalised. Suggestions were made that the research was flawed, that facts had been fabricated or exaggerated and attempts were made to censure future data. Despite these allegations being confronted and disproved, the last four months of the Pilot were spent in isolation, unable to access information, attend meetings or send data to the evaluation team without the approval of senior managers. The finding for the Pilot was not extended any further as a result.

Despite this, some agencies' practice did change during and after the Pilot. The Police in particular carried out a joint review of cases with social services where young women had been identified as sexually exploited. It is believed that a full review of evidence took place, and an investigation of some sort launched. A recommendation of the review was an overhaul of missing person procedure which subsequently took place. This should ensure consistent recording of information. Additionally relevant facts such as whether the young person is on the 'at risk' register, whether they have been found at a certain location before, and what is known about any men they may be associating with should be available to officers responding to a missing person report. Additionally a new post of Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator was created. It is also believed that managers from social services have met regularly to review policy and practice.

Work by the Pilot and Project with the Crime Reduction Programme will hopefully lead to sexual exploitation being included in the Crime and Disorder Audit in the future, under the category of violent crime or domestic violence. This may result in sexual exploitation being adopted as a policing priority and for resources to be accordingly allocated.

The Project has always worked closely with the ACPC. Several members of the Steering Group and Key Players are members of the ACPC or its sub-groups. The Project was instrumental in drafting the ACPC guidelines regarding child sexual exploitation. Through Key Players the guidelines and their effectiveness have been monitored. Sexual exploitation was proposed and has been adopted as a ACPC key objective for 2002-2003.

Although limited access to data in the final months of the Pilot prevented proper analysis, the amount of discussions and meetings taking place to share concerns about children affected by issues of sexual exploitation are believed to have increased as a result of the development aspect of the Pilot. If so, this should lead to more informed and effective strategies to be developed to safeguard children and disrupt the behaviour of their abusers. It is also believed that senior managers have been meeting regularly to discuss issues and strategies. This should ensure this issue is not neglected in the future.

Overall the Pilot was a positive influence in the town where it was located. It achieved a great deal of innovative work and promoted some important reviews of practice. Hopefully the Pilot has raised the profile of abuse through prostitution. Notwithstanding the negativity and hostility it received in its final months, discussions to improve the services young people and their families receive; and to consider ways to address

the men who target vulnerable young people should ensure that the cause and symptom of exploitation is addressed effectively in the future.