

# REPORT TO ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

## SUBSTANTIVE REPORT

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In August 2014 Professor Alexis Jay published her report into child sexual exploitation ("CSE")<sup>1</sup> in Rotherham (the "Jay Report"). The decision by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (the "Council") to commission the Jay Report put Rotherham, the Council and its response to CSE in the spotlight. The impact of CSE on the children and young people of Rotherham between 1997 and 2013 has been profound. The Jay Report, and those reports that have followed including the report prepared by Louise Casey in 2015 (the "Casey Report"), ensured that the issue was 'out in the open'. A number of perpetrators have been convicted of serious criminal offences and crucial work to investigate and prosecute those accused continues. It remains an issue that is high on the agenda for Children and Young People's Services in local authorities throughout the country.
- 1.2 Having established what was happening to children and young people in Rotherham over those years, the obvious question for those with responsibility for the Council's services at the time is: 'What went wrong?' but it is a question that has been difficult to answer. It seems clear that, for those working with children and young people, identifying and responding effectively to emerging evidence of CSE has been difficult to tackle. It required professionals to think differently. It is an issue that appears to have been misunderstood and misinterpreted over the years, and not just in Rotherham.
- 1.3 Many people at the Council did take the issue very seriously but did not always have the right tools, resources or support to deal with it effectively. It required a pro-active response from the Police, which was not always forthcoming. It required professionals with different qualifications and expertise to set aside differences in their professional disciplines and collaboratively work together – to move away from the 'silo' mentality. Sometimes this was achieved, to good effect, and sometimes not. Allegations of cover up and collusion went to the highest levels of the Council. All of this took place across a period of considerable change for the Council, in the delivery of services to children and young people and against a backdrop of reducing budgets and competing demands.
- 1.4 This report examines what happened at the Council in the past, considers the allegations made, and seeks to identify the lessons that should be learned. It examines the roles and performance in role of senior officers in post between 1997 and 2013 and asks the question whether any disciplinary or other remedial action is now required.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 We were instructed by the Council to conduct an independent investigation and prepare a report into the performance, practice and conduct of senior staff referred to in the Jay Report between 1997 and 2013 (the "Relevant Period").
- 2.2 The report is produced by Mark Greenburgh, a partner and Head of Public Sector at Gowling WLG (UK) LLP with the support of Jemma O'Reilly, a Principal Associate with the firm, and Alison Lowton (AL), a consultant who was previously Director of Law and Administration for the London Borough of Camden and is an expert in Children's Services law. The report is the culmination of many months of work. We are grateful to senior officers at the Council for their time in providing

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<sup>1</sup>The term 'CSE' is used throughout the report but the terminology only altered from 'child prostitution' to 'child sexual exploitation' in governmental guidance issued in 2006'.

information and access to witnesses.

- 2.3 In line with our Terms of Reference we have identified members of staff with responsibility for the Council's response to CSE and sought to identify their individual and collective responsibilities, actions and failings across the Relevant Period. In particular, the report considers when and how issues concerning CSE came to the attention of senior officers; who was responsible for the Council's response; what key CSE related strategies were in place; any barriers to progress; and the wider impact of the culture in which these individuals worked. The report is intended to assist the Council to determine whether or not there are grounds to commence disciplinary or capability proceedings against any current employee or the need to refer any former or current employee to the relevant regulator on grounds of professional misconduct. In the case of former employees any such recommendations together with supporting information would need to be passed to the current employer for them to consider.
- 2.4 We sourced and reviewed relevant and, where possible, contemporaneous documentation from the Council and from publically available sources. We have not sought, as part of this report, to either question or endorse the findings in previous reports about the Council but we have used published documents, including the Jay Report and the Casey Report as a starting point for our own investigation. We also referenced the recently published book titled *'Broken and Betrayed'*<sup>2</sup>. In addition to this a large number of people willingly gave their time in interviews and provided written responses to our questions. A number of those interviewed provided copy documentation to us to support their evidence. Some of them have also engaged lawyers, at their own expense, to assist them. A number of those who assisted us have already been the subject of significant scrutiny in the press and have given time to multiple different inquiries. We are grateful to them for agreeing to assist us despite any reservations they may have had about doing so.
- 2.5 Our Terms of Reference do not extend to investigating and reporting on the role that Members of the Council played in the Council's response to CSE. However, we have considered concerns which witnesses expressed during our investigations about the effect of Members' attitudes on the working environment for Council officers during the Relevant Period. We were able to speak to Mark Edgell, the Leader of the Council between 2000 and 2003 but former Leader Roger Stone and Lead Member for Children's Services, Shaun Wright declined to participate, and Paul Lakin (also a Lead Member for Children's Services) cancelled our interview and did not re-schedule. That is disappointing as these former Members could have made a useful contribution to the investigation.
- 2.6 The correct test of evidence for the findings of this report is the 'balance of probabilities'. This is substantially lower than the criminal burden of proof which must be 'beyond reasonable doubt'. For most interviewees, a significant period of time had elapsed since the matters in question took place. Much of the available evidence was oral and could not be substantiated by documentation. Significant weight could not be placed on this evidence particularly when, as was often the case, witnesses could not recall matters with clarity, or where accounts and recollections differed. Where there are conflicts of evidence we have made that clear. We have also made it clear where more than one witness has given the same or similar accounts; and/or where contemporaneous notes or other corroboration exists. It is inevitable that memories have faded and/or been influenced by subsequent reports (i.e. interviewees often struggled with whether they could genuinely recall something from the time, or if they had read about it since then in reports or in the press). Despite these difficulties we consider that, in the main, those we interviewed were honest and tried to recollect events as well as they could, given the passage of time, the lack of available

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<sup>2</sup> 'Broken and Betrayed' Jayne Senior (2016)

documentation (see below) and the fact that many of them have given evidence to multiple different inquiries which may to some extent have generalised their recollection.

- 2.7 The preparation of this report was hampered by two key factors: the first was that a number of former senior officers chose not to engage with the process (and cannot be compelled to do so); and the second was that some of the contemporaneous documentation we had hoped to review was limited or now appeared to be missing despite the best efforts of the Council to try and track it down. Whilst we would have expected some of this documentation to have been retained we were not surprised to find that it was difficult to locate documents up to fifteen years after they had been created. As people moved roles at the Council, or moved on, few retained contemporaneous records nor do we expect them to have done so. We have no reason to believe that any documentation has been withheld from us or deliberately concealed or withheld. We are confident that the broad thrust of our findings are robust and would not have been significantly different even if all of the papers we had asked for had been found.
- 2.8 Our task has been to respond to the Terms of Reference provided by the Council. Matters in this report have already been the subject of significant scrutiny. On the evidence available to us we have concluded that the way in which the Council responded to CSE in Rotherham was not the responsibility or fault of any one person. It was the product of multiple and systemic failures. But there were key moments when a substantially different history may have occurred if individual judgements and responses had been better. We have highlighted these. Whilst our report has a specific focus, it should not be read in isolation. It is one of a number of reports that have been commissioned since the publication of the Jay Report and its contents form part of the overall picture.

### **3 SUMMARY**

- 3.1 Most senior officers with responsibility for the safeguarding of children (from Chief Executives to Heads of Service as well as some Members) across the Relevant Period knew that there were issues with CSE (or 'child prostitution' as it was known prior to guidance issued in 2006) for the Council, even if the extent and scope, later identified in the Jay Report, had not been realised.
- 3.2 Though there was some evidence of early, informal, activity by junior officers, the key multi-agency response to the issue in the Council was Risky Business, which was founded in 1997. This was not a 'top down' response by senior managers to a recognised problem; rather it was the result of a joint bid for funding prepared by two innovative junior officers working in the Youth Service and in Social Services. The project was managed and run by the Youth Service which sat within the Education, Culture and Leisure Department (prior to the creation of Children's Services in 2004). The remit of the project broadly remained the same until it was absorbed within Social Care, at the behest of senior officers in 2011. Whilst the Risky Business project itself was successful (in that it provided critical support to young people and children at risk of 'child prostitution' and later CSE in Rotherham), the evidence suggests that the concerns they raised were sometimes dismissed or played down, and that its structure, working methods and approach were criticised at the time. Some senior officers failed to take positive action to examine the concerns that the project identified. Opportunities for learning were missed, certainly in the early part of the Relevant Period, due to a silo approach to service provision and due to misgivings about how the Risky Business project was operating.
- 3.3 In addition to the Risky Business project itself, between 1997 and 2013, there were a large number of other multi-agency groups at the Council with 'child prostitution' and later CSE as their focus (many overlapped and reported to each other across the Relevant Period). Some of these meetings involved senior officers from the Council and some did not. The time and resource

involved in preparing for and attending those meetings would have been significant, though it is difficult to establish what tangible contribution was made. The evidence suggested that some groups struggled with attendance (unsurprisingly given the sheer number of groups) and that some were 'talking-shops' rather than pro-active bodies that held themselves or each other properly to account. This appears to have remained the case despite external reviews in later years which flagged the issue. The number of groups in place across the Relevant Period was indicative of an organisation that was endeavouring to get to grips with CSE (or matters we would now recognise as such) but was struggling to find an effective way of doing so.

- 3.4 Some positive work was done by the Council, but its progress was hampered by organisational and attitudinal barriers. The relationship between Social Services and Education, Culture and Leisure, especially prior to 2005, was blinkered and there appears to have been a fundamental lack of recognition and understanding about what Social Workers and Youth Workers could both bring to the table as far as tackling CSE was concerned. There was a lack of trust which led to multiple allegations of cover-up. Although relationships improved when these directorates merged into Children and Young People's Services from 2005, the damage was not easily repaired. This was a contributory factor and a number of opportunities to take early decisive action to tackle the issue were missed as a result.
- 3.5 These 'operational barriers' must also be viewed within the context of a culture where, the evidence suggests, some people had concerns about the portrayal of the race/ethnicity of perpetrators of CSE and where many of those interviewed offered their own accounts of sexism/misogyny, harassment and bullying in the working environment. That culture appears to have persisted despite multiple changes in the senior management team across the Relevant Period and the evidence suggests it was also attributable, in part, to a culture amongst Members which was not tackled adequately.

## **4 THE SENIOR OFFICERS**

- 4.1 Ultimately the senior officers who were responsible for ensuring that the Council met its duty to respond to CSE were the Chief Executive and the relevant Directors and senior managers in Education, Culture and Leisure and Social Services/Children's Services across the Relevant Period.
- 4.2 We have summarised our findings in relation to the individuals who filled these key roles at the Council across the Relevant Period. We have not found evidence to support any notion that any individual 'turned a blind eye' to CSE in Rotherham. But neither is there much evidence of 'inquiring minds' or a purposive approach when evidence of what was happening did come to their attention. The actions taken to tackle CSE are the focus of this report, but one of the main problems in Rotherham was that no one had sole responsibility either for identifying CSE or for implementing strategies to tackle it. In our view, no individual officer can or should be held out as solely or principally culpable for the Council's failings.
- 4.3 The identity of those who held the various key roles changed throughout the Relevant Period. Across the early part (1997-2003) of the Relevant Period the Chief Executives were Alan Carruthers (1999-2000) and Ged Fitzgerald (2000-2003). The Director of Social Services was John Gomersall (1999-2005) and the Director of Education, Culture and Leisure was Diane Billups (2001-2005). Other senior managers included Jacqueline Wilson who was Head of Children and Families within Social Services (2000-2004) and Phil Rogers who was Strategic Leader of Culture, Leisure and Lifelong Learning within Education, Culture and Leisure (2001-2009). The Risky Business project, which was part of Youth Services, sat within Education, Culture and Leisure across this period.

4.4 Across the later part (2004-2013) of the Relevant Period the Chief Executives were Mike Cuff (2004-2009) and Martin Kimber (2009–2014). The Director of the newly created Children and Young People's Services was Dr Sonia Sharp (2005–2008) and then Joyce Thacker (2008–2014). The Risky Business project was absorbed into this new directorate along with Youth Services and Social Services. Other senior managers included Simon Perry (latterly Director of Targeted Services until August 2011) and Pam Allen (latterly Director of Locality Teams (Safe) until 2009). After 2009 the comparable role of Director of Safeguarding was held by Lyn Burns (November 2009 to March 2010), Gani Martins (to February 2011), Howard Woolfenden (to December 2012) and Clair Pyper (to August 2014).

#### 4.5 The Chief Executives

- (a) As the 'Head of Paid Service' the Chief Executives did not have lead operational responsibility for the work of the directorates. None of them had nor should be expected to have had, day-to-day oversight of the many projects and initiatives that officers would be working on across the Council. However, Chief Executives do have ultimate responsibility for the coordination of the Council's functions, and for allocating resources to meet specific circumstances when they come to their attention. We interviewed Alan Carruthers who held the role between 1999 and 2000. Ged Fitzgerald who was in post from 2000 to 2003 declined to be interviewed but agreed to provide written responses to questions as did Mike Cuff, who was in post 2004 to 2009 and Martin Kimber who then held the role until 2014. All are now retired save for Mr Fitzgerald who works elsewhere in local government.
- (b) Although Mr Carruthers was aware of the work of the Risky Business project, which had been running since 1997, his evidence was that no specific issues about CSE (or matters we would now recognise as such) were brought to his attention during his tenure. The project was still in its infancy and it appears that 'child prostitution' (as it was known then) did not have a high profile at a senior level in the Council. These issues were not raised with Mr Carruthers in writing nor did they feature in Executive Directors meetings. He assumed the project was working as problems were not being escalated to him. Mr Carruthers seemed unaware of the systemic issues that blighted the operation of Risky Business in its formative years, but there is no evidence that its findings or the concerns it raised, were brought to his attention.
- (c) The work of the Risky Business project had, however, come to the attention of Mr Fitzgerald by late 2001. He had contact with senior Police officers and met with senior managers about specific issues relevant to a pilot project, connected with the Home Office, concerning matters we would now recognise as CSE in Rotherham. There is little evidence available about who else was involved in those meetings, the discussions they had, or any actions identified by or taken by or at the behest of Mr Fitzgerald, as a result of his involvement. Mr Fitzgerald recalls that events were 'downplayed' and he did not raise the issue with Members. The pilot project ended in 2002. Correspondence from a partner of the pilot project, CROP (now PACE), at the end of 2002 and into 2003, culminated in a letter to Mr Fitzgerald in February 2003 asserting that the Council "obstructed significant planned research". We could find no evidence of an investigation into that claim, or of any response to that letter from Mr Fitzgerald, although he says such a letter would have been passed to the Director of Education, Culture and Leisure (Ms Billups) for a response. We have not seen any evidence which substantiates that such a response was made. In our view concerns of this nature deserved a response from the Chief Executive, but there is no reason to believe the absence of such was a deliberate strategy or that Mr Fitzgerald was involved in, or aware of any 'cover up'. Mr Fitzgerald says he relied on the professional expertise of others around him; but there is no documentary evidence of such advice being sought or obtained. It is clear that opportunities to look into the position in more detail in 2001, when Mr Fitzgerald had personal dealings with the Police and again when he received external correspondence in 2002/2003, were

missed. Had a more rigorous approach been taken by him then, or if he had looked to establish the reasons behind the issues raised with the Police or in the correspondence, his understanding of the issues and response by the Council might have been very different.

(d) In December 2004, shortly after Mr Cuff had joined as Chief Executive, there was a report to Members and other senior officers about the scale of CSE in Rotherham. This report was a turning point in the Council's response to CSE, in that this was the first time that CSE had been drawn to the attention of such a large number of people at a senior level. The report triggered a 'Task and Finish Group' and, though Mr Cuff had no direct involvement with this group, he recalls that its work was absorbed into the first Children's Plan developed by Dr Sharp in 2005. Significant Police operations concerning CSE began during Mr Cuff's tenure and, though he had no direct involvement, numerous other reports into the work of Risky Business and its structure were commissioned at an operational level. Although Mr Cuff was sighted on the issue, and knew work had been commissioned to address it, and recalls presentations about CSE and wider work as part of the first Children's Plan; the extent and scope of that work has been difficult to establish given that some documentary evidence could not be found. However, the issue does not appear to have attracted the level of attention from him which, with the benefit of hindsight, it should.

4.6 By the time Mr Kimber was appointed in late 2009, Children's Services had been rated by Ofsted as inadequate (unexpectedly as far as the Strategic Director of Children's Services was concerned, and for matters unrelated to CSE). Mr Kimber appears to have taken appropriate steps to inform himself of the position in Rotherham with respect to CSE alongside steps to try to mitigate the impact of the high staff turnover at a senior level in Children and Young People's Services between 2010 and 2014. Significant Police operations concerning CSE including Operation Central concluded during this period and Operation Czar began, for which the Council's approach was criticised by others. We make no judgement on that. Mr Kimber did recognise the problem and he commissioned the Jay Report which identified the scale of CSE in Rotherham. Mr Kimber left the Council following its publication.

#### 4.7 Directors and Senior Managers in Social Services/Education Culture and Leisure

(a) Until 2005 Social Services and Education, Culture and Leisure (which incorporated Youth Services and also the Risky Business project) operated as two separate and distinct directorates at the Council with too little dialogue or collaboration between them. This was a common phenomenon and led, in part, to the requirement for Children's Services Directorates to be formed.

(b) Lead responsibility for safeguarding sat with Social Services but both directorates worked with children and young people at risk of 'significant harm'. We interviewed the respective Directors: John Gomersall who was Director of Social Services between 1999 and 2005 and Diane Billups who was Director of Education, Culture and Leisure between 2001 and 2005. Both have since retired. Other senior managers from those directorates who feature in this report include Jacqueline Wilson who was Head of Children and Families between 2000 and 2004, and Phil Rogers who was Strategic Leader of Culture, Leisure and Lifelong Learning (which included responsibility for Youth Services) from 2001. He retired in 2009 and Ms Wilson works elsewhere in local government.

(c) Although Mr Gomersall knew about an early initiative in Rotherham called 'Street Team' and he knew of the Risky Business project, surprisingly he appears to have had no direct knowledge about the scale of CSE in Rotherham until a report to Members in December 2004. This lack of knowledge is inconsistent with the evidence provided by others. Even though the Risky Business project sat in a different directorate, others around him, including the Chief Executive (to whom he reported) Mr Fitzgerald, Ms Billups and Ms Wilson had been involved with the project, knew about



the work it was doing from as early as 2001 and say they spoke to him about it. He says he has no recollection. Even though he was seconded to other duties for part of the period in question, it remains surprising that the Director of Social Services remained apparently unaware of such a significant issue and that there is no documentary trail that chronicles his personal knowledge and involvement. Whilst Mr Gomersall's recollection is likely to be inaccurate, we do not consider that this is deliberate or that he is seeking to minimise the extent of his knowledge or involvement. The report to Members in December 2004 was a turning point for the Council's response, so it is not unreasonable that this sticks out in his memory. Following that meeting Mr Gomersall asserted that he took positive action to progress the CSE agenda including seeking reports directly from the newly established Task and Finish Group, ensuring cases were allocated and ensuring that Dr Sharp was fully appraised. In respect of the culture of the department, although Mr Gomersall took steps he considered appropriate to deal with concerns that were raised with him, the effectiveness of those measures is not clear.

- (d) Similarly, although Ms Wilson knew of Risky Business and of the issue of CSE in Rotherham, she took more of a 'hands off' approach on the basis that Risky Business was not part of her service or area of direct responsibility. That there was not a single senior designated officer is a failure on the part of the Chief Executives and Directors, not of Ms Wilson, and the evidence is that she certainly did take more of an interest than Mr Gomersall. She knew CSE was an issue in Rotherham, albeit she says the evidence available to her was that it was on a 'small scale'. She made a referral of a case to the Risky Business project and she also escalated a CSE concern directly to the District Commander of the Police although, it appears that when they allegedly failed to action it, she did not take the issue any further either within the Police or within the Council. Allegations made that concerns were escalated to her which she failed to take seriously were not substantiated. Ms Wilson was involved in issues related to the Home Office pilot in 2002, which offered her an opportunity to look into matters relating to CSE in more detail, but that opportunity was not taken. We do not think this omission was deliberate. It seems that for Ms Wilson, although she intervened in respect of some individual service users and she understood this to be a serious issue for a small group of vulnerable young people, she did not appreciate the larger issue where needs were not being met. The impression given was of a focused response by Ms Wilson to the users and issues that lay within her direct service responsibilities rather than of a more holistic approach. Other allegations that Ms Wilson was involved in covering up issues related to CSE in Rotherham (including allegations that she authorised a 'raid' on Risky Business premises) are not supported by the evidence and we do not think she was involved in any deliberate 'cover up'. As one of few senior women in the Council at the time Ms Wilson offered detailed accounts and written evidence of examples of the misogyny and bullying behaviour towards women by some Members and officers and her attempts at procuring a change in established behaviours. She does not seem to have been supported by her superiors in those laudable efforts and inevitably to some extent Ms Wilson too lost heart as a result.
- (e) In contrast to Mr Gomersall's recollection Ms Billups, in her role with Education, Culture and Leisure, was briefed about CSE and the work of Risky Business when she arrived at the Council in 2001. Surprisingly she did not discuss this with Mr Carruthers (the Chief Executive) but she says she spoke to Mr Fitzgerald about it when he arrived as well as to Mr Gomersall and to Ms Wilson. She recalled visiting the Police Station on multiple occasions to flag her concerns about CSE, though it seems she relied on assurances by the Police that action was being taken, without tangible evidence that it was, or that it was effective. These were all important missed opportunities. Ms Billups did commission the report to Members in December 2004 which helped to raise the profile of CSE at a senior level, but there is little evidence to suggest that she insisted on a systematic response reported to her and to the Senior Management Team thereafter. It has been asserted that Ms Billups was one of those involved in 'covering up' issues related to CSE in Rotherham including allegations that she authorised a 'raid' on Risky Business premises. We have

not seen any evidence of this nor would Ms Billups' involvement in any form of cover up make sense in the context of the other work she did to raise the profile of CSE with other senior officers and with Members.

- (f) The person with overarching responsibility for the Youth Service and for Risky Business between 2001 and approximately 2005 was Phil Rogers. Despite the fact that Risky Business sat within his direct line of management, Mr Rogers said he had no knowledge of issues of child prostitution or CSE in Rotherham. This is very surprising to us. We recognise that memories fade but, for a manager in his position, with access to data and information, to have no knowledge at all implies either that he did not effectively line manage his service and/or did not absorb information provided to him. He reported to Ms Billups, who had significant involvement with the project between 2001 and 2005. The Heads of the Youth Service (to whom Risky Business reported directly) reported to Mr Rogers and recall discussing the project with him. The only recollection he does have is that he attended a meeting with the Police and others in 2001 though, unfortunately, he does not recall what was discussed at that meeting. Certainly it seems to us that a reasonable expectation would be that he was sighted on the services provided within his department, the issues encountered and the engagement with external agencies; together with the actions of the Task and Finish Group. We have seen no evidence that this was the case.

#### 4.8 Strategic Directors and Senior Managers in Children and Young People's Services

- (a) From 2005 these two directorates merged into Children and Young People's Services headed by a new Strategic Director. We interviewed Dr Sonia Sharp who held this role between 2005 and 2008 and received some written evidence from Joyce Thacker who held this role until 2014. To the best of our knowledge Mrs Thacker has not worked since 2014 and Dr Sharp is a principal in a consulting business which covers a number of sectors.
- (b) Other senior managers who feature in this section of the report include Simon Perry, who held numerous roles (latterly Director of Targeted Services until August 2011) which included overall responsibility for Risky Business. Numerous roles were held by Pam Allen (who had previously reported to Ms Wilson) between 2004 and 2009, latterly as Director of Locality Teams (Safe). After Ms Allen left in 2009 the comparable role of Director of Safeguarding was held by Lyn Burns (interim) from November 2009 until March 2010 and then Gani Martins until February 2011, by Howard Woolfenden until December 2012 and then again on an interim basis by Clair Pyper until August 2014. We received written responses to questions from Ms Allen and Ms Pyper and some written evidence from Mr Woolfenden and Mr Perry. We interviewed Ms Martins. We have no evidence from Ms Burns. Although Ms Allen and Ms Martins work elsewhere in local government we do not know the position for Mr Perry, Mr Woolfenden, Ms Burns or Ms Pyper.
- (c) In May 2005 Dr Sharp was appointed to manage the transition from the previous separate Social Services and Education, Culture and Leisure directorates into a single Children and Young People's Service (a requirement of national legislation). This project was of fundamental importance to the Council and was a very large task. While those impacted by the changes may have found them difficult this was no different to other local authorities who were undertaking similar work. Upon her appointment Dr Sharp took steps to inform herself of the position in Rotherham with respect to CSE. She attended the Risky Business premises to meet with workers and victims and, in conjunction with Ms Allen, commissioned a report in 2005 about the work of the project and ensured that CSE featured as a priority in the first Children's Services plan. Significant Police operations began during Dr Sharp's tenure. In our view Dr Sharp was well seized of the problem, ensured that there were resources and information available to assist in a meaningful response and the matter remained prominent. We make no criticism of her leadership concerning the Council's response to CSE.

- (d) Following Dr Sharp's departure in Spring 2008, Mrs Thacker was in the role (acting up until July 2008 and then permanently) until 2014. Her knowledge about CSE in Rotherham was significant as she had originally chaired the Risky Business steering group in 2005. She sat on CSE related groups including the Sexual Exploitation Steering group and commissioned reports including the Children First review in 2009 and the Barnardo's review in 2013. She was also involved with the Child S Serious Case Review and supported redactions made to it, although no finding of 'cover up' has been made in this respect. The extent (if any) to which Mrs Thacker was responsible for the Council's failures in respect of Operation Czar (which is heavily criticised in other reports) cannot be established on the information available. She had some involvement in the restructuring of Risky Business in 2011 and refutes that it was not adequately supported or funded. In November 2009, Children's Services was rated by Ofsted as inadequate (for matters unrelated to CSE, although it is indicative of the significant issues faced by the directorate). The evidence suggests that Mrs Thacker experienced significant bullying and other poor behaviour from her peers in the Council, which she tried to address, and she describes having 'suffered on several occasions as a consequence of my efforts'. There is little evidence of effective support for her efforts from her line manager or from HR. Mrs Thacker commissioned the Jay Report in conjunction with Mr Kimber and left the Council following its publication.
- (e) The extent of Mr Perry's knowledge or involvement with Risky Business or other matters relevant to the Council's response to CSE prior to the restructuring of that service in 2011 is not clear. He declined to be interviewed by us and the picture of his involvement from the small amount of documentation available is insufficient to allow us to form a coherent view. He was responsible for Risky Business at the point it was restructured in 2011. He denies allegations that he told the manager of Risky Business that 'someone has to take the fall for Child S' murder', or that he told the team, in the context of the proposed restructure, that they were 'f\*\*\*ed'. He describes the restructure as essential though there are questions about whether this new team was then funded and supported appropriately from the outset.
- (f) Prior to the report to Members in 2004, when Ms Allen was reporting to Ms Wilson, it appears that she had little knowledge of or involvement with Risky Business or its work. Allegations which pre-date 2004 including Ms Allen's alleged involvement with matters relating to the Home Office pilot project are not supported by the evidence available and we do not think that she was involved. Ms Allen worked with Dr Sharp in 2005 on the development of the new Children and Young People's Services. She commissioned specific reports in 2005 about the work undertaken by Risky Business and she was involved in early work about restructuring its service, as well as specific work for the Local Safeguarding Board and the Sexual Exploitation Forum. She also commissioned the Children First review in 2009. We have considered carefully the allegation of comments made by Ms Allen concerning the exaggeration and 'hysteria' of issues raised by Risky Business. Ms Allen vehemently denies the allegation and, even if such an impression had been given, there is no evidence in practice to suggest that Ms Allen failed to deal appropriately with matters relating to CSE. Similarly Ms Allen has been accused of 'cover up' but that is not supported by any evidence. We can find no basis to substantiate that allegation or that such a 'cover-up' took place at all. She offered examples of when she had sought to challenge the culture at the Council, having also experienced episodes of bullying and other poor behaviour particularly from Members.
- (g) Those who held the role after Ms Allen left only did so for short periods (both Ms Burns and Ms Pyper were in interim roles to 'hold the fort' pending the arrival of a permanent post holder). Based on the limited evidence available to us we have not made any criticism of the work of Ms Burns, Ms Martins or Ms Pyper in our report. The work of Mr Woolfenden, however, does merit further comment. He was in post when Risky Business was restructured in 2011. He says this was a positive move as opposed to one which amounted to the project being 'shut down' (as alleged); though there are questions about whether this new team received sufficient funding or support at

the outset. Mr Woolfenden rejects assertions that he put high thresholds in place at the 'front door' of Children's Services, but describes the changes as necessary to ensure that decisions about safeguarding issues were not being made by administrative staff without any professional accountability. He recalls raising concerns about data protection issues with the manager of Risky Business amid concerns about their operation and he also had some involvement in the Child S Serious Case Review, although he disputes this was significant. Mr Woolfenden was certainly aware of the issues and action, but we have not been able to reach a conclusion as to the effectiveness of his involvement from the information available. He did not wish to be interviewed but provided written responses to the questions posed.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Based on the evidence we our conclusions and recommendations to the Council are as follows:

- (a) To the best of our knowledge the following senior officers are not working elsewhere in any capacity: Mr Carruthers, Mr Cuff, Mr Kimber, Mr Gomersall, Mrs Thacker, Ms Billups and Mr Rogers. In relation to these former officers, whilst there may have been errors of judgement or missed opportunities as detailed in this report; and a failure, in some cases to tackle cultural issues effectively (or, in Mr Rogers' case, to grasp issues in a service for which he was directly responsible); we have found no culpable behaviour which could now justify any form of legal action or regulatory involvement of any kind. These officers may be in receipt of pensions from the Local Government Pension Scheme. Whilst there are provisions within the scheme to review pensions in certain circumstances, the evidence we have found would not support any application of the provisions associated with either gross negligence or fraud. We do not believe that there are any grounds for the Council to take steps in this respect.
- (b) We have not identified that disciplinary and/or capability proceedings are warranted in respect of any senior manager currently in post at the Council. Similarly we have not identified that a referral to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) is warranted in respect of any current or former officer of the Council identified in this report.
- (c) Some of the events in the Relevant Period took place a long time ago and doubtless the processes and reports that have already been made public will have caused all involved to have reflected and learned much with the passage of time and experience. We have residual concerns regarding the response to what was already a well-established issue by Mr Perry and Mr Woolfenden during their respective tenure in office. The evidence we have reviewed is insufficient for us to reach a concluded view. We would encourage their current employers to be satisfied that any relevant lessons have been learned.
- (d) We have been told that the current employers of Mr Fitzgerald and Ms Allen have already conducted investigations of their own – but we have not been provided with any details of the evidence considered or the conclusions reached. We make no comment as to the adequacy or robustness of those processes or their findings. The initial investigation into Ms Wilson was undertaken by this firm (the "Doncaster Report"), albeit without the benefit of much of the oral and documentary evidence available for this report.
- (e) However, the lessons to be learned are important for the sector as a whole and with this in mind, we recommend that the Council refers this report and its findings to the current employer of Mr Fitzgerald and Ms Wilson. It is important to be clear that we have not found that either of these people were uniquely culpable for the Council's response to emerging evidence of CSE. But there are points at which each missed opportunities to have changed the outcomes. We recommend that those employers consider whether they wish to raise any of these matters with their employee

in light of the content of this report, the findings of any internal investigation already conducted and the nature of the role and responsibilities now undertaken by the employee in their current role, to satisfy themselves that the learning has been adequately captured. Had the officers referred to in (a) above still been active in the sector we would have made the same recommendation. In respect of Ms Allen, whilst no adverse finding has been reached about her work for the Council in this report, we recommend that the Council refers this report and its findings to her current employer for them to review in light of the internal investigation they've already undertaken.

- (f) We are mindful of the conclusions of the House of Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government in its Report dated 18 November 2014 (Reference HC 648) which concluded that it is for the current employers to be satisfied that each has confidence in the individuals in their employment and their ability to perform their current role and whether they consider that any conduct on the part of the employee has brought the new employer into disrepute.
- (g) This report has examined what happened in the past and many of those involved have retired or moved on. The Council is not the same institution it once was either in terms of performance or culture, where significant improvements appear to have been made. We recognise that substantial progress, especially in Children's Services. Whilst the present day managers should look to see how the lessons learned are implemented, in our view it is vital that, the Council should continue to look forward.

## SUBSTANTIVE REPORT

### 1 BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 Our Terms of Reference

- (a) We have been instructed by Rotherham MBC (the "Council") to conduct an independent investigation and prepare a report to the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State into the performance, practice and conduct of senior staff referred to in the Report into historical Child Sexual Exploitation ("CSE")<sup>3</sup> in Rotherham by Professor Alexis Jay in October 2014 (the "Jay Report"); between 1997 and 2013 (the "Relevant Period"), and further highlighted in the Corporate Governance Inspection Report made by Louise Casey in February 2015 (the "Casey Report").
- (b) This report is intended to assist the Council to determine whether or not there are grounds to take disciplinary or capability proceedings against any current employee or the need to refer any current employee to the relevant regulator on grounds of professional misconduct. We have been asked to do the following:
- (i) Prepare a framework report to establish the relevant social care practice and professional standards in respect of CSE across the Relevant Period including current practice;
  - (ii) Establish and agree a list of those members of staff who may have held responsibility for the Council's response to CSE and to identify their individual role (or absence of) as well as their collective responsibilities, actions and failings across the Relevant Period;
  - (iii) Identify and, if possible, interview witnesses/former employees/current employees to establish the facts necessary to form conclusions relevant to the matters at (i) and (ii) above.
  - (iv) Review available relevant documentation such as reports, minutes of meetings, performance inspection reports, plans and strategies relevant to the matters at (i) and (ii) above.
  - (v) Provide a report to the Council that sets out conclusions and recommendations to include any further steps to ensure HR actions are taken where appropriate. This should include findings about the actions or inactions of current and former employees, and recommendations on whether disciplinary or capability procedures should be considered. In the case of former employees any such recommendations together with supporting information would be passed to the current employer for them to consider.
- (c) This report is produced by Mark Greenburgh, a partner and Head of Public Sector at Gowling WLG (UK) LLP with the support of Jemma O'Reilly, a Principal Associate and Alison Lowton (AL), a consultant who was previously Director of Law and Administration for the London Borough of Camden and is an expert in Children's Services law. Prior to becoming Director of Law AL specialised in the law relating to social care. Since leaving Camden AL has conducted a number of investigations arising from the death of a child.

#### 1.2 Scope and Methodology

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'CSE' is used throughout the report but the terminology only altered from 'child prostitution' to 'child sexual exploitation' in governmental guidance issued in 2006.

- (a) We have sourced oral and written evidence in respect of the matters at points 1.1(b)(ii to iv) above. This report considers the following questions:
- (i) When and how did issues concerning CSE come to the attention of senior officers in the Council?
  - (ii) Who was responsible for the Council's response to CSE and what key CSE related strategies were in place to try and address it across the Relevant Period?
  - (iii) What evidence is there about any barriers to progress and who was responsible for those across the Relevant Period in the Council?
  - (iv) How did the culture at the Council across the Relevant Period influence its response to CSE?
- (b) We prepared and sent letters to more than 70 people seeking their agreement to an interview. Most of those interviewed were current and former employees of the Council although we have also interviewed individuals who worked in the voluntary sector. We have not interviewed individuals who did work or currently work in other agencies such as the Police. We are grateful to the people listed below for their agreement to participate. Only those working at Service Manager level and above have been named in this report. We have detailed their tenure in post, though in many cases interviewees held numerous different roles during their employment with the Council or other relevant agencies:
- (i) Officer A who has held numerous roles since 1996;
  - (ii) Steve Ashley (SA): the former Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board between 2013 and 2014;
  - (iii) Officer B: who held numerous roles between 1992 and 2014 latterly as Safeguarding Unit Manager (2013 - 2014);
  - (iv) Officer C who held numerous roles between 1984 and 2015;
  - (v) Alan Carruthers (AC): who held numerous roles between 1975 and 2000 latterly as Chief Executive (August 1999 to 2000);
  - (vi) Diane Billups (DB) who was Director of Education, Culture and Leisure between January 2001 and April 2005;
  - (vii) Officer D who held numerous roles between 1983 and 2003;
  - (viii) Officer E who has held numerous roles since 1989;
  - (ix) Di Stirling-Chow (DS-C) who was the Interim Director of Housing between January 2006 and November 2007;
  - (x) Officer F who has held numerous roles since 1980;
  - (xi) Kim Curry (KC) the former Director of Strategy and Commissioning for Adult Social Care from 2006 – 2008;

- (xii) Officer G who was in post between 2011 and 2015;
- (xiii) Officer H who held numerous roles between 1978 and 2004;
- (xiv) Mark Edgell (ME): former Leader of Rotherham Council (2000 - 2003);
- (xv) Officer I who has held numerous roles since 2003;
- (xvi) Witness J who was in post between 2001 and 2002;
- (xvii) Matt Gladstone (MG) who held numerous roles between 2014 and 2010 latterly as Assistant Chief Executive;
- (xviii) Officer K who has been in post since 2000;
- (xix) John Gomersall (JG) who held numerous roles between 1973 and 2006 latterly as Executive Director of Social Services until 2005;
- (xx) Alan Hazell (AH) AH the former Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board between 2009 and 2013;
- (xxi) Officer M who was in post between 1997 and 2001;
- (xxii) Officer N who was in post between 2009 and 2010;
- (xxiii) Officer O who has held numerous roles since 2001;
- (xxiv) Officer P who held numerous roles between 1995 and 2010;
- (xxv) Gani Martins (GM) former Director of Children's Safeguarding between March 2010 and February 2011;
- (xxvi) Officer Q who held numerous roles between 1994 and 2014;
- (xxvii) Officer R who was in post between 2000 and 2003;
- (xxviii) Phil Morris (PM): who has held numerous roles since 1994 latterly LSCB Business Manager (2010 to present);
- (xxix) Rod Norton (RN): former Head of Young People's Services (2001 - 2006);
- (xxx) Cath Ratcliffe (CR): former Strategic Lead for School Attendance and Parenting (2001 - 2011);
- (xxxi) Witness S who worked with the Children and Young People and Families Voluntary Sector Consortium between 2005 and 2013;
- (xxxii) Phil Rogers (PRo) who held numerous roles between 2001 and 2009 latterly as Strategic Leader of Culture, Leisure and Lifelong Learning;
- (xxxiii) Officer T who was in post between 2000 and 2011;



- (xxxiv) Sonia Sharp (SS) who was Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services between April 2005 and July 2008;
  - (xxxv) Officer U who was in post between 2007 and 2010;
  - (xxxvi) Officer V who has held numerous roles since 1990;
  - (xxxvii) Witness W who worked in the voluntary sector between 1985 and 2010;
  - (xxxviii) Jim Stewart (JS): the former Safeguarding Manager/Strategic Safeguarding Manager between July 2005 and February 2010;
  - (xxxix) Alan Swann (AS): who held numerous roles between 1973 and 2008 latterly Director of HR/Assistant Chief Executive (2006 - 2008);
  - (xl) Officer X who held numerous roles between 1978 and 2008;
  - (xli) Officer XA who was in post from 1999 to 2012;
  - (xlii) Jacqueline Wilson (JW): the former Head of Children's Services between February 2000 and September 2004;
  - (xliii) Officer Y who has held numerous roles since 2001; and
  - (xliv) Officer Z who was in post between 2007 and 2012.
- (c) We prepared for each interview in advance and, where possible, held those interviews face to face. We recorded each interview and produced draft transcripts which were reviewed and then sent to each interviewee for their review<sup>4</sup>. With the consent of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and Doncaster Children's Services Trust, we have also used the report, the interview transcripts and other relevant evidence collated as part of a prior investigation into the conduct of JW relevant to the period between 1999 and 2004 (the "Doncaster Report") to supplement the evidence collated as part of this process where appropriate. This includes interviews with: Phil Kelly (PK) who held numerous roles between 1993 and 2003 latterly Children Services Manager, Protection, Performance and Quality (2000 - 2003); Sue May (SM): former Project Manager at NCH National Children's Homes in Rotherham between 2000 and 2006; and Pam Allen (see below).
- (d) Some officers declined to be interviewed in person but agreed to respond to written questions. We received written responses from the following people:
- (i) Pam Allen (PA): who held numerous roles between August 1999 and November 2009 latterly as Director Locality Teams (Safe)
  - (ii) Mike Cuff (MC): the former Chief Executive between April 2004 and August 2009;
  - (iii) Ged Fitzgerald (GF): the former Chief Executive between January 2001 and December 2003;

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<sup>4</sup> Officer T was interviewed and provided with transcripts but did not wish to comment on them due to the amount of time already engaged in contributing to external investigations and because she says some of the information is incorrect. DS-C was interviewed and provided with a transcript but did not approve it.

- (iv) Martin Kimber (MK): the former Chief Executive at the Council between October 2009 and October 2014;
  - (v) Clair Pyper (CP): the former Interim Director of Children's Safeguarding between December 2012 and August 2014; and
  - (vi) Annie Redmond (AR): who held numerous roles between February 2003 and July 2010 latterly as Service Manager: Operational Safeguarding Unit (2008 – 2010).
- (e) A further 27 people whom we sought to interview as part of this process either failed to respond at the time (having been sent letters or emails to the last known address held by the Council) or declined our request. In particular we sought to interview the following people who held key senior roles over the Relevant Period:
- (i) Christine Brodhurst Brown (CBB): who held numerous roles between 2002 and 2015 latterly Manager of the Youth Service (2009 – 2015)
  - (ii) Tom Cray (TC): who held numerous roles between 2003 and 2014 latterly as Director of Neighbourhoods & Adult Services;
  - (iii) Paul Lakin (PL): the former Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services between 2010 and 2014;
  - (iv) Simon Perry (SP): who held numerous roles between March 2001 and August 2011 latterly as Director of Targeted Services;
  - (v) Roger Stone (RS) the former Leader of the Council between 2003 and 2014;
  - (vi) Joyce Thacker (JT): who held numerous roles latterly the former Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services between July 2008 and September 2014;
  - (vii) Howard Woolfenden (HW): the former Director of Safeguarding between February 2011 and December 2012; and
  - (viii) Shaun Wright (SW): the former Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services between 2005 and 2010.
- (f) We have since received written responses in respect of a number of points from JT, HW and SP which feature in the findings below. The Council was unable to trace contact details for Lyn Burns (LB) who held the role of Interim Director of Children's Safeguarding between November 2009 and March 2010 until just prior to publication of this report so she has not been interviewed.
- (g) It is unfortunate that the individuals listed at (f)(i) to (viii) were not prepared to be interviewed. As many of them were in post at the Council across the latter years of the Relevant Period, it does mean that the evidence we have been able to report in respect of that period is somewhat limited. Despite this we have reported, where the evidence permits, on their work at the Council in respect of CSE and made appropriate recommendations at section 2.9 below. Those identified at section 2.9 below have each received letters setting out our provisional findings in relation to their involvement across the Relevant Period and have been given the opportunity to comment further prior to publication of this report.
- (h) Finally, we sourced relevant and, where possible, contemporaneous documentation from the

Council as well as from publically available sources, including the Jay Report and the Casey Report which are referred to throughout, the recently published book titled 'Broken and Betrayed' (the "RB [Risky Business] book") and reports prepared by the Communities and Local Government Committee. In some instances the contemporaneous documentation such as meeting minutes for example, was limited or missing altogether which has impacted on the conclusions outlined below. A number of those interviewed provided copy documentation to us to support their evidence. Efforts were also made by the Council to try and track down documentation that was missing. Whilst we would have expected some of this documentation to have been retained we were not surprised to find that it was difficult to locate documents up to fifteen years after they had been created. As people moved roles at the Council or moved on, few retained contemporaneous records nor do we expect them to have done so. We have no reason to believe that any documentation has been withheld from us or deliberately concealed or withheld. We are confident that the broad thrust of our findings are robust and would not have been significantly different even if all of the papers we had asked for had been found.

## **2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 2.1 Firm conclusions in respect of the points at 1.2(a) above have proved to be difficult. Not only is the contemporaneous documentation patchy but a number of those who worked at the Council and were involved in its response to emerging evidence of CSE over a significant proportion of the Relevant Period chose not to engage with the process and cannot be compelled to do so. The correct test of evidence for the findings of this report is the 'balance of probabilities'. This is substantially lower than the criminal burden of proof which must be 'beyond reasonable doubt'. For most interviewees, a significant period of time has elapsed since the matters in question. Much of the available evidence was oral and could not be further substantiated by documentation. Significant weight cannot be placed on this evidence particularly when, as was often the case, witnesses could not recall matters with clarity, or accounts and recollections differed. It is also inevitable that memories have faded and/or been influenced by more recent reports (i.e. interviewees often struggled with whether they could genuinely recall something from the time or if they had read about it since then in subsequent reports and in the press). Despite these difficulties we consider that, in the main, those we interviewed were honest and tried to recollect events as well as they could, given the passage of time, the lack of available documentation and the fact that many of them have given evidence to multiple different inquiries which may to some extent have generalised their recollection.
- 2.2 The evidence about when and how issues concerning CSE came to the attention of senior officers in the Council supports a finding that most senior officers with responsibility for the safeguarding of children (from Chief Executives to Heads of Service as well as some Members) across the Relevant Period did know that CSE (or 'child prostitution' as it was known prior to guidance issued in 2006) was an issue for the Council even if the extent and scope later identified in the Jay Report had not been realised.
- 2.3 Ultimately the senior officers who were responsible for the Council's response to CSE were the Chief Executives and the relevant Directors and Heads of Service in Education, Culture and Leisure and Social Services/Children's Services across the Relevant Period. Though there was some evidence of early, informal activity by junior employees the key multi-agency response to the issue in the Council was Risky Business which was founded in 1997. This was not a 'top down' response by senior officers to a recognised problem; rather it was the result of a joint bid for funding prepared by two innovative junior officers working in the Youth Service and in Social Services. The project was managed and run by the Youth Service which sat within the Education, Culture and Leisure Department (prior to the creation of Children's Services in 2004). The remit of the project remained broadly the same until it was absorbed at the behest of senior officers into a

new team under the control of social workers in 2011. Whilst the Risky Business project itself was a success (in that it provided critical support to young people and children at risk of 'child prostitution' and later CSE in Rotherham) the evidence suggests that the concerns they raised were sometimes dismissed or played down, and that its structure, working methods and approach were criticised at the time. Some senior officers failed to take positive action to examine the concerns that the project identified. Opportunities for learning were missed, certainly in the early part of the Relevant Period, due a silo approach in service provision and due to misgivings about how the Risky Business project was operating.

- 2.4 In addition to the Risky Business project itself, between 1997 and 2013, there were a large number of other multi-agency groups at the Council with 'child prostitution' and later CSE as their focus. Many overlapped and reported to each other across the Relevant Period. Some of these meetings involved senior officers from the Council and some did not. The time and resource involved in preparing for and attending those meetings would have been significant though it is difficult to establish what tangible contribution was made. The evidence suggested that some groups struggled with attendance (unsurprisingly given the sheer number of groups) and, that some were 'talking shops' rather than pro-active bodies that held themselves or each other properly to account. This appears to have remained the case despite external reviews in later years which flagged the issue. The number of groups in place across the Relevant Period was indicative of an organisation that was endeavouring to get to grips with CSE but was struggling to find an effective way of doing so.
- 2.5 The barriers to progress within the Council must be viewed within the context of a culture where, the evidence suggests, some people had concerns about the portrayal of the race/ethnicity of perpetrators of CSE and where many of those interviewed offered accounts of sexism/misogyny, harassment and bullying in the working environment. The culture appears to have persisted despite multiple changes in the senior management team across the Relevant Period and the evidence suggests it was also attributable, in part, to a culture amongst Members which was not tackled adequately.
- 2.6 With this culture as a backdrop the evidence suggests that some employees working within Youth Services (and particularly within Risky Business) may have encountered barriers as a result of their location and structure and that there could be a hierarchical and dismissive approach by some social workers and senior officers in Social Services/Children's Services towards the work being undertaken.
- 2.7 We also investigated the involvement of senior officers at the Council in a number of discrete allegations of cover-up including matters relating to the Home Office Pilot and the alleged raid of the Risky Business premises in 2002, matters relating to the delivery of a report in 2004, the redactions made to the Serious Case Review for Child S in 2010 and the alleged removal of other documents and equipment from the Risky Business premises. There is no evidence to support a finding that any senior officer was involved in or orchestrated a deliberate cover up of information concerning reports of CSE at the Council. However, the evidence does support findings that, on numerous occasions throughout the Relevant Period, senior officers appear to have focused on how (or to whom) information was being presented rather than on the information itself. The evidence suggests that a number of opportunities to take early decisive action to tackle CSE were missed.
- 2.8 Our task has been to respond to the Terms of Reference provided by the Council. Matters in this report have already been the subject of significant scrutiny. On the evidence available to us we have concluded that the way in which the Council responded to CSE in Rotherham was not the responsibility or fault of any one person. It was the product of multiple and systemic failures. Whilst

our report has a specific focus, it should not be read in isolation. It is one of a number of reports that have been commissioned since the publication of the Jay Report and its contents form part of the overall picture.

2.9 Based on the evidence we have been able to collate our recommendations to the Council are as follows:

- (a) To the best of our knowledge the following senior officers are not working elsewhere in any capacity: Alan Carruthers (AC), Mike Cuff (MC), Martin Kimber (MK), John Gomersall (JG), Joyce Thacker (JT), Diane Billups (DB) and Phil Rogers (PRo). In relation to these former officers, whilst there may have been errors of judgement or missed opportunities as detailed in this report; and a failure, in some cases to tackle cultural issues effectively (or, in Mr Rogers' case, to grasp issues in a service for which he was directly responsible); we have found no culpable behaviour which could now justify any form of legal action or regulatory involvement of any kind. These officers may be in receipt of pensions from the Local Government Pension Scheme. Whilst there are provisions within the scheme to review pensions in certain circumstances, the evidence in this report would not support any application of the provisions associated with either gross negligence or fraud. We do not believe there are any grounds for the Council to take steps in this respect.
- (b) We have not identified that disciplinary and/or capability proceedings are warranted in respect of any senior manager currently in post at the Council. Similarly we have not identified that a referral to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) is warranted in respect of any current or former officer of the Council identified in this report.
- (c) Some of the events in the Relevant Period took place a long time ago and doubtless the processes and reports that have already been made public will have caused all involved to have reflected and learned much with the passage of time and experience. We have residual concerns regarding the response to what was already a well-established issue by Mr Perry and Mr Woolfenden during their respective tenure in office. The evidence we have reviewed is insufficient for us to reach a concluded view. We would encourage any current employer to be satisfied that any relevant lessons have been learned.
- (d) We have been told that the current employers of Mr Fitzgerald and Ms Allen have already conducted investigations of their own – but we have not been provided with any details of the evidence considered or the conclusions reached. We make no comment as to the adequacy or robustness of those processes or their findings. The initial investigation into Ms Wilson was undertaken by this firm (the "Doncaster Report"), albeit without the benefit of much of the oral and documentary evidence available for this report.
- (e) However, the lessons to be learned are important for the sector as a whole and with this in mind, we recommend that the Council refers this report and its findings to the current employer of Mr Fitzgerald and Ms Wilson. It is important to be clear that we have not found that either of these people were uniquely culpable for the Council's response to emerging evidence of CSE. But there are points at which each missed opportunities to have changed the outcomes. We recommend that those employers consider whether they wish to raise any of these matters with their employee in light of the content of this report, the findings of any internal investigation already conducted and the nature of the role and responsibilities now undertaken by the employee in their current role, to satisfy themselves that the learning has been adequately captured. Had the officers referred to in (a) above still been active in the sector we would have made the same recommendation. In respect of Ms Allen, whilst no adverse finding has been reached about her work for the Council in this report, we recommend that the Council refers this report to her current employer for their review, in light of the internal investigation they've already undertaken.

- (f) We are mindful of the conclusions of the House of Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government in its Report dated 18 November 2014 (Reference HC 648) which concluded that it is for the current employers to be satisfied that each has confidence in the individuals in their employment and their ability to perform their current role and whether they consider that any conduct on the part of the employee has brought the new employer into disrepute.

### **3 WHEN AND HOW DID ISSUES CONCERNING CSE COME TO THE ATTENTION OF SENIOR OFFICERS IN THE COUNCIL?**

- 3.1 Section 13 of the Jay Report stated that by 2005, it was 'hard to believe that any senior officers or members from the Leader and the Chief Executive downwards were not aware of the issue' (Appendix 5). In this section we report on the evidence we have collated about when and how issues concerning CSE (or 'child prostitution' as it was known prior to guidance issued in 2006) came to the attention of senior officers (and others) in the Council across the Relevant Period.
- 3.2 As the Relevant Period spans some sixteen years it is important to place the evidence in the appropriate context. The framework document at Appendix 1 sets out the relevant social care practice and professional standards in respect of CSE across the Relevant Period including current practice. It is clear from this framework that the Children Act 1989 placed Local Authorities under a duty to investigate and make enquiries into the circumstances of children considered at risk of '*significant harm*' which can include physical, sexual and emotional harm and neglect.
- 3.3 Lead responsibility fell to the Director of Social Services prior to 2004 and to the Director of Children's Services post 2004. The current version of the guidance on the responsibilities of this role was last reviewed in 2012. The framework document makes it clear that the Chief Executive had ultimate officer responsibility especially as they were usually also the Head of Paid Service which, amongst other things, carried the responsibility of ensuring there were sufficient staff to carry out the local authority's functions. However the local authority as a whole carried the corporate parenting responsibility for any children looked after by it.
- 3.4 The original statutory guidance in place at the start of the Relevant Period was called 'Working Together' and stated that children involved in '*prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation*' are to be treated as victims of abuse. Although this guidance does not specifically reference CSE the evidence suggests that the activities now recognised as CSE were a known risk factor for children and young people. The guidance determines that 'the welfare of children is a corporate responsibility of the entire local authority, working in partnership with other public agencies, the voluntary sector, and service users and carers'. The terminology in the Working Together guidance altered from 'child prostitution' to 'child sexual exploitation' when the guidance was reissued in 2006.
- 3.5 It is also important to note that, prior to changes brought in under the Children Act 2004, services for children and young people, notably Education, Culture and Leisure (including Youth Services) and Social Services operated in separate directorates within the Council (see section 5.3(a) below). It is explained in the framework document that, when the changes in 2004 were brought in, this meant that existing social services departments had to be dismantled, a home found for adult social services and a merger of the education department with children's social services (Appendix 1). There are references in this report to Education, Youth Services and Social Services (relevant to matters prior to 2005) and then to Children's Services in relation to matters after 2005.
- 3.6 We have reported on the evidence we have collated in respect of this issue over three periods: 1997 to 2003; 2003 to 2009; and 2009 to 2013. The picture painted by the evidence we have been

able to source is one of an emerging issue from the late 90's onwards.

(a) 1997 - 2003

- (i) The evidence suggests that, even though the statutory guidance was not as developed as it is now, issues that would now be recognised as CSE (then known as 'child prostitution') did come to the attention of some individual employees in operational roles at the Council at an early stage (even prior to 1997). It is not possible from the evidence we have collated to determine how widespread this knowledge was at an operational level though most of those interviewed who were working with young people at this time told us that they had some knowledge of the issue. In contrast the evidence suggests that, save in limited respects, the knowledge of those in senior roles across this period was limited (see section (vi) below).
- (ii) For example we heard evidence from Officer C, who worked at a Young Person's Centre between 1992 and 1997 that, during this period, he identified concerns at local residential units about looked after children who were going missing and unusual taxi activity. This is supported by the evidence of Officer F who recalled issues with taxis in Studmore Road and also by the evidence of Witness W who was first aware of the issue in 1995/1996. It was Officer C's evidence that he recalled a meeting between senior officers and Police at a local golf club (though he struggled to recall the date and we have not been able to corroborate this from other sources) which led to the development of what seems to have been the first early intervention/disruption called 'Street Team' (see section 4.4 below). We also heard evidence from Officer T who had been told by Officer C about the work he was doing and seen, as part of her own induction to Risky Business, the minutes of a 'Taxi Licensing Group' who were meeting during this period to discuss similar issues though we have been unable to source copies of these minutes. This early awareness also appears to be supported by the evidence of Officer E, a youth worker in 1998, who recalled at that time *'a small number of young people...in residential care...being picked up in cars...going missing'*. This is also supported by the evidence of Officer P who sat on the local ACPC alongside Officer E (see section 4.6(a) below). It was Officer P and Officer E who worked together on the original funding application for Risky Business in the late 90's and the establishment of Risky Business itself in 1997 demonstrates early recognition of the issue in practice (see section 4.5 below).
- (iii) Not only were Risky Business from 1997 onwards identifying and highlighting issues with senior officers including DB (see section (ix) below) it was the evidence of other employees in operational roles around this period that they too were aware of concerns related to CSE. For example PM, who was working in a duty assessment team, recalled discussions in the office between colleagues who had concerns about young people and adult males. An employee working in late 2000/2001, Officer M, recalls *'young men waiting at the end of the road at a particular residential unit in Maltby'*. Another employee who joined in 2001, Officer Y, recalled that a particular worker in his team was working closely with Risky Business and had a case load of young people who were considered vulnerable. There is also evidence that this knowledge extended to other teams working with young people, for example, Officer I recalled a young person who was on her caseload in *'about 2003'* who was *'linked to taxi drivers'* about whom Risky Business had concerns. Similarly it was Witness J's evidence that she was in *'regular contact with individual social workers, team managers and area managers...from every team in Children's social care including the Family Crisis Response team, 'initial response' teams, long term teams, children with a disability, and the Leaving Care team'* about CSE matters.

- (iv) The evidence from individuals in 'middle management' roles in both Social Services and Education/Youth Services across this period was less clear. For example it was PK's evidence, who was one of numerous Service Managers reporting to JW in Social Services and who gave evidence as part of the Doncaster Report, that there was a growing '*generalised issue and concern*' about young women congregating at the bus station to be picked up by taxi drivers though this is suggestive rather than indicative of specific concerns about CSE. This is supported by the evidence of Officer R (who reported to PK at this time) that Officer P was raising these issues with her and she was raising them with PK (though PK could not '*hand on heart*' say that he raised the issue with JW – see (viii) below). It was PA's evidence (as part of the Doncaster Report), who started in August 1999 and was JW's deputy in Social Services until 2004, that nobody sat her down over this period and said '*do you know there is an issue at the bus station where kids are being sexually exploited*'. Others interviewed who sat within Education such as PPro (who joined in 2001) and Officer H had conflicting evidence to offer: it was PPro's evidence that he had no knowledge of any matter concerning CSE and that he didn't discuss it with DB or Officer H (despite the evidence to suggest he may have attended the meeting at section 5.2(c)(ii)(C) below) or with SS, whereas Officer H told us that he knew about the issue prior to the establishment of Risky Business in 1997. Although we understand that SP joined the Council in 2001 as Head of Youth Offending Services it is not known when or how issues relating to CSE first came to his attention.
- (v) The evidence about the knowledge of CSE held by those in operational roles appears to contrast with the evidence of those working in senior roles in Social Services and Youth Services (and beyond) across this period: the Chief Executives (AC and GF), the Director of Social Services (JG), the Head of Children and Families (JG then JW) and the Director of Education Culture and Leisure (DB). The same can be said for the Leader (ME) though there is evidence to suggest that the Cabinet Member for Education may have been briefed (see section (x) below).
- (vi) It was the evidence of the Chief Executive (promoted from the role of Director of Planning and Economic Regeneration in 1998), AC, that he heard nothing about matters concerning CSE (or child prostitution as it was known then) from either JG (see (vii) below) or from JG's predecessor prior to his retirement in 2000. Although he knew that the Risky Business project had been established he assumed the project was working as problems were not being escalated to him. Similarly it was DB's evidence that she did not discuss CSE matters with AC. It was not solely the responsibility of officers to raise these issues with AC but it appears that 'child prostitution' (as it was known at the time) did not have a high profile at a senior level in the Council. There is no evidence that issues were raised with Mr Carruthers in writing nor did they feature in Executive Directors meetings. It was the evidence of GF that he had a handover meeting with AC prior to him joining the Council in 2001 '*including a high level and broad brush commentary on the key officers, politicians and issues of that time. Social services did not feature prominently, nor did Education*' but that '*Child sexual exploitation was not a phrase in use at the time I was at RMBC. Child prostitution was the subject of a good deal of focus at that time and came to my attention, at one level, fairly early on due to the activity of the Risky Business project*' and that he could recall discussing it with DB and JG/JW. He is clear, however, that concerns specifically about 'CSE' (which was not a term in use at the time) did not come to his attention.
- (vii) It was the evidence of JG, who had been appointed Head of Children's Services in 1998 and latterly to Director of Social Services in 1999, that he recalled discussions with Officer C about taxi drivers '*in the late 90's*' who had been making '*inappropriate*' remarks to



looked after young people. It was JG's evidence that he asked Officer C to *'collate information across the residential units to see if there was concern about the comments made by particular taxi drivers so this could be passed to the Police and licensing authorities for action'* (see section 4.3 below). He also recalled the Street Team initiative (see section 4.4 below) which he described as *'a response to concerns about the vulnerability of youngsters in care when they were legitimately out with friends or in town in the evenings'*. Notwithstanding JG's knowledge of the 'Street Team' initiative, other concerns about the conduct of taxi drivers across this early period and the work being undertaken by individual social workers such as Officer P (see section (a)(ii) above), it is JG's evidence that although he was aware of *'individual issues of grooming'* he did not understand *'a picture that there was organised activity going on...nor the scale of that activity'* until *'a meeting in 2004'* which we anticipate is the report to the Safeguarding Children Board on 9 December 2004 cited at Appendix 18 (see section 4.6(g) below). It was JG's evidence that his recollection of Risky Business prior to 2004 was of a *'project working inside or alongside the youth service' who 'were working with youngsters on the street who may have been vulnerable to any form of exploitation, not sexual exploitation specifically'* with whom he had no personal contact.

- (viii) It was the evidence of JW (who was appointed to the role of Head of Children's Services in 2000 and who also acted up to the role of Executive Director of Social Services for two short periods in 2002 and 2003 into 2004) that she was aware of a *'small scale'* issue in Rotherham town centre although she could not recall how this came to her attention. It was JW's evidence that: *'what I am not describing to you is an understanding that there is an issue about sexual exploitation and Asian men'*. Her recollection of the time *'was not that Rotherham had a huge prevalence of this and that there was any kind of crisis associated with it or it wasn't something that was being tackled...'*. It was JW's evidence that she did not see any social care files where her team were dealing with CSE save that she knew of a couple of cases of young women who had previously been in care, were addicted to heroin and working as prostitutes. It was DB's evidence (see section (ix) below) that JW told her she *'knew of the ongoing issues'* and this is not inconsistent with the level of knowledge described by JW. This level of understanding is supported by the evidence of SM who could recall *'a handful that were massively at risk in terms of more formalised sexual exploitation'* though not by the evidence of PK who said although it was *'not big numbers'* he would *'not say it was a handful'*. It was JW's evidence that she could not recall any discussion with JG or Officer C about concerns with taxi drivers (see section (a)(ii) above). She says that *'the significance of Risky Business in my work in Rotherham...was a very small part indeed'* (there is evidence that JW attended six meetings in six years about the project and one example of her referring a young person to the project herself). It is also JW's evidence that she spoke to the District Commander of the Police independently to request surveillance which was refused (section 5.4(c) below). In addition to this it is JW's evidence that she was involved in amending a report to the Home Office in 2002 – the "2002 Report" at section 5.3(c)(ii) below.
- (ix) Conversely, it was DB's evidence that, when she joined the Council as Executive Director for Education, Culture and Leisure in Autumn 1999 (prior to being formally appointed to her substantive post in September 2000), she met with Youth Service Leaders and was informed of the Risky Business service. It was DB's evidence that she met with Risky Business and was provided with a book to read and a confidential account from a young person who had experienced exploitation. DB describes discussions with the Police, discussions with Members, discussions with GF and also with JG and JW (both of whom, on DB's evidence, told her that *'they knew of the ongoing issues'* though it is JG's evidence that the first time DB raised these issues with him was in 2004 – see section 4.6(g) below)

and discussions with Head Teachers of Secondary Schools about the issue. The evidence from DB contrasts with the evidence from JG and JW across this period though it is possible that this was simply because Risky Business sat within Education at the time for which DB was ultimately responsible.

- (x) Further, it was the evidence of the Leader of the Council from 2000, ME, that although he *'knew the name Risky Business...knew broadly what it was doing'* there is no evidence that he knew more than that in practice. It was DB's evidence that, shortly after she arrived at the Council in 1999, she raised the work of Risky Business with the Cabinet Member for Education at the time. It was ME's evidence that the Cabinet Member for Education was *'not someone to mince her words or to shy away from a fight or conversation'* though we have not been able to interview her so we have not been able to establish the extent of her knowledge. We have not seen any evidence to suggest that issues concerning CSE were raised formally with Members during this period.

(b) 2004 to 2009

- (i) Alongside the amendments to the statutory guidance and the ongoing work of Risky Business the evidence suggests that most of those interviewed who were working below senior management level were aware of CSE as an issue even if that did not feature directly in their own work not least because of the significant Police operation that commenced in 2008 (Operation Central). There is no evidence to suggest that knowledge about CSE as an operational issue was particular to those we interviewed though that does not necessarily mean that everyone working in the Council in such a role would have had that knowledge.
- (ii) The evidence we were able to source about the knowledge of those in senior roles across this period is far from complete although, again, it seems unlikely that anyone in a senior role with responsibility in this area would have been unaware of the work of Operation Central from 2008 onwards. We have set out below the evidence we were able to collate from those working in the most senior roles in Social Services and Education/Youth Services (which in turn became Children and Young People's Services across this period): the Chief Executive (MC), the Director of Social Services (JG) and the Director of Education Culture and Leisure (DB) who was succeeded by the Director of Children and Young People's Services (SS and then JT), and the Head of Safeguarding Children and Families (PA). We have also set out, as far as possible, the knowledge of the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Education.
- (iii) The new Chief Executive, MC, arrived in April 2004. It was his evidence that he spoke with GF prior to his departure (and this is supported by GF's evidence) but that he did not recall GF *'mentioning any issues connected to CSE at that time, nor any issues relating to this being raised during the interview/appraisal process'*. It is GF's evidence that 'child prostitution' was not a major issue at Chief Executive level when he arrived and that it wasn't when he left in 2003. As outlined at section (a)(vii) above, it was the evidence of JG, that he did not understand *'a picture that there was organised activity going on...nor the scale of that activity'* until *'a meeting in 2004'* which we anticipate is the report to the Safeguarding Children Board on 9 December 2004 (the "2004 Report") cited in the timeline prepared for the Home Affairs Select Committee (Appendix 18) (see section 5.3(c)(iv) below). He recalled that this meeting led to the establishment by the then Leader, of the Task and Finish Group and this is supported by the timeline at Appendix 18 (see section 4.6(g) below for more detail).

- (iv) As we set out at section (ix) above it was DB's evidence that she was familiar with CSE from 1999 although she did not think she had escalated issues to AC (as she said she had to GF). It was SS's evidence that, when she arrived in 2005, she was *'told that there was an issue with violent organised criminal gangs from the Pakistani community who were sexually exploiting young girls...'* and we have seen a copy report detailing referrals between April and September 2005 that was prepared by Risky Business at SS' request. It was SS' evidence that she recalled that about 80 girls were identified as being of concern (of which about 20 were under the age of 18) though there were some *'data cleansing issues'* due to duplicate records. It was SS' evidence that she was *'clear there was an issue with a sizeable number of girls who were subject to or at risk of CSE but nothing to the extent indicated by Alexis Jay'*.
- (v) Similarly it was JS's evidence that after he arrived in July 2005 he was told about a presentation to/discussion with Members in 2004 (see section 5.2(c)(iv) below) and the Task and Finish group (see section 4.6(g) below). We have been unable to interview JT to establish when the issue came to her attention and this is not clear from her written response. We do, however, know that JT worked alongside the Council in a different role in 2005 and it was her evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2014 that she had *'known ever since [I] have been involved in Rotherham and indeed chaired the Risky Business Project that there was a huge issue of child sexual exploitation in the town'*. Equally it was Angie Heal's evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in September 2014 that JT was aware of the issue as early as 2003 having been a recipient of a report from her detailing the issue (see section 5.2(c)(iii) below) although it is JT's evidence that she did not become aware of this report until she took up her role as Chair of the Risky Business steering committee in 2005. It was PA's written evidence that her involvement with Risky Business prior to 2005/6 was *'very limited'* (see section (a)(iv) above) but that she became *'increasingly aware of the issue related to CSE'* in 2005 (see section 4.6(b)(vii) below). This is supported by the notes of a meeting attended by PA and others in March 2005 about the *'future structure of work re: Sexual Exploitation'* which sets out *'It is recognised that sexual exploitation is a serious and significant issue in Rotherham that needs to be addressed'*. In any event, as we said above, although we have been unable to interview everyone who held a senior role across this period, it seems unlikely that they would be able to say with credibility that they were unaware of CSE in light of Operation Central from 2008 onwards.
- (vi) The same can be said for the then Leader (RS) and the Cabinet Member for Education. Whilst we have not been able to interview RS it appears that, by the time of the meeting on 2 December 2004 cited in the Timeline at Appendix 18 he was aware of the issue as he established the Task and Finish Group detailed at section 4.6(g) below. His written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (Appendix 17) supports this. The Cabinet was established in March 1999 and the Cabinet Member for Education was in post between then and May 2005 when SW took over as Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services. We are not clear about what information the Cabinet Member for Education may have passed to SW as her successor or to other Members across this period. There is evidence to suggest that SP delivered a report in September 2006 to the Scrutiny Panel and this notes that Members were due to visit the Locality Teams in December 2006. We have been unable to interview SW, who was Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services between June 2005 and May 2010. The narrative in the RB book (page 169) suggests that a detailed report was prepared for JT to pass to SW in 2006 about the work of Risky Business and that *'[SW] gave us the green light to continue as we were'* but it was SW's evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (Appendix 7) that he did not receive his first report about CSE until June 2007 which may

be a report from Officer Z. There is also evidence to suggest that SP presented a report to Scrutiny Panel in October 2008. There is evidence that Members sought a further update on CSE in May 2009 but that SP decided to push that back in light of the '*major Police operation*' (likely to be Operation Central).

(c) 2009 to 2013

- (i) Again most of those interviewed below senior manager level who were working with young people across this period were aware of CSE not least because of the significant Police operations across this period including Operation Czar (2010) and Operation Chard (2011) as well as the Lessons Learned Review into Operation Central and the Child S Serious Case Review though there is some dispute about whether that Serious Case Review was recognised as relating to CSE (see section 5.2(c)(v) below). Whilst the evidence we were able to source about the knowledge of those in senior roles across this period was not complete, again, it seems unlikely that anyone in a senior role would have been unaware of the issue across this period.
- (ii) We have set out below the evidence we were able to collate from those working in the most senior roles in Children and Young People's Services across this period: the Chief Executive (MK), the Director of Children and Young People's Services (JT), the Director of Localities (Safe) (PA) and the Directors of Safeguarding Children (GM, HW and CP). Further we heard evidence from GM, amongst others, that SP (now working as Director of Targeted Services), was also involved across this period as was the Assistant Chief Executive, MG (see section 4.3 below).
- (iii) It was the evidence of the departing Chief Executive, MC, that he did have brief discussions with MK prior to his appointment in 2009 (alongside offers of briefing meetings and visits to the Council which, on MC's evidence, were not taken up by MK) and that he recalled telling MK about Operation Central. It is MK's evidence that he met with MC on one occasion between his appointment and starting work but that he '*does not recollect any suggestion during the meeting of any significant challenges relating to Children's Services*' (Ofsted later rated services as 'inadequate' in Autumn 2009 leading to the issue of an Improvement Notice in December 2009). There is evidence to suggest that there were reports to the Director Leadership Team in February 2011 about CSE (Appendix 18).
- (iv) We have already detailed at paragraph (b)(v) above the evidence from JT and PA which suggests that they were, at the very least, aware of the issue from 2005 onwards. We were not able to interview LB, TC or HW (who did not offer any view on this in his written response) but it was the evidence of GM, who joined on an interim basis in 2010, that as far as CSE was concerned, '*that was all out in the open when I was there*'. We were not able to interview SP so it is not clear when the issue first came to his attention although the documentation suggests that it was on his radar by 2006 at the latest. It is the evidence of CP that, when she joined the Council in 2012, she was briefed by HW '*on CSE and the joint team that had been established in October 2012 which included local authority staff and Police officers*' (see section 4.5(w) below).
- (v) As far as the Members are concerned there is limited evidence of reports across this period though, as set out at section (b)(vi) above, the evidence suggests that the Leader had been aware of the issue from 2004 (as was the Cabinet Member for Education if she was still at the Council in this period). Similarly we have been unable to establish the extent of PL's knowledge though we have not seen any evidence to suggest he was not aware of the issue. The timeline at Appendix 18 suggests that an Overview and Scrutiny

Management Board Meeting took place in October 2012 to review the learning from the Child S Serious Case Review and that a 'Team Manager' (presumably Officer G) attended to answer questions on CSE. Certainly it is Officer G's evidence that she had to '*meet with [MK] and [RS] to talk about CSE*'. There is evidence of JT reporting to Cabinet in detail in July 2013 on progress towards satisfying the recommendations detailed by the Home Affairs Select Committee in June 2013 and setting out information on referral numbers and ongoing Police operations in July 2013, September 2013 and November 2013.

#### **4 WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO CSE AND WHAT KEY CSE RELATED STRATEGIES WERE IN PLACE TO TRY AND ADDRESS IT ACROSS THE RELEVANT PERIOD?**

4.1 Whilst the work with young people at risk of CSE was undertaken by individuals at an operational level, ultimately responsibility for the Council's response to CSE sat with those senior officers who have held, over the Relevant Period, the roles detailed at sections 3.6(a) to (c) above. In this section we shall report on the evidence we were able to collate about some of the key CSE related-strategies in place across the Relevant Period and the relative successes and failures of that work.

#### **4.2 Intervention by Social Services/Children & Young People's Services**

(a) The scope of this report does not extend to whether or not individual social workers responded appropriately or otherwise to CSE related matters or to the examination of the decisions made at individual strategy meetings, child protection conferences or other statutory investigations despite the fact that some of those interviewed may have played a part in those meetings and/or investigations in respect of individual young people. The individual case files identified and reviewed as part of the Jay Report (Files A-O) are the subject of a separate report by Jean Imray (the "Imray Report") and we have not examined these files ourselves. Similarly, whilst we understand that a number of other investigations are underway into related matters we have not commented on those further in this report nor would it be appropriate to do so whilst those investigations are ongoing.

(b) The focus of this report is the role of senior officers in Social Services/Education, Culture & Leisure/Children's Services at the Council in tackling CSE. Whilst many of those interviewed offered us evidence of other innovative and successful work that they were involved with concerning children and young people as part of their work at the Council we have not included it in this report. We recognise however, that for senior officers across these directorates work related to CSE was one of many competing and important demands on their time and increasingly limited resources. The matters identified in this report must be considered in the context of the evidence we have been able to collate about the work that was done in the Council to try and tackle CSE and in recognition of the collective impact across the Relevant Period of the matters identified at section 5 below. The multi-agency arrangements in place are considered in more detail below. Other steps taken to address the matter across the Relevant Period are set out in the timeline at Appendix 18. We have also identified some of the other discrete work undertaken by senior officers as follows:

- (i) There is evidence to suggest that a number of senior officers including JW and DB did seek to raise matters relating to CSE directly with the Police at an early stage in the Relevant Period;
- (ii) JW produced evidence that one of the key safeguarding priorities identified in the 2003 Prevention Strategy prepared by the Council was 'increasing the reporting of CSE cases';

- (iii) The evidence suggests that it was DB who authorised CBB to prepare the 2004 Report (see section 5.3(c)(iv) below) which escalated issues relating to CSE to Members and triggered the Task and Finish Group (see section 4.6(g) below);
  - (iv) The evidence suggests that it was SS and PA who commissioned the report by SM in 2005/2006 into the work of Risky Business and also that they developed the role of Assistant Safeguarding Manager and recruited Officer Z (see section 4.5(h) below);
  - (v) There is evidence to show that senior officers including GF, DB, JW and SS had some involvement in preserving and/or increasing the funding available to Risky Business across the Relevant Period;
  - (vi) It was Officer T's evidence that it was JT who agreed to use funding via Connexions to put on the 'Every Child Matters' conference which took place in March 2006 (page 167 of the RB book);
  - (vii) It was SS's evidence that tackling CSE was made a priority in the first Children's Services Plan within the 'Stay Safe' section;
  - (viii) It was also SS' evidence that she commissioned an action plan working alongside staff in Children's Services and partner agencies for responding to sexual exploitation of children and young people in Rotherham; she conducted a review of the end to end processes for referral, assessment, planning for children and young people at risk of or subject to CSE and identification of ways of improving these; that she was involved with extensive awareness raising and training for council staff, schools, park wardens, transport staff and owners of pubs and clubs; and that she supported the initial work of Operation Central.
  - (ix) Steps were taken to commission reports into the progress made in respect of CSE including the Children First review in 2009 commissioned by PA and JT, the Barnardos Review commissioned by JT in 2013 (which identified four key priority areas) and the decision by MK and JT to commission the Jay Report.
- (c) It is, of course, possible that other senior officers involved across the period such as SP and HW would have evidence to give about the positive steps they took to address CSE in the Council but they declined to be interviewed and they did not offer any evidence in writing on this point.
  - (d) Notwithstanding the positive work identified above we have set out at section 5 below the evidence we have collated relating to difficulties in Social Services/Children & Young People's Services that may also have contributed to the way in which CSE related matters were dealt with over the Relevant Period.

#### 4.3 The role of Taxi Licensing and Enforcement

- (a) The scope of this report does not extend to investigating the taxi licensing and enforcement function at the Council. This is the subject of a separate report by Weightmans LLP (the "Weightmans Report"). We have not investigated the interrelationship between Licensing and Children's Services over the Relevant Period having focused our investigation on senior managers in Social Services/Education, Culture and Leisure/Children's Services with responsibility for child protection issues. Notwithstanding this the evidence we have seen does suggest that Licensing (within the context of Neighbourhood Services) played a part in some of the multi-agency groups referenced at section 4.6 below and that individuals from Safeguarding and from Risky Business attended 'Responsible Authorities' meetings where issues about safeguarding and taxis were

discussed.

- (b) The Weightmans Report does suggest that, in 2010, the Assistant Chief Executive at the time, MG, called meetings at which matters relevant to CSE were discussed. We sought to understand the context in which issues relating to CSE came to MG's attention and what steps he took to alert the appropriate service within the Council. We have not seen minutes from those 2010 meetings but it was MG's evidence that the issue came to his attention in 2010 in the context of work he was doing with the European Roma Matrix Project which was tackling issues including *'trafficking, overcrowding issues and waste management issues'* in Rotherham. It was MG's evidence that Officer T fed some information into that work.
- (c) Despite this contact with Officer T, other than the discrete points mentioned below, MG's role did not appear to extend to any wider involvement in the work being undertaken by Risky Business. It was MG's evidence that there was not a link (at that time) between safeguarding and licensing so he flagged this up to say they should be sharing information (perhaps another example of the 'silo' approach detailed at section 5.3(a) below). This evidence is supported by the Weightmans Report which sets out that, in an email in November 2010, MG tasked HW with ensuring that the exploitation sub-group (see section 4.6(d) below) worked *'to ensure robust processes and procedures are in place surrounding the exchange of information and intelligence, in particular between licensing, enforcement, Police, safeguarding and risky business'*. He also tasked Officer T with *'holding a case conference in December to assess the number of taxi drivers and operators who pose a significant concern which need to be identified to the licensing team'*. While this was not supported by Officer T's evidence she did recall preparing some information for MG about 'properties of concern' (i.e. residential properties in Rotherham that were on her radar in relation to CSE). It has not been possible to determine what happened as a result of these requests and/or the information provided and HW did not agree to be interviewed. It was MG's evidence that he understood that there were then *'monthly meetings going on...between safeguarding, licensing and the Police'*. He did not recall issues about CSE being reported at senior management team meetings but he recalled the *'Chief Exec and the Leader and [JT] were having detailed briefings from the Police'* (although, if this is right, it is surprising that CSE did not feature in senior management team meetings at all given the ongoing Police operations across some of the Relevant Period). It appears that some steps were taken by MG to establish a link between safeguarding and licensing. Although he does not appear to have had wider involvement in the work being undertaken by Risky Business, we have not concluded that MG failed to take appropriate or effective steps in the context of his role.

#### 4.4 The role of Street Team

- (a) It was Officer C's evidence that the first early intervention/disruption was set up in the mid-late 1990's and called 'Street Team'. This was an informal arrangement set up due to concerns at an operational level about looked after young people who were going missing in Rotherham. He recalled that the *'bus station was a nightmare and some parks'* and that he and his colleagues would go out in cars to collect young people and return them to their residential childcare unit or their foster carer as well as to their own homes. A former manager of Officer C's, Officer F, recalled the work of Street Team and that RB and others were *'out in cars, checking numbers'* and that there were *'residential staff who were going out and doing the best they could'*.
- (b) This initiative was known to JG (as Officer C raised it directly with him as they knew each other well) who recalled that there was a *'team of staff who would go to places where young people would congregate to see whether there were any youngsters around that seemed to be getting into difficulties'*. JG recalled that this initiative picked up that *'young people are going into town hanging about with all the young people in the park...drinking and doing things that young people do but*

*nothing in relation to sexual exploitation*'. It was JG's evidence that *'at various times individual children's units experienced instability and concerns re children in placement including absconding, involvement in criminal activity such as shoplifting, involvement in substance abuse etc. At such times the introduction of a temporary increase in staffing to undertake outreach work in the community had proven to be an effective short term response'*. There was some evidence to suggest that Officer C, JG and others may have held meetings about Street Team at a golf club but we were unable to establish whether or not that was right. It was JG's evidence that the only meeting he could recall being held at the local golf club was one of the regular monthly meetings of the officers in charge of residential care units and he remembered it as it was an unusual venue for such a meeting. It was JG's evidence that he did not regularly attend these meetings (nor we would have expected him to do so) but that he did so about twice a year in addition to reading the minutes of such meetings to enable him to keep abreast of the work in the children homes. It was JG's evidence that he did not recall issues around the monitoring of taxis bringing children back to the home being discussed at the meeting which he attended. Copy minutes from those meetings have not been seen.

- (c) It was Officer C's evidence that Street Team ran for *'a number of years'* though this is not supported by JG who recalls that there was *'never an intention to establish a permanent outreach team as we planned and implemented additional oversight and improved care for all children in the residential home by increasing general staffing levels in each of the homes from one to two residential social workers on all shifts whilst at the same time reducing the capacity of each unit down from 10 children to 5 or 6'*. There were not any formal record keeping or reporting requirements for Street Team which does suggest that this was a relatively informal initiative in practice. Regardless of how long this initiative did run for the evidence wasn't entirely clear about why it finished. It was Officer C's recollection that he and the team were claiming overtime but it is JG's evidence that *'it was not funding which led to the ending of these occasional interventions but rather, the limited capacity of existing residential staff to sustain this work over and above their already pressured work rota'*. It was the evidence of both JG and Officer F that concerns had diminished although Officer E also recalled, at the time, that there were concerns that the team were putting themselves at risk. It was JG's evidence that he knew that concerns had diminished as he was *'proactively asking for updates from residential staff and managers and from progress information they passed to me about action taken in respect of one driver who had his license revoked...'* It is also JG's evidence that, with the benefit of hindsight, concerns *'may have diminished as a result of the taxi drivers becoming aware of the monitoring we had set in place possibly from the children themselves or from other sources'*. Following this it is JG's evidence that steps were taken to increase staffing levels across all the children units and to reduce the occupation of the homes from 8 children to 5 children to *'enable better oversight and care of residents'*.
- (d) It is, of course, impossible to say what might have been different if Street Team had continued or developed further (and of course similar work was undertaken by the Risky Business team – see section 4.5(e) below). Hindsight suggests that formalising this initiative (whether via the residential team or Risky Business – see section 4.5(e) below) might have proved valuable particularly as it was the evidence of someone currently working in Youth Services in the Council, Officer A, that a similar multi-agency initiative called 'Keep Safe' is currently operating in Rotherham and has been very successful. Although JG said he was not aware of anything related to CSE at this time he accepts that this may have been a missed opportunity for the Council although not something that could have been reasonably foreseen at the time based on the information available to him. If JG's evidence about his lack of knowledge prior to 2004 is correct (note DB's evidence to the contrary at section 3.6(a)(ix) above), then we are inclined to agree with this view.

#### 4.5 The role of Risky Business



- (a) We heard evidence from Officer E about the origins of the Risky Business Project in 1997 and the account of the project that follows is based on the documents and the other evidence available to us. The Risky Business Project sat within Youth Services (which sat within Education, Culture and Leisure headed up by DB rather than Social Services) at the Council from its conception and it did not move under the remit of social workers until much later (see section (r) below). It was the evidence of Officer E that her line manager at the time had gone to a conference in 1997 where the speakers included Irene Ivison (who had set up the Coalition for the Removal of Pimping - CROP now PACE - after her own daughter had been murdered after being forced into prostitution in the early 1990's) and Fiona Broadfoot (now described on LinkedIn as a Consultant and Trainer in Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) where these issues were discussed. It was Officer E's evidence that, at this time, issues were emerging about young people at Rush House, a homeless project in Rotherham and that Ms Broadfoot together with another youth worker from the Council were running what Officer E described as a '*girl's group*' delivering youth work at Oakhill Flats. It was Officer E's evidence that it was this group of young women who chose the name 'Risky Business'.
- (b) Notably the manager of Rush House, Witness W, appeared on Panorama saying that he warned social care managers about the risks of sexual exploitation but neither JG nor JW had any recollection of discussing those with him (it was JW's evidence that she had detailed notes of meetings with Witness W and he never raised it with her and JG refutes that any conversation about CSE took place). It was Witness W's evidence that he sought to raise the issue with contacts at the Council including PA and others from 2003 onwards following the establishment of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium (a group comprising those who were working with young people in the voluntary sector – see section 4.6(j) below).
- (c) It was Officer E's evidence that the '*girl's group*' eventually ceased but that a new initiative called 'Youth Work Works' (a concept around one to one work rather than more traditional youth work) started shortly afterwards and that they started to identify a small number of young people at risk through these sessions. It was Officer E's evidence that her manager asked her to apply for external funding to support this group of young people (as Officer E had experience of applying for external funding having set up a separate project to tackle domestic violence issues in the local area). It was Officer E's evidence that she worked on this in conjunction with Officer P and that this was the genesis of the formal Risky Business project. There is evidence of a funding bid document from 1997 setting out the scope of Risky Business making it clear that their target group, at least at that time, was girls/young women under the age of 18 (Appendix 8). The fact that the Council supported the funding bid and set up Risky Business is evidence that, by as early as 1997, it was recognised that CSE was an area that merited further specific work.
- (d) It was Officer T's evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in September 2014 that she was first involved with Risky Business in the Council in 1999. With hindsight the decision to create Risky Business and its involvement with other multi-agency groups (see section 4.6 below) was a positive development for the Council. The evidence about how the project developed from 'one to one youth work' to the established body which features in the Jay Report and the Casey Report is not entirely clear. However it is important to say that, despite criticisms later levelled by some at Officer E and Officer P (see section 5.3(c) below), the evidence suggests that the original genesis of the project was the result of their hard work and determination to raise awareness of CSE in the Council and they should be duly credited for that early insight and response to the issue.
- (e) By the early 2000's, Risky Business was operating out of the International Centre in Rotherham. The evidence suggests that the project was funded in a series of different ways. It was Officer E's evidence that she put in a bid to the Home Office for funding in 2000 which required a formal steering group to be set up which, we understand, Officer P and others including JT sat on across the Relevant Period. It was Officer P's evidence that, even at this stage, '*we thought at that point*

*we needed specific additional staff at Risky Business, we needed specific social workers who had the time and the expertise to do work with these young people*'. There is also a reference at Appendix 18 to funding to Risky Business between 2001 and 2006 though it is not clear whether that is a reference to the same funding that was applied for by Officer E (in conjunction with Officer P – see section (c) above). Similarly there are references to sources of funding for Risky Business in 2003 in the timeline at Appendix 18. It was Officer Y's evidence that he recalled JW asking him to use some funds secured in respect of a teenage pregnancy strategy to fund a Risky Business worker. There is also evidence from 2004 in an email from RN that the Children and Young People's Executive Group had agreed to support further funding for the project. There is other evidence of efforts by a series of individuals to try and maintain funding for the project throughout the Relevant Period. As far as we understand the project functioned in a broadly similar way until the changes instigated in 2011 (see section (r) below).

- (f) The evidence we have collated suggests that, whilst DB was knowledgeable about the work of Risky Business and sought to escalate her concerns alongside others including RN and Officer E as well as Officer P the senior post-holders in Social Services had limited involvement with Risky Business prior to 2005 (see section 3.6(a) above). It is possible that Officer P's involvement was considered sufficient given that Risky Business was not a service that sat within Social Services although it is difficult to see how her involvement alone was appropriate given the safeguarding issues relevant to the work. It was the evidence of numerous people at interview including DB, RN, Officer E, and Officer P that the relationships between Risky Business and other services in the Council, particularly Social Services, were not positive though the evidence suggests there may be a number of different reasons for this – see section 5 below. In fact JT in her evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in September 2014 described them from 2005, when she was chairing the Risky Business steering group, as *'a small group of people in a small project...who were desperately trying to get their voice heard'* (Appendix 3). Similar frustrations were shared by Officer T and Witness J as part of their evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in September 2014 (Appendix 7) and in their interviews. Whatever the reason in practice the fact that Risky Business sat within a separate department did not excuse any lack of curiosity on the part of senior officers in Social Services prior to the amalgamation of those departments in 2005 (though note JW's evidence about her discussions with representatives in Education about the work of Risky Business referenced at section 5(b)(xxix) below). As we referenced above it is JG's evidence that he had not been made aware of the work of the Risky Business project prior to 2004 *'and that the work of services managed by the Youth services within the Education, Culture and Leisure programme area were not closely linked to the work of Children and Families services in my own programme area...'*
- (g) Prior to the restructure of Risky Business in 2011 the evidence suggests that there had been numerous reports into their working practices and thought given to whether a multi-agency team should be formed. There is evidence of a meeting on 20 March 2005 attended by SS, RN, CBB, PA and others where there were discussions about the *'future structure of work re: Sexual Exploitation'* and that the proposed multi-agency team would be *'formed with resources from YPS in the form of the Risky Business Project'* as well as someone relocated from the Bridges Project (a project related to care leavers) and a management post via Keep Safe funding.
- (h) A first report by SM of the Bridges Project was commissioned into the work of Risky Business. It is SS' evidence that she asked for this *'review of best practice'* following her discussions with Risky Business and that she asked PA to conduct a review of all the cases on Risky Business's books. It is PA's evidence that she commissioned SM's work following concerns raised with her about matters discussed at Key Players – see section 4.6(b)(vii) below). This course of action was authorised and supported by SS. This report from early 2006 could not be located (though note section 4.6(b)(xiii) below) but it was SM's evidence that one of her recommendations was that

*'Risky Business remain where they are but they have very, very formal structured links into the child sexual exploitation co-ordinator...'*. She said that *'I did support Risky Business in terms of their view that they needed to remain part of the youth work sector because I did actually recognise that the voluntary informal assertive outreach element of their work was essentially youth work that fitted better and actually there was some real merit in that model'*. It was PA's evidence that SM's report *'helped to move towards a framework/approach that identified where we needed to ensure safeguarding principles were applied...'* and also that this report led to the appointment of Officer Z as Assistant Safeguarding Manager (a process which JS says he was also involved with). A similar report was delivered by PA to the LSCB in December 2005 (see section 4.6(a)(xi) below). This demonstrates that, by as early as 2005 recommendations were being made about changes to the structure and working practices of Risky Business.

- (i) There is no evidence to suggest that the intention of PA or any of the other officers involved in a proposed 'restructure' was anything other than positive. Certainly it was Officer Z's evidence that it was her role to *'act as a bridge, build on communication, establish some systems for referral management'* and that she *'wrote reports and reported on figures for child sexual exploitation most of which would come from Risky Business'*. We have seen samples of the reports Officer Z prepared and she is cited in the Jay Report as someone *'seen by all of those involved as a positive influence on the difficulties between Risky Business and the children's social care staff...'* (see section 5.3(b) below). This is also directly supported by Officer T's evidence. On balance this suggests that the changes instigated by PA and JS and implemented by Officer Z were intended to be positive and to strengthen the relationship between Risky Business and Social Services/Children's Services though the evidence also suggests that the attempts to move beyond the *'bridge'* described by Officer Z to a fully integrated service with Social Services/Children's Services were not as well received or successful in practice (see section (r) below).
- (j) The idea that the Risky Business Project would become a multi-agency resource featured in the Sexual Exploitation Action Plans presented to the LSCB in 2007 and 2008 (see section 4.6(a)(xv) below). Originally this resource was going to be in place by September 2006 but the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board – see section 4.6(a) below) report delivered by Officer Z in June 2007 cited funding issues though there is evidence of discussions about a changing remit in the notes of the Sexual Exploitation Forum from 2007 (see section 4.6(c) below). By March 2008 it was envisaged that *'the project will be considered within the context of the Integration Agenda'*. An action plan is not attached to the report delivered in September 2009 but the report suggests that plans to facilitate a multi-agency resource had not been progressed while the Project *'remains in premises that are unsuited to the future task'*.
- (k) The recommendations in the Lessons Learned Review (LLR) in 2010 recommend that a multi-agency CSE team is formed. There is a minute from an Extraordinary Meeting of the LSCB in July 2010 that *'the LSCB reviews the proposals previously rejected in June 2008 for a multi-agency team based around the nucleus of Risky Business'*. The idea that such a proposal was either made or rejected in 2008 is not clear from the minutes we have seen. It was AH's evidence that he could not recall any discussion at LSCB about the fact that proposals had previously been rejected in 2008.
- (l) The notes in the LLR in 2010 which are repeated in the LSCB minute in July 2010 make it clear that *'this is not a recommendation for an enlarged Risky Business nor for more resources. The original raison d'etre for Risky Business is enshrined in the traditions of supportive youth services and that should be sustained'*. Specific recommendations included different accommodation that was *'fit for purpose'* and a computer monitoring system *'for the purposes of mapping and tracking perpetrators and offenders'*. There is then an email from PM to HW on 15 September 2010 to say that the recommendations had been accepted and translated into an action plan (see section (p))

below).

- (m) The evidence suggests that, in the meantime and prior to the delivery of the Child S Serious Case Review (SCR) (see section (n) below), other tentative attempts at multi-agency working had been trialled. In October 2010 two individuals with backgrounds in youth offending, Officer I and Officer O, were seconded into Risky Business. It was their evidence that an attempt had been made to place social workers into such a role in 2009 which had not been successful though the reasons for this are not clear and the secondments don't feature in the RB book. It was Officer K's evidence that the decision to second Officer I and Officer O in 2010 was made by SP to *'bring some...rigour of Youth Justice to Risky Business'* and it was Officer O's evidence that SP wanted them to be *'an extra pair of hands'* though it was Officer I's evidence that SP had said they needed to *'sort out the case recording and...give some support as they are sinking'*. There is an undated paper (the author is not stated though it is likely to be SP) which describes this secondment as a *'temporary measure'* designed to progress the current investigation (which the documentation suggests is Operation Czar). As SP declined to be interviewed the triggers and true purpose behind this secondment remain unclear though the evidence of both Officer I and Officer T suggests that it was not very successful.
- (n) A SCR was commissioned by the LSCB following the murder of Child S in Autumn 2010. This SCR was delivered in April 2011. The SCR Panel comprised a variety of professionals including HW and Officer K. As part of the SCR it was the evidence of Officer K that he was asked to conduct the Local Management Review (LMR) in respect of the 'Youth and Targeted Services' which included Risky Business (referred to in the LMR as Project 1). The specific findings detailed by Officer K are not the focus of this report (see section 5.3(c)(v) below) but, in summary, his main findings in respect of the role of Risky Business appeared to relate to information management, organisational processes and structures. These findings in the SCR appear to be supported by the evidence of Officer I and Officer O at the point they were seconded in October 2010 (section 5.3(b)(xxx) below) though they were strongly refuted by Officer T at interview and in the RB book (pages 250 to 254).
- (o) It was the evidence of Officer G, who joined in September 2010 that it was the findings in the SCR that led to the restructure and this appears to be supported by the evidence of Officer T (albeit that she disputes the legitimacy of the recommendations relating to Risky Business in the SCR). We have not seen evidence of any formal consultation process that preceded this restructure. However it is Officer T's evidence that she was first advised of this change by SP who called her into a meeting (on the back of the findings in the SCR at section 5.3(c)(v) below) and told her she was *'fu\*\*ed'* and then delivered the same message to the rest of the Risky Business team. This account also features at page 238 of the RB book but it is denied by SP. Neither HW nor JT were aware of the matter. It is Officer T's word against SP's and this cannot be substantiated further.
- (p) The evidence suggests that the proposed structure of this new team continued to change throughout the period that followed. It is Officer G's evidence that she was seconded to the Team Manager role in April 2011 and there is contemporaneous email evidence to suggest that she was *'asked to review sexual exploitation services'*. We have also seen a report dated 17 May 2011 addressed to the Director Leadership Team (and which appears to have been prepared by Officer G) setting out her review and proposals in more detail. It is Officer T's evidence that the changes amounted to Risky Business being *'shut down'* and that this had happened weeks before the delivery of the report in May 2011. It is not clear exactly when changes were implemented but it was unlikely to be before Officer G was seconded in April 2011 given that she was tasked with reviewing the service.
- (q) In his written response HW explained that he *'saw this as a positive move and was in fact recognition of the success the service had had. The plans were also in recognition of growing*

*understanding of the need to tackle this phenomenon on a formal statutory basis. RB was borne out of a youth provision and did excellent work with supporting victims what it lacked was any staff to take on and support the statutory function of protecting children by undertaking sec 47 enquiries often jointly with the police. The new structure was to bring that function to the team. It also proposed how to strengthen its non statutory support role and indeed it was agreed to appoint a former CSE victim to the staff group...'. It is SP's evidence that he did not say that the project was being 'shut down' and that the work was to be absorbed into the new CSE team. It was SP's evidence that 'the work of that very small group was vital in bringing the attention of all parties to CSE and the dedication of staff was significant. However it became clear that the sheer scale and complexity of the issues meant that a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach (including social work, police, health etc) was required'. The view of SP about the work undertaken by Risky Business is supported by a letter he sent to Officer T in April 2009 commending their work on Operation Central. The intention behind the restructure is also supported by Officer G's evidence: 'there was no hidden agendas around restructuring that service other than the need to professionalise the service and integrate it properly into child protection'...'wasn't about following a clinical procedural child protection process, it was about utilising the qualification of a social worker with good engagement skills so once a child disclosed, they weren't having to tell a youth worker then a social worker...if the model was a successful one elsewhere why couldn't it have been a successful model in Rotherham?'*

- (r) Regardless of the motivation what is clear from the evidence is that the way in which Risky Business delivered its work was going to change. The document referenced at (m) above includes a revised reporting and funding structure involving the creation of two new social worker posts, two new project officers at Risky Business and a new Team Manager post in addition to the existing Senior Project Worker role (held by Officer T) and four Project Workers. The document states that there is a relatively newly created Safeguarding Co-ordinator (Sexual Exploitation) post in the Safeguarding Unit and that this role would be seconded for two years into the Team Manager post. It was Officer G's evidence that, contrary to the plan and to the timeline at Appendix 18, 'no new money came for nearly a year' and the restructure did not happen in the manner proposed. It was Officer G's evidence that she kept being told by HW and JT that she would get this money but it never materialised. This has been refuted by JT who says that she 'fought hard to ensure adequate funding was secured and protected to tackle CSE'. It was JT's evidence that this was a 'substantial multi-agency investment'. It was JT's evidence that 'Given the financial climate at the time I was constantly being asked to identify significant budget reductions which I did deliver elsewhere but I always protected the funding given to the CSE team". HW did not offer any evidence on this point save to say that, following Officer G's appointment, JT overtook direct management of the service. We would be surprised if that was accurate: although JT had been involved in the past her remit as Director was much wider than this team and its work by this point in the Relevant Period. Similarly Officer G's evidence at (y) below about 'seven changes of line management in four years' does not suggest that JT was managing this particular service directly.
- (s) There is contemporaneous evidence to suggest that, at the same time, attempts were made to make changes to the way in which the service was delivered (in line with the comments in the SCR) including, for example emails to say 'We need to have an assessment and review document on young people's files asap'. There are emails referencing 'the new filing format' and emails asking 'Please can ask that every file has an assessment which must indicate the level of risk they feel the young person faces as a result of CSE...we may be asked to produce files to demonstrate that we are recording information in a more structured format than before' as well as detailing formal supervision sessions between Officer G and the Risky Business team.
- (t) Across this period a set of slides prepared by CBB titled 'Rotherham Youth Service – 2011 and beyond' detailed significant cuts and restructuring for Youth Services due to be in place by July

2011 and significant savings that had to be found through 2011 and 2012. It seems possible that the restructure of Risky Business proposed after the SCR was impacted by these changes within Youth Services though we have not been able to speak to SP, HW or CBB to ascertain whether that is accurate. It was JT's evidence that she *'always protected the funding given to the CSE team'* (see paragraph (r) above). However there is contemporaneous email correspondence between Officer G and SP in 2011 to suggest that there were some difficulties over a shortfall of funding for the new team and that the proposed structure of the team was already being revisited in 2011.

- (u) It was Officer G's evidence that in 2012 she was asked to look at the budget for Risky Business and that she considered the budget would be best served by recruiting two social workers and a youth worker. There is a paper titled *'Response to Sexual Exploitation Service Consultation 22 May 2012'* and a further paper titled *'Development of a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Team Response to Consultation Paper dated 22 May 2012'* which sets out a revised proposal comprising a Team Manager, two social workers and two support workers. A timeline for the implementation of the new CSE service was prepared and it is Officer G's evidence that this was adhered to.
- (v) There is evidence to suggest that, by this point, the relationship between Officer G and Officer T had deteriorated not least because, on Officer T's evidence, she felt she had been demoted, her workload was reduced and cases were being closed. It is Officer G's evidence that *'I succeeded [Officer T] as the Head of Risky Business but she continued in the team. This obviously created a difficult relationship. I made every effort to get on with [Officer T] but it was almost inevitable in the circumstances that she felt aggrieved'*. It is Officer T's evidence in the RB book that *'Relations between myself and [Officer G] were at rock bottom and I'd already put complaints to HR about her attitude towards me. I'd asked for it to be logged but didn't particularly want to make a bigger issue of it than that'*. Though Officer G acknowledges that [Officer T] felt aggrieved, in the absence of a formal complaint, we have not examined the reasons for the breakdown in this relationship in detail. However it is perhaps unsurprising that the change in 2011 was not welcomed by Officer T: in her view Risky Business was being *'shut down'*, the team was moving to be managed by a social worker and efforts were being made to change the way in which the service was delivered in the context of recommendations in a SCR that Officer T disputed. It was at the point that the service was restructured in 2012 that long-established Risky Business workers including Officer T left the Council with enhanced redundancy packages (it was Officer T's evidence that she had been told by Officer G that she could submit her notice shortly after SP advised her of the change in structure in 2011 (see section (o) above) though this is not supported by Officer G's evidence). It is Officer G's evidence that she did encourage them to apply for the new youth worker role as part of the restructure in 2012 and this is broadly supported by Officer T's account in the RB book.
- (w) It was Officer G's evidence that in October 2012 she relocated to the Maltby Public Protection Unit (PPU) with two social workers, a parenting worker and two youth workers (filling one post) followed by another newly qualified social worker in 2013. It was Officer G's evidence that JT was supportive of the structure but CP (who joined on an interim basis after HW left in late 2012) was not though this is not supported by CP's evidence that the *'CSE team had already been set up when I arrived in November 2012; Risky Business was no longer in existence and any 'proposal' had already been implemented'*. Similarly it was JT's evidence that there was no lack of support from CP for the team. It was Officer G's evidence that the team was set up for about a month and then both of the more experienced social workers went sick so she became *'social worker, team manager, doing strategy meetings and...delivering training'*. This is perhaps supported by the evidence of Officer C: *'what I remember most about [Officer G] and that team is it always seemed to be massively busy...never saw [Officer G] walk, you just saw her run from meeting to meeting'*.
- (x) The repeated attempts to establish Risky Business as a wider multi-agency team was criticised in the Jay Report. Whilst the evidence of some of those interviewed did appear to support the

concerns expressed in 2010 and 2011 about the way Risky Business operated the evidence also suggests that the revised structure introduced in 2011 did not resolve matters. It was Officer I's evidence that *'they were pushed from pillar to post'...it got to the stage where they were doing everything from...early intervention to the whole spread of stuff...they no longer had the resources to be able to spend the time with the young people, getting to know them in order to secure the convictions or to adequately protect.*

- (y) Although it was Officer G's evidence that she tried to make the revised structure a success it was her evidence that she left the Council in March 2015 because she was *'absolutely exhausted and really disheartened'*. She described having had *'seven changes in line management in four years'* and that *'it was just a battle all the time'*. For example Officer G said that she would *'complain about the knowledge and experience and social workers being able to identify CSE'* and the response would be *'go out and do some training'* and that she was *'wheeled everywhere...to be the face of CSE'*. Equally she described being told very clearly that she was *'a team manager and that was operational'* yet she was then questioned over the lack of a strategy for dealing with CSE when it emerged at the Home Affairs Select Committee that no action plan was in place.
- (z) Although it was Officer G's evidence that she had reviewed the budget and proposed the new structure she was a Team Manager in an operational role and, ultimately, responsibility for structuring the service successfully did not sit with her. It was Officer G's evidence that the revised structure was based on structures that had worked successfully elsewhere but she did not get the support to implement it: *'when management moved on the new managers didn't buy into it but didn't put anything else in its place'*. The evidence suggests that this team suffered numerous difficulties certainly in the latter stages in respect of both structure and approach and it is unfortunate that we were not able to explore this further with former officers such as HW and SP. It is inevitable, however, that difficulties in this team would have had some impact on the Council's response to CSE across the Relevant Period.

#### 4.6 The role of Multi-Agency Groups

- (a) Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC)/Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)
  - (i) These particular multi-agency groups are the product of statute and guidance and were not started by the Council (unlike groups such as Key Players for example – see section (b) below). Nonetheless these groups warrant some examination as far as the involvement of the senior officers from the Council is concerned. The ACPCs were the statutory multi-agency groups established under the 'Working Together' guidance and explained in the framework document (Appendix 1). This guidance determined that ACPCs had to *'actively enquire'* into the extent to which there was a local problem regarding organised abuse and child prostitution. Page 35 suggests that ACPCs *'should have a clear role in identifying those children in need who are at risk of significant harm or who have suffered significant harm and in identifying resource gaps (in terms of funding and/or the contribution of different agencies) and different ways of working'*. These ACPCs were replaced by LSCBs from 2004 following the implementation of the Children Act 2004 (they had to be in place by April 2006).
  - (ii) The notes we have seen suggest that the ACPC had an Independent Chairperson even though this was not compulsory prior to 2004. It was JG's evidence that he introduced this requirement and that he appointed an individual who used to work for the NSPCC to this role in 2001. It was JG's evidence that the ACPC Chair had direct access to him and that, at his appointment, he said to him: *'Hey, if you've got any concerns, tell me. Come and see me and tell me'*. It was JG's evidence that the Chair never brought any particular concerns

to his attention.

- (iii) Similarly it was JW's evidence that she could not recall matters concerning CSE being raised at these meetings though the evidence suggests that they may have been (see section (v) below). It was also JG's evidence that there was a case review sub-committee of the ACPC who would review cases and *'try and quality assure them, to see whether people who hadn't been involved in the case, when they read them, whether they felt, "Hey, they've missed something here'*. It was JG's evidence that *'if a case review sub-committee realised there'd been ten strategy meetings and conferences on children who had been sexually exploited, then that should have come out as a pattern'*. We have not seen any records from the case review sub-committee so it is not possible to determine whether or not those patterns were there in practice but there is no evidence of any patterns being reported to the ACPC (from the limited minutes available) and it is JG's evidence that no such concerns were raised by this sub-committee to him.
- (iv) It was JW's evidence that ACPC committees were *'well established'* but that they were *'not very good'*, *'no culture of challenge'* and *'not dynamic'*. Similarly PA said these meetings were not a *'dynamic high status productive body of people'* and said that they *'weren't places that held you to account'*. It is not clear from the evidence whether the views expressed by JW and PA about the ACPC are substantiated but it is AL's view that it would not be unusual at the time for ACPCs to have been unmanageably large and ineffective. It is JW's evidence that at a meeting on 15 January 2004 she raised concerns about the ACPC and a further meeting was scheduled in February to discuss this but the process altered shortly afterwards in any event.
- (v) In respect of the Relevant Period limited ACPC minutes are available between December June 1998 and September 2004. The notes from June 1998 reference a discussion about the new 'Working Together' guidance eventually issued in 1999. There is also a reference in the notes from 1 December 1998 to a Child Protection Audit though the report itself has not been seen. There are references in the Key Players minutes dated 28 June 2001 to ACPC training scheduled for July 2001, November 2001 and February 2002 demonstrating that this group were taking active steps to bring matters to the attention of the ACPC. There is no evidence about the content of this training or the attendees. There is a report prepared by Witness J dated 19 February 2001 which looks like an introduction to a talk about CSE in Rotherham due to be delivered to the ACPC on 5 March 2001. We do not have the notes from this meeting: there is no evidence about attendees or what actions were agreed. The timeline at Appendix 18 suggests that it was Key Players (see section (b) below) who delivered the first report on CSE to the ACPC (though this does not appear to be accurate in light of Witness J's report at Appendix 8).
- (vi) The work of Risky Business is referenced in the notes of the ACPC dated 3 December 2002 which record that information was due to be presented to the Policy and Practice Sub-Committee. The report prepared by Officer B for the sub-committee is dated 11 December 2002. The Chairs Report to the ACPC dated 18 March 2003 suggests that Officer B presented this report in January 2003 and that it had been provided to the ACPC who identified that *'the current procedures remain appropriate'*. There is also a suggestion in the timeline at Appendix 18 that Risky Business gave an update to ACPC on 10 March 2003 but those minutes are not available. There is also a reference in the timeline at Appendix 18 to a report at an ACPC meeting on 18 March 2003 but this report was from the Children's Society rather than Risky Business though it concerned CSE issues. The sub-committee reported again in September 2003 on a variety of updated policies including an 'Interagency Protocol (for young people at risk of Sexual Exploitation)'. The report



suggests this protocol *'simplifies the process of addressing the identification of young people at risk of sexual exploitation'* and the minutes of 2 September 2003 suggest the protocol was approved. The only other reference is in a further sub-committee report on 2 March 2004 where it records that the Sexual Exploitation Forum (see section (c) below) has been established and referrals to the forum have been received. Although the purported ineffectiveness of the ACPC across the Relevant Period is a failing the evidence we have seen does not suggest any direct responsibility on the part of any senior officer of the Council for that failure.

- (vii) The Children Act 2004 required local authorities to establish Local Safeguarding Children Boards (to replace Area Child Protection Committees) and the legislation had to be implemented by April 2006. These boards were a statutory construct with a wider responsibility for 'safeguarding' rather than child protection and a greater number of agencies were required to be involved in their work. It was JS's evidence that he was appointed in July 2005 to help Rotherham 'to establish the board and support them...' and this is supported by minutes of a meeting in July 2005 where he submitted a report and a draft Development Plan for discussion.
- (viii) It was PA's evidence that the LSCB was *'really tremendously good compared to ACPC'* though the Casey Report does not suggest that the LSCB (by February 2015) is particularly effective. It was AH's evidence that when he was appointed to the role of Independent Chair (which he held from 2009 to 2013) he was told by the outgoing Chair in 2009 that *'although people attended the LSCB meetings...there was a tendency for then all the agencies to go away and not think child protection and...to leave the issue of child protection in general to Children's Services'*.
- (ix) The first set of available LSCB minutes from December 2004 records a presentation by a Youth Adviser about CSE. The minutes suggest that this is the 2004 Report that was made to the Children and Young People's Board and Executive Group earlier that month. Information is given about the number of children *'on the Register'* (though this is in total rather than for CSE alone), the number of Child Protection referrals and the number of children subject to initial Child Protection Conferences. This meeting was attended by MC, DB and JG among others. It was JG's evidence that it was around this time that he began to understand the *'scale'* of CSE.
- (x) There is no reference to CSE in the available LSCB minutes from early 2005 save for a reference in May 2005 to the training sub-committee doing further work around sexual exploitation and a record in July 2005 that RN would update the LSCB in October *'on the outcome of the small Task Group set up to implement recommendations relating to sexual exploitation'*. An officer group involving PA, JS and RN produced a progress report which was presented to the LSCB on 5 October 2005. The minutes suggest this report was presented by PA. This progress report says that the group is drawing up a report for consideration at the Children's Board and the Safeguarding Board. There is no express reference to the Task and Finish Group in this progress report (see section (g) below) but this report says there were 4 children on the child protection register, 8 who had been discussed at the Sexual Exploitation Forum (see section (c) below) and that Risky Business were working with *'approximately 100 young people around this issue'*. The completed report and an action plan was expected by December 2005.
- (xi) A more detailed report was then delivered to the LSCB in December 2005 and included an action plan for the further development of services. It was JS's evidence that planning included actions to *'develop a multi-agency team including Risky Business, locate the*

*Service in a more central location and provide easy access to health services and support in returning to education and establish a clearer model of intervention and to develop better performance information including outcomes for the children and young people worked with and action against suspected perpetrators'. It is also JS's evidence that other work undertaken by the LSCB across this period included the funding of multi-agency courses (run by Officer T) in addition to Risky Business' own annual training programme (increased to 6 courses by 2009) and the development of a 'Safe Parenting' handbook for parents which included information about CSE. It is PA's evidence that the paper delivered in December 2005 'was significant in that it led to the commissioning of the [SM] review'. It is PA's evidence that the 'action plan had some variable results/outcomes. We increased base budget funding to secure posts within the team' (and this is reflected in the timeline at Appendix 18) but 'The delivery model was rendered less effective by changing personnel'. This report states that there 'has not been a commonly agreed measure of the prevalence of exploitation in the borough' but sets out in detail the number of young people under the care of Risky Business and Social Care. The inclusion of numbers in the report is, perhaps, indicative of a service that is endeavouring to get to grips with the issue albeit not until late 2005.*

- (xii) The minutes from 9 February 2006 note a report from JS about a *'revised procedure'* for CSE and that his role as Chair of the Sexual Exploitation Forum and the work of the Forum (see section (c) below) was discussed. There is also a minute that *'Detail in respect of the new multi-agency service are not far enough advanced to be included...'* which is further evidence to show that a multi-agency service was being considered from an early stage (see section 4.5 above). Another report was presented by JS at the meeting in June 2006 about the progress in key areas of the development plan. One item was 'Responding to sexual exploitation in Rotherham' but the report itself is not attached so the information reported is not known.
- (xiii) The minutes from August 2006 record under the title 'Sexual Exploitation Forum' that the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel *'had called in an update on safeguarding issues relating to sexual exploitation. A report was being submitted to their next meeting in September. In view of this a report on this matter would be submitted to the next meeting of the Safeguarding Board in October'*. Such an update is not reflected in the available minutes from the Sexual Exploitation Forum (see section (c) below) but it seems likely that this was the report prepared and submitted by SP in September 2006. There is also a reference in these minutes to the 'Sexual Exploitation Action Plan' which directly references SM's secondment *'to undertake research and development'* (which from contemporaneous reports appears to have been from 1 April 2006 until August 2006). The minutes record that *'[SM] has reviewed referral, assessment and service planning within Children and Young People's Services managers and Risky Business staff and is finalising recommendations to further improve arrangements and procedures'*.
- (xiv) The minutes from October 2006 reference an update report prepared by RN, PA and JS *'regarding progress with the development of borough wide processes and arrangements to protect young people from sexual exploitation'*. The minutes record that the report highlights the role of the Risky Business project and that the *'meeting was informed that two of the four children considered to be at particular risk were in Local Authority care'*. The minutes record that *'...it is felt that issues around sexual exploitation are now more clearly managed and officers are better equipped to give more accurate statistics around activity compared to the situation two years ago'*. A further report to contain statistical information in terms of referrals, current activity and outcomes for children was due to be submitted at a future meeting.

- (xv) The report itself updates the LSCB on the Sexual Exploitation Action Plan, cites agreed multi-agency Sexual Exploitation Procedures, new referral procedures through to the Social Care front desk, agreed definitions of thresholds to guide these referrals (see section 5.4(a)(iv) below) as well as proposals to ensure better financial security for Risky Business. The report details 78 current active referrals and, of those, 15 met the top 2 thresholds of need and, of those 15, 4 were considered to be at particular risk. The appended plan details progress such as the appointment of a Front Desk manager and revised thresholds for referrals and responses referencing the 'Safe and Well' protocol introduced by the LSCB – see section 5.3(b)(vii) below. The background papers referenced include SM's draft report though this is not attached to the update report we have seen.
- (xvi) Further reports in June 2007, June 2008 and September 2009 by Officer Z set out updated figures in respect of contacts and referrals and the work of the Sexual Exploitation Forum as well as an updated action plan. The accompanying minutes from the LSCB for 2007, 2008 and 2009 do not detail the nature or scope of any challenge to the reports presented by Officer Z. In June 2007 it was decided that the action plan would be reviewed again in June 2008 and annually thereafter. Any discussion which preceded that decision is not recorded. In terms of activity this report from June 2007 details 51 contacts at the 'Front Desk' between April 2006 and March 2007, 6 strategy meetings since January 2007, no children on the Child Protection Register due to issues of CSE but 2 looked after children (1 of whom was in secure accommodation) had been identified as at risk of CSE. It records that Risky Business had 45 referrals across the same period for young people under the age of 18 and that there were 22 referrals with post-18 year olds. It would be easy to say with hindsight that CSE should have remained higher on the agenda for the LSCB but this is not indicative of fault. This was indicative of a change in focus for the LSCB when previous reports on CSE had featured more regularly but this was not unreasonable in circumstances where the LSCB were comfortable with the progress being made by PA, Officer Z and others against the action plan. There is also evidence as the minutes progress of increasing demands on the time and resources of the LSCB (for example an increase in the number of separate reports that are minuted and the number of serious case reviews) which may also have played a part in this decision.
- (xvii) The minutes of June 2008 reference the next annual report delivered by Officer Z. The minutes state that *'Rotherham MBC has been proactive in this area and had, with partners, progressed a multi-agency Action Plan to underpin, develop and strengthen the resources and services working to protect young people from sexual exploitation'*. The minutes reference a steering group (see section (e) below) and that the respective roles of the steering group and the Sexual Exploitation Forum (see section (c) below) had been reviewed and clarified. In terms of activity this report from June 2008 details 118 contacts at the 'Front Desk' between April 2007 and March 2008 (so more than double the number from the previous report), that no children were on the Child Protection Register due to issues of CSE but 2 looked after children in residential units had been identified as at risk of CSE. It records that Risky Business had 59 referrals across the same period for young people under the age of 18. The report records only 2 referrals with post-18 year olds but says that Risky Business is *'ceasing to work with post 18 year olds but plans and services are being put in place for these young people if they require further work'*. We have seen an updated action plan for this period suggesting that work in this area had continued throughout the year.
- (xviii) A further report is presented to the LSCB in September 2009. There is a short minute which reports that *'growing public awareness in Rotherham of sexual exploitation has created growing demands and challenges...that need to be addressed. Resource*

*implications and capacity issues were highlighted as key areas of concern*'. In terms of activity this report from September 2009 details 117 contacts at the 'Front Desk' between April 2008 and March 2009 (mirroring the year before), one child was on the Child Protection Register where sexual exploitation was a contributory factor, 8 looked after children in residential units had been identified as at risk of CSE and 5 of those were in Out of Authority placements. It records that Risky Business worked with 148 young people under the age of 18 across this period and that 'the number of contacts' totalled 2151 (though we anticipate that this number included attendees at workshops etc). An action plan is referenced and is indicative of ongoing work across the year.

- (xix) The LSCB's Annual Report for 2008-2009 references CSE in the number of referrals but it is notable that, despite the reports delivered by Officer Z and the extent of the work referenced in the action plans appended, CSE does not appear to feature in the LSCB's action plan itself. It is possible that the separate work being undertaken meant it did not need to feature as a point of action for the LSCB. However this does, perhaps, support the evidence of AH, who became Chair of the Board after that report was published, that issues about '*child protection*' were left to Children's Services even though senior officers including JT, PA were members of the Board. The extent to which any of them may have challenged the Board on this approach or the reasons why the Board adopted this approach is not clear from the evidence we have seen and previous Chairs of the Board have not been interviewed but we understand that this may not have been unique to the Council.
- (xx) By 2010 Officer G is involved in delivering papers to the LSCB alongside SP and there is evidence of reports from the Exploitation sub-group (see section (d) below) though the remit of that group is wider than CSE alone. There is the work of the Child S SCR in 2010 though this is considered separately at section 5.3(c)(v) below. There are reports to the LSCB in December 2010, June 2011, June 2012 and December 2012. The report in December 2010 appears to be twofold: a report from Officer G and a report from the Exploitation sub-group (section (d) below). In this meeting Officer G seeks support for a multi-agency CSE team and she references the outcomes from the LLR (see section 4.5(b) above). In terms of activity Officer G details 190 contacts with the 'Children and Young People's Services Access Team' between April 2009 and March 2010 and a further 112 contacts between April 2010 and September 2010. Some 200 strategy meetings were held from April 2009 to March 2010 demonstrating, as the report itself says, an increase in awareness and activity. The report references 3 young people who are '*subject to a CP Plan where sexual exploitation is a contributory factor*'. No separate action plan is attached to the document we have seen (as it had been to previous reports to the LSCB) but the report references numerous proposed actions. The extent to which those actions were discussed or subject to challenge by the LSCB are not recorded in the minutes but there is evidence in subsequent minutes of, for example, Officer G and PM working together on briefing papers for schools on safeguarding concerns.
- (xxi) A further update from the Exploitation sub-group was delivered by SP in June 2011. This was not specific to CSE though it referenced action undertaken in that regard. The minutes from the LSCB record that '*a new sexual exploitation team was in the process of being established despite funding challenges...[Officer G] had already made good progress with the action plan for the new team*'. A copy of this plan was not attached to SP's report nor is any wider discussion about those objectives or progress referenced in the minutes so the level of challenge is difficult to gauge. No information was given (or at least recorded) about the level of contacts as had been the case in previous reports.

- (xxii) A similar report from the Exploitation sub-group was delivered to the LSCB in June 2012 by Officer K. He informed them that the revised work plan for the Exploitation sub-group included CSE as one of its main themes. He reported that 'The Sexual Exploitation Team is now part of the Safeguarding Children and Families Service and has a dedicated team manager...'. In terms of activity this report details 123 contacts to Children's Social Care services which led to 72 referrals between April 2011 and January 2012. The report references 4 young people who are 'subject to a CP Plan where sexual exploitation is a feature'. The youth and family support work focus of the team had supported 106 young people between June 2011 and January 2012 with 47 open cases and had delivered training to approximately 500 young people in secondary schools across the borough. Other work pending was reported to include a CSE training package for Muslim leaders.
- (xxiii) In December 2012 the LSCB minutes note delivery of a further report from Officer G about the work of the new Child Sexual Exploitation team (see section 4.5(w) above). A small sub-group of the Exploitation sub-group had reviewed two specific reports about CSE and the work plan was due to be reviewed in January 2013. We have not seen the specific reports this sub-group reviewed nor were any proposed amendments to the work plan documented in this report or the LSCB minutes. However the report does suggest that the Exploitation sub-group had undertaken a benchmarking exercise of the Council's services against the Government's Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Plan and *'were compliant with recommendations except those which require external action by government departments'*.
- (xxiv) It was HW's evidence that he attended a national conference on CSE delivered by Bedfordshire University who were researching the response of LSCBs to CSE: *'The speakers asked why people thought the response was slow. I offered my view that they were afraid of opening a 'can of worms'...*'. Whilst this may have been the case there is evidence to suggest that plenty of work was ongoing (particularly in the Exploitation sub-group) across this period (see section (d) below).
- (xxv) The first set of available LSCB minutes of a 'Child Sexual Exploitation meeting' are March 2013 which detail a wide set of discussions and attach the plan referenced at section (d)(iii) below. The minutes record that AH said *'most of the actions ought already to be in hand but it needs to be ensured that work is progressing as it should'*. It is not clear, however, how such a plan can be challenged or checked in the absence of specific points for action. It is possible that it is this same plan which is criticised in a meeting on 17 July 2013 where it is noted that *'the action plan needs to be more specific about what needs to be achieved'* and *'Another gap identified in the action plan was a lack of analysis in relation to outcomes and impact of the actions'*. Clearly, whilst such a plan was not the sole responsibility of senior officers in the Council it would have been preferable if the plans (originally drawn up in 2011) had been more firmly driven and clearer from the outset. The Annual Report for 2012-2013 prepared by AH places a firm emphasis on CSE as a high priority and the report sets out details of referrals as well as the work of the Sexual Exploitation Forum in contrast to the report referenced at section (xix) above.
- (xxvi) It should be noted that the Child Sexual Exploitation 'Delivery Action Plan' prepared in September 2013 is markedly different though a review conducted in December 2013 determined that it was *'too complicated'* and that *'many staff did not appear to understand the plan or its significance'* suggesting that this was not fit for purpose either. We have not reviewed the impact of the LSCB beyond this date given that it features in the Casey Report but the evidence suggests that the work of the LSCB across this period in respect of CSE was not as productive as it could have been despite the involvement of a series of senior officers from the Council alongside others. It was SA's evidence that, when he took

over as Chair in 2013, one view expressed to him was *'they are making a big song and dance about next to nothing and it will all sort itself out'* which is not indicative of a LSCB that was holding itself or other agencies properly to account even at the later stages of the Relevant Period.

(b) Key Players

- (i) The work of the Key Players group, which was one of the earliest multi-agency collaborations, is outlined in the Jay Report where it is described as *'a multi-agency group who discussed individual cases and tried to map networks of perpetrators from available intelligence'*. It also developed and delivered training to the ACPC (see section 4.6(a)(v) above). It was Officer P's evidence that the group emerged out of the Risky Business steering committee (which had been set up to support the funding applications made by Officer P and Officer E – see section 4.5(c) above). It was Officer P's evidence that the intention of the steering committee was to support the project but that committee meetings were *'becoming less and less about managing the project and more about the concerns in respect of the young people and how to link it all together'*. It was Officer P's evidence that they decided to set up the Key Players group *'to free us up to focus on the Risky Business project...because we recognised we needed to pull it all together and start identifying those issues'*. This is supported by Officer B's report to the Policy and Practice Sub-Committee of the ACPC in December 2002 which suggests that membership/function of Key Players was revised in April 2002. It was Officer P's evidence that the group met monthly in various venues and that the information they collated led to recognition that they should have *'some recognised academic collated information that we could present to persuade people'* (which in turn led to the appointment of Witness J and the report detailed at section 5.3(c)(ii) below).
- (ii) The evidence of Officer P about the work of the Key Players group is supported by the limited minutes available which span the period between September 2000 and 7 March 2002. The first of those minutes dated 12 September 2000 refer to the meeting prior to that as the 'first meeting' suggesting that the group started meeting in 2000. Although there are only eleven sets of minutes those minutes suggest that more than eleven meetings took place across this period. Although it was SM's evidence that attendance from Social Services could be *'sporadic'* and that *'you would not have necessarily the consistency of attendance'* the available notes suggest that someone from Social Services attended each of these meetings. SM described the meeting as *'informal'* and this is supported by the evidence of Officer E who didn't recall that it was *'formalised'* though, equally, she considered it *'inappropriate that some of the information was being shared there'*. This is supported by the minutes dated 28 June 2001 in which Officer E expresses concerns about children's names appearing on the minutes. This is, in part, supported by the evidence of Officer Y who recalled that if a young person was discussed at a meeting one of his team of social workers would go out and do an assessment and then, depending on the concerns, the young person would be supported by a social worker or by Risky Business. He explained that social workers got involved where there were *'any risks in relation to parenting, parenting neglect, parenting concerns...if not it would be over to [Officer T's] team to deal with the sexual exploitation aspect of it'*.
- (iii) The notes of the meetings appear to demonstrate that tasks were allocated, often though not always to Officer P, about seeking to involve social workers, engaging with others such as Officer F and writing to other officers, including PA and PK about particular concerns. Similarly it was Officer B's evidence that *'it was about youth service undertaking some preventative work...if it warranted a social care referral then that would take place'*.

- (iv) It was JG's evidence that he knew of Key Players: *'that there were some people working in a group to collate information...but that would be the sum total of my knowledge'*. He didn't attend any meetings or seek to do so nor could he recall seeing any reports that *'laid out the nature and extent of what subsequently came out'*. Similarly it was DB's evidence that she knew the name but she didn't think it was something she was asked to work with. It was JW's evidence that she *'put into the Key Players Group one of my key middle managers with a child protection responsibility, [Officer P]'* and that it was *'a reasonable interface'*. It was JW's evidence that she considered Officer P's post *'which was much more senior by this stage to be appropriate senior representation in this operational group'*. There is evidence that social workers and other practitioners also attended the group but there is little evidence of any senior management engagement with the Key Players group until 2005. This, of itself, is not unreasonable given that Key Players was a sub group of a small operational team. However that does not mean that a failure by senior officers in Social Services to then act upon the information it was reporting was justified (see section 5.3 below).
- (v) The minutes dated 5 April 2001 suggest that the group intended to write to team managers (copied to senior managers) with concerns that procedures were not being followed but it is not clear whether or not a copy of that letter was sent to senior managers— it is JW's evidence that it was not. The notes dated 18 May 2001 suggest such a letter had not been sent by this point. There are then minutes dated 26 July 2001 where Officer P reports that JW was *'very pleased with the multi-agency work taking place'* and that she had asked Officer P to report to Councillors in August 2001 (see section (vi) below) which suggests that Officer P had updated JW (even if the copy letter referenced above was not sent). Although JW does not recall this meeting it is her evidence that this *'does not support the view that [I] was being given advice that there were significant issues of concern arising from the group'*.
- (vi) There are references in the notes dated 30 August 2001 to the preparation of a report by Officer P and Witness J to 'Heads of Service' and a reference on 28 September 2001 to Officer P being tasked with informing senior management about 'Update Information'. In this respect we have seen a note prepared by Risky Business for the Key Players meeting on 28 September 2001 about numerous young women but it is not clear whether this is the 'Update Information' referenced in the minutes. There is no evidence to show that this contact was made (over and above the minute from 26 July 2001). Officer P refers in her evidence to some contact with JW and that *'we saw it as a huge problem and they saw it as something that wasn't that massive'*. Equally, it was JW's evidence that *'that kind of case by case discussions wouldn't come to me and shouldn't have come to me unless there were concerns. It would have bubbled up if there were concerns about it not working, or a failure to engage, or cases that weren't dealt with properly but it didn't, it didn't come to me'*.
- (vii) The evidence suggests that one of the first senior managers to take a more active interest in the work of Key Players was PA. It was PA's evidence that one of the members of Key Players [RC] (now deceased), told her of a *'growing issue around kind of sexual abuse/CSE'* and that this led her to commission SM's report in 2005 (see section 4.5(h) above). It was also SS' evidence that she had asked PA to conduct a review of all the cases on Risky Business' books and that she authorised and supported SM's appointment. It is not clear when the discussion happened between PA and RC but if it was not until 2004 or 2005 then Key Players had already morphed into the Sexual Exploitation Forum by then (see section (c) below). The evidence suggests that it was prior to 20 March 2005 but it is not clear whether such a discussion took place before or after the presentations in

December 2004 which led to the establishment of the Task and Finish Group (see Appendix 18 and paragraph (g) below). Whilst PA's decision to engage with this work (whether within the guise of Key Players or the Sexual Exploitation Forum) was positive it is unfortunate that the Key Players group (and/or the Sexual Exploitation Forum – see section (c) below) had been running for nearly five years before this happened despite evidence which suggests that officers did receive updates from as early as 2001. The possible reasons for this are explored at section 5 below.

(c) Sexual Exploitation Forum

- (i) The evidence suggests that the original Key Players group morphed into a more formal group: the Sexual Exploitation Forum and then the Sexual Exploitation sub-group (see section (d) below). The availability of the minutes for these meetings is patchy. It is Officer B's evidence that she believed these replaced Key Players and that they reported into the ACPC (though she may well have meant the LSCB by this stage – see section (a)(ix) above). It is Officer T's recollection (page 136 of the RB book) that '*Witness J's report and subsequent departure coincided with the end of the key players meetings...*' (see section 5.3(c) below) and '*we had a period of about six months where we had no arena for sharing anything, until a decision was taken to set up a new discussion group. And so the Sexual Exploitation Forum was born*'. This suggests that the Forum started running in late 2002 or early 2003. The notes of an interview with CBB in September 2014 suggest that it was created as part of the Task and Finish group (see section (g) below) and the evidence of Witness S was that he was told by PA in 2005 that a new forum was being set up (after the letter sent by the Children, Young People and Families Consortium to the Chief Executive – see section (j)(iv)). However the first set of contemporaneous minutes is dated July 2004 which pre-dates both that presentation in 2004 and the 2005 letter so the position remains unclear.
- (ii) By 2004 both Officer E and Officer P had moved into other roles (Officer E in 2002 and Officer P in 2003) and it was Officer P's evidence that she had not heard of the Sexual Exploitation Forum. Based on the evidence we have seen the reason for the change in name from Key Players is not clear nor is it clear when exactly that change happened or why it did. The minutes of the Forum dated 21 September 2005 include attendees from Social Services, Risky Business, the Police and Education Services. There is evidence to suggest there were difficulties with this Forum in the early stages. The RB book at page 155 describes them as a '*frustrating experience*'. The Jay Report reports that, in 2004, minutes of the Forum indicated concerns that some referrals they were making to children's social care were being reclassified as 'Teenager out of control' and that a project worker had attempted to make a referral and been told that she had to have witnessed the incident herself as third party information would not be accepted (Appendix 5). It was JW's evidence that she had no knowledge of this Forum prior to her departure from the Council in September 2004 and she had no knowledge of any meeting in July 2004 (see (i) above). It was PA's evidence that she had no recollection of a discussion of that nature around reclassification and that the contention about the worker having to witness an incident had never been brought to her attention. It is possible that any reclassification was happening at an operational level but it is not clear who was making those decisions. The lack of available minutes or other evidence about those involved has meant it has not been possible to further explore those issues.
- (iii) There is evidence of an 'audit' of the Forum by the Police and Risky Business in May 2005. This is mentioned in the Jay Report (Appendix 5) and also at pages 155 to 157 of the RB book. We have seen documents titled 'Draft Sexual Exploitation Forum Audit – May 2005



conducted by Police and Risky Business' and a separate document titled 'Comments raised by the Risky Business Project in relation to the final audit conducted in May 2005 by South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham Social Services forum'. We sought to understand the trigger for this review. It was PA's evidence that she spoke about the audit with a Police Officer *'who was of the view that the work of the Key Players Forum was not as productive as it needed to be. Her view was that this was as a result of the numbers of cases that were constantly being reviewed. She felt that from a Police perspective this was proving inefficient and it frustrated the need to understand the outcomes which had resulted. The cases included Looked After Children and we agreed that the care plan and review/protection conferences were a better forum to assess need and related protection plans. This view was predicated on the fact that social workers, foster carers and residential workers did not attend the forum so therefore had a little if any information. Better sharing of the information with the social workers and carers from Risky Business or the Police would have led to an appropriate protection plan being developed with the carers. In addition those girls who were believed to be in a 'consensual relationship' and those over 18 would cease being reviewed by the forum. The rationale was this allowed the Police and agencies within the forum to focus on those other young people without statutory interventions and those in need of services and protection'*.

- (iv) Whilst it is PA's evidence that she spoke to the Police about this it is not clear who from the Council actually worked through the audit document with the Police or whether Risky Business were involved in those discussions (the title of the document suggests that they were but a different document suggests that the audit was carried out by the Police and 'the Council'). It is SS' evidence that she did not have any recollection of this audit though, at an early stage, she had insisted that all children at risk of or involved in CSE had to be assessed by social care. It was SS' recollection that PA wasn't saying they couldn't be discussed rather that they had to be referred to Social Care as well. It is PA's evidence that she did not see the audit documentation nor was she perhaps likely to have had personal involvement in the process given her seniority. It was JS's evidence that this 'audit' had already taken place by the time he arrived at the Council in July 2005.
- (v) One example of a case that was removed from the Forum is the case of a young woman who moved to Newcastle yet Risky Business record that she has returned and is residing in Creswick Road. Another example is the case of a young woman who is noted as being *'heavily involved with the Family Crisis Response team'* but that *'an assessment was done as she was making her own choice so the Social Services case was closed and a final referral was done to Risky Business'*. However, on the response from Risky Business, the comment is *'what constituted [x] making her own choices as the original referral was around drugs and kidnapping'*. It is Officer T's recollection that nothing happened as a result of these challenges (page 157 of the RB book) and we have not seen any evidence of any formal response to their concerns (nor is it clear who may have had responsibility for progressing those) though it should be noted that some of the concerns related to young people who had been removed from the Forum many months prior to the audit - as early as July or August 2004.
- (vi) In the absence of a clear audit trail and/or a more detailed review into what happened to each of the individual young people concerned it is difficult to determine whether or not the decision to 'audit' the Forum and/or any decision to remove those individual young people amounted to a failure in any respect. There are, though, discussions noted in the minutes on 21 September 2005 where Officer T raises concerns about the removal of a young person from the Forum when plans were in place to address sexual exploitation and the prospect of a sample case was discussed. The Chair undertook to *'discuss the position*

*with the Safeguarding Manager'* though it is not clear from the evidence whether or not such a review ever took place. Equally there are minutes from March 2006 which suggest that, on occasion, cases were removed from the list with agreement when there were no longer concerns in relation to CSE.

- (vii) In June 2005 letters were sent by the Council's 'ACPC' (which is not clear given that the LSCB appears to have been established prior to that date – see section (a)(viii) above) to CBB amongst others, detailing concerns about the way in which the Forum was operating and making it clear that the meetings *'are designed to consider the cases of young people that are not being dealt with elsewhere as a result of limited information or options to work with them. Where strategy meetings or Section 47 meetings have taken place, Sexual Exploitation Forum is not the arena for further in depth discussion regarding such young people'*. This letter also inferred that referral processes had not been adhered to and that the Chair of the meetings had been seeking out information from *'Social Services Front Desk'* and that *'there is the means for cases which do not originate in front desk to be missed'*. We have not seen any response to this letter but the Forum minutes dated 21 September 2005 reiterate the referral processes and suggest that a referral should be made if a professional is concerned about a young person being sexually exploited or at risk and that they would need to contact the Chair and discuss their concerns. It appears that the Chair would act as a form of gatekeeper: *'...all cases needed to be discussed with [the Chair] so a decision could be made as to whether they should be discussed at Forum'*. Whilst this suggests that the scope of the Forum had been limited we do not have any evidence about what this change meant in practice save that, in the agendas for the meetings that followed the letter in June 2005, the number of referrals is occasionally listed as 'None'. This either suggests that, on occasion, every new referral to the Forum was already being dealt with elsewhere or that no new cases were coming to light. It is not possible to determine which of these is right based on the evidence we have seen though the latter seems unlikely in practice.
- (viii) Although the evidence suggests that the work of the Forum continued there are limited minutes available until May 2006. At this meeting the *'research and development work'* of SM is referenced (possibly the report commissioned by PA in 2005) which had been a *'positive process'*. The meetings through 2006 suggest increased interest from the LSCB (mirrored in their minutes) but also that the focus of the Forum starts to change from a place where individual young people were discussed into more of a forum about training and development. It was JS's evidence that the intention was that discussion about individual children was going to take place more in strategy meetings but that *'there did not seem to be a great deal coming out of the meetings from the Police side of things'* so he spoke to the Police about whether a more senior officer could attend to bring *'greater knowledge, experience and influence'*. There is a reference in the timeline (Appendix 18) to a report to the LSCB about the work of the Forum in February 2006 and to a *'revised procedure'* (though that is not reflected in the Forum agendas available in respect of that period). There is discussion at the Forum in November 2006 about a request from the LSCB for a report into the work of Risky Business and the Forum suggesting that the LSCB was taking steps to remain apprised of the position (possibly a reference to the Action Plan referred to on the timeline at Appendix 18) and it is noted by the minutes of December 2006 that Officer Z was due to join in January 2007 with responsibility for *'the lead on sexual exploitation issues'* (which she retained responsibility for until Officer G was appointed in September 2010).
- (ix) By February 2007, Officer Z is chairing the Sexual Exploitation Forum and the evidence suggests that she is tackling issues such as *'issue around identifying the level of risk of*

*young people referred to the project and factors previously used needs to be rethought and discussed* noting that *'Risky Business' assessment of risk does not always accord to the agreed threshold* (see section 5.4(a)(iv) below). It is notable that, in comparison to previous meetings, this meeting does not feature any discussion about individual young people. It was Officer Z's evidence that *'we began to try and develop that group along a different way with development of knowledge and issues and hold [strategy meetings] on young people if we were concerned'* and this aligns with JS's evidence above.

- (x) Similarly by February 2007 (perhaps on the back of work done by the Steering Group – see section (e) below) the notes suggest that Officer Z was keen to review the terms of reference for the Forum *'in order to best define how it can contribute to and enhance the work currently in progress regarding managing/preventing sexual exploitation'*. In light of the comments at section (ix) above about the changing nature of the Forum it is notable that, after Operation Central concluded in 2010, Officer Z produced a paper evaluating the *'positive aspects and challenges presented by Operation Central'*. Some of the challenges noted were the *'lack of robust mechanism for making links with regard to adults involved', 'lack of a robust system for co-ordinating and disseminating relevant information and establishing links between individual situations'*. At the risk of over simplifying the position this had been the original intention of the Key Players group and, indeed, the Forum in its early days. It is unfortunate that, as that group developed over time, this original purpose appears to have been lost. If, as Officer Z's paper suggests, this information was not being pooled elsewhere at a multi-agency level then that is a failing though one that is difficult to attribute to any one individual particularly in light of the patchy information available.

(d) Exploitation Sub-Group

- (i) The evidence suggests that a 'new' group is started in 2010 or 2011 which is chaired by SP. There is a reference in the notes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the LSCB in July 2010 inferring that there is a *'new Exploitation sub-group which will monitor exploitation issues and report directly to Rotherham LSCB. The work plan for this group has...not been formulated'* although the report to the LSCB in December 2010 suggests its remit is wider than CSE alone. The establishment of this group appears to flow directly from the LLR delivered in July 2010 relating to Operation Central. The first set of available minutes is dated May 2011 and, at first review, they evidence a marked 'step up' in terms of the scope and nature of these meetings. The notes are more detailed and there are action points which appear to be reviewed at subsequent meetings (a marked contrast to the quality of the notes produced previously). There are also a larger number of attendees including Officer C who was sitting as a Lay Member of the LSCB.
- (ii) Although the evidence suggests that a significant amount of work was undertaken by this sub-group over the intervening period it has been difficult to assess the impact of this work on the Council's response to CSE. The evidence suggests that topics covered at these 'new' meetings included the Sexual Exploitation Service (the name for the group now being managed by Officer G – see section 4.5(w) above) and the preparation and delivery of a work plan (albeit that the evidence suggests that delivery of this plan was very slow in practice). In some context the evidence suggests that a plan drawn up in 2010/2011 was not progressed and that a revised work plan was delivered in draft in May 2012. There are references to the plan being updated later in 2012 and again in January 2013 though the nature of those updates is not clear. Any difficulties or delays experienced in implementing these plans do not appear to have been reported as problems to the LSCB (see section (a)(xxiii) above). We have seen copies of two plans: a 'Rotherham Sexual Exploitation Services Draft Development Plan' and a 'Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Exploitation Sub Group Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan. The latter was, on Officer G's evidence, prepared in readiness for the Ofsted inspection in 2012.

- (iii) A 'Prevent, Protect, Pursue – Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan dated March 2013 is presented to the LSCB on 15 March 2013. It appears to be a new version of the plan prepared by the sub-group: it is wide in scope detailing 'what we will do', 'how we will do it' and 'who will be the lead agency'. The difficulty, however, is that when the Council is tasked with driving a particular element of this it is simply noted as being the responsibility of 'Rotherham MBC' meaning that it is impossible to determine who has been tasked with progressing it and by when. The Police assume responsibility for chairing those meetings during 2013 (though it remains a multi-agency forum) and the plan does not feature again in subsequent minutes available to us though the reasons for this are not clear. Other detailed plans/actions arising from those discussions are, however, appended to the minutes and, it appears, were subject to regular review.
  - (iv) Notwithstanding the amount of work that the sub-group appeared to be involved with it should be noted that the Chair of the sub-group between November 2011 and August 2013, Officer K, described it as *'the worst chairing job I've ever done in my life'*. He said that the group *'didn't meet very often because meetings kept being cancelled by HW and it was a 'terribly, terribly tense meeting which didn't get anything done'* (although it was HW's evidence that a decision to cancel the meeting would also be for Officer K as Chair of the sub-group). Officer K attributed that to the *'Andrew Norfolk situation and the press'*. He said that *'the Police didn't want to discuss cases or talk about...sexual exploitation and there was this tension'* and that *'the Police were deeply mistrustful of Social Care because...their view was that files had been leaked'*. Officer K recalled that it was one of the Lay Members who used to press for information about cases (although it is Officer K's evidence that it was the Police who were reluctant to provide this rather than Council officers).
  - (v) It was JT's evidence that she met regularly with the Police to discuss CSE and that they decided the sub-group was *'floundering and jointly agreed it needed much more ownership at a senior level'*. The Police assume responsibility for these meetings in July/August 2013. Reference is made in the minutes to the 'Gold Group' (which we understand was the strategic group) and the 'Silver Group' (which we understand was the operational group) (see section (f) below). We have not examined the minutes beyond this date given that this extends beyond the Relevant Period.
  - (vi) It should be noted that the ongoing work of the Exploitation sub-group should not be confused with a different set of meetings, also called the Sexual Exploitation Forum, which were chaired by SW from October 2013 in his role as Police and Crime Commissioner. The notes suggest that JT attended these meetings on behalf of the Council (together with a number of other authorities in the local area and Members). It was JT's evidence that the purpose of this group was *'to share practice and concerns across the sub region relating to CSE'* and that this was *'reported back into Rotherham Gold group'* and that *'tasks were allocated accordingly'* (see paragraph (v) above).
- (e) Sexual Exploitation Steering Group
- (i) The first reference to a Sexual Exploitation Steering Group is in a 'progress report' dated 8 May 2006. The notes from the Sexual Exploitation Forum dated 26 September 2007 suggest that the Steering Group *'meets regularly in order to look at ways of addressing S.E. in Rotherham'*. It is not clear who set this group up but the fact that it includes JT and PA suggests wider buy-in and interest at a senior level than is evident from the minutes of

Key Players and/or the Sexual Exploitation Forum. We have located terms of reference for the group developed in early 2008 suggesting that it was set up *'to address the need to co-ordinate the borough's multi-agency response, at a strategic level, to tackling sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and young people'*. The group is described as a Strategy Group in terms of reference dated January 2008 and as a Steering Group in otherwise identical terms of reference dated February 2008.

- (ii) Although the author of the first progress report in May 2006 is unknown the content suggests it may be SM (it is not clear whether this is the report she prepared at PA's request – see section (b)(vii) above). The report details a proposed service structure which includes the appointment of an Assistant Safeguarding Manager (eventually Officer Z in early 2007) – see section 4.5(i) above. There are not minutes of the Steering Group to accompany this report so it is not clear whether the report was discussed in a meeting or simply circulated. Similarly a further report in July 2006 which incorporated a proposed service structure (though this was not attached) covers issues such as funding and accommodation for Risky Business but it is not clear to whom this report was circulated. There are discussions at a meeting in November 2006 about the need to retain Risky Business as a specialist service and the prospect of Officer T and CBB attending team meetings in Social Care (though it is not clear whether that happened). There is an action plan dated 2006 where people including PA and RN are tasked with various actions (and where most of those are marked as completed) but there are no minutes to accompany this document.
  - (iii) There are minutes of meetings through 2007, 2008 and 2009. Topics covered include funding for Risky Business, training, premises and these overlap, to some degree, with the matters discussed in the Sexual Exploitation Forum. The other documentation available in respect of 2007 and 2008 is a further action plan where people including PA and CBB are tasked with various actions (and where most of those are marked as updated/completed) and there is evidence that this plan was reviewed and updated by the group. By 2010 the group is being chaired by SP and, although there is reference in these notes to a Safeguarding Away Day and to draft terms of reference for the Exploitation sub-group (see section (d) above) no further information is available. There is reference to the fact that *'attendance [of the sub-group] will be monitored'* and *'the agenda must be owned by the group'* perhaps reflecting the difficulties with contribution at the Exploitation sub-group described by Officer K (see section (d)(iv) above). The minutes (albeit that they are limited) give the impression of a group that did hold themselves to account though the extent to which they were able to influence and direct the wider Exploitation sub-group, as opposed to being a further 'talking shop' is not clear.
- (f) CSE Gold and Silver Groups
- (i) The Gold and Silver terminology is emergency planning language suggestive of Police involvement and this is supported by the limited evidence available in respect of these groups. The evidence available includes circulation lists detailing involvement from the Council, the LSCB, the Police and others. The terms of reference for the 'Gold' Group are not clear from the evidence we have seen though JT attends these meetings (the Casey Report sets out that the Gold Group has sole responsibility for developing the CSE strategy and delivery plans for the Council and that it reports to the Safer Rotherham Partnership and to the LSCB). It was JT's evidence that *'we commissioned Barnardo's to undertake a review to give us a baseline of our current practice to act as a basis for the gold group going forward'*. It was JT's evidence that *'we had taken the recommendations from the Barnardo's report and made clear that the only groups responsible for CSE were the Gold*

*and Silver groups*'. There are four sets of minutes available between March 2013 and June 2013 (the circulation list is much wider than the list of attendees) but the meetings are chaired by the same person from the Police who starts to chair the Exploitation sub-group meetings from August 2013 onwards. It is not clear whether the Gold group morphs into the Exploitation sub-group after that date (see section (d) above) though PM recalled that this was what happened in practice and this would be consistent with JT's account above.

- (ii) The terms of reference for the 'Silver' Group suggest that the Silver group reports to the CSE sub-group (which we anticipate is the former Exploitation sub-group referenced at section (d) above, now the Gold group). Attendees from the Council included CBB, Officer G and Officer K though how this links to the work already being undertaken by the Exploitation sub-group is not clear. There are two sets of minutes available (one dated 1 December 2013 and one is undated) which detail current operations/investigations but the role of the attendees from the Council in that group and notes of any actions are not documented. It has not been possible, in the absence of further contemporaneous documentation, to properly assess the impact or otherwise of these groups or to test the extent of the involvement of any senior officers from the Council and the work they had been tasked with.

(g) The Task and Finish Group

- (i) The timeline at Appendix 18 suggests that, in December 2004, there was a report to the Children and Young People's Board about 'the sexual exploitation of young people' and that the same presentation was given to the LSCB in the same month (see section 4.6(a)(ix) above and section 5.3(c)(iv) below) (the "2004 Report"). It is CBB's evidence that she was tasked with preparing this report by DB.
- (ii) The timeline at Appendix 18 records that a Task Group, chaired by the Leader (RS) was to be established. His written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (Appendix 17) supports this. The membership of this group is not clear nor have we seen any minutes. It was JG's evidence that this group was *'comprised of six councillors and five officers including the Head of Children Services'*. Despite the potential involvement of RS and others it was MC's evidence that he had *'little if any recollection of this Task and Finish Group. I do not think that I was involved in it and I do not know who else participated in it...I must have been aware of it at the time but am afraid I do not recall it. I do not know who was responsible for progressing recommendations arising from the group but there should be records of the group's meetings and action plans that can clarify this'*. There are references in the timeline at Appendix 18 to reports from the Task and Finish Group to the Children and Young People's Board in February 2005, March 2005 and April 2005 at which point they stop. Unfortunately we have not been able to source any of these reports. We have seen one report prepared by Officer T at CBB's request for this group which is an update on the work of Risky Business between December 2004 and February 2005. This report details the number of referrals to the project and includes case studies. The recipients of this report are not known.
- (iii) There is a reference to the Task and Finish Group in the minutes of the Sexual Exploitation Forum in September 2005 which suggests their work was ongoing but that there was *'no direct representation from the Forum'* and also to a Task and Finish Group 'Action Plan' in minutes dated May 2006 though this cannot be located/identified either. Both CR and RN could recall being at one meeting of the Task and Finish Group but not what was discussed. It is the evidence of both JG and Officer T that they were not involved. It was CBB's evidence in September 2014 that SP was leading this but it is SP's evidence that,

although he recalls *'an initial meeting around this time'* he was not part of the Task and Finish Group and did not chair it. Although CBB recalled that PA was involved with the group it was PA's evidence that she recalled *'a group led by [RN] from youth services but it does not provoke a strong memory of either the timing or the content'*. It was JG's evidence that he thought the purpose of the Group was that *'people would get together, do a brainstorm of the issues that needed tackling, they would draw up a list of what needed to be done and when and then they would implement that and monitor it to make sure that it comes to a finish and there is a positive conclusion'*. It was JG's evidence that he was not asked to be part of the Task and Finish Group but he enquired about its work *'and was told that in addition to investigations the group was developing a strategy to raise awareness of the issue with staff, elected members, schools and with other agencies'*. It is JG's evidence that he took steps to ensure all cases were allocated and that the newly appointed Director of Children's Services (SS) was fully apprised of the issues.

- (iv) It was SS's evidence that the Task and Finish group did produce a list of recommendations including a member seminar, a partner away day to clarify roles and responsibilities, multi-agency training, a telephone number for the public to raise concerns, and exploration of a better witness protection scheme and travel arrangements. It is MC's evidence that one possible explanation for the *'apparent petering out'* of this group was that the work of the group was relevant to parts of the new Children's Plan which was being developed by SS through 2005. This is supported by the written evidence from RS at Appendix 17. We have not been able to source a copy of this plan though it is SS' evidence that tackling CSE featured as a priority and that these recommendations were taken and incorporated into the overall action plan. It is also JS's evidence that CSE featured in this first plan. There is, for example, evidence of conferences that were held (the Every Child Matters conference in March 2006 referenced at section 4.2(b) above) though the extent to which this followed or was the result of either the work of the Task and Finish Group or formed part of the Children's Plan is not known.
  - (v) In the absence of any contemporaneous documentation about this Task and Finish group it has been difficult to establish whether or not any action was taken (either prior to or in conjunction with the Children's Plan) but it was Witness W's evidence that there was a meeting of the Task and Finish group in March 2005 (which was attended by members of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium – see section (j) below) which is referred to in a letter to the Chief Executive in November 2005 where an update on the group's work was sought and not received (see section (j)(iv) below). In the absence of any minutes from the group or any further details about its membership it is difficult to reach any further conclusion in respect of its work or, indeed to establish whether any specific failings can be attributed to senior officers at the Council. However it is MC's evidence that *'working parties did not just fade away – especially if they were formed at the request of the Leader. They may have been changed however if other developments made it sensible to do so and this may well have been the case in this instance'*. We were surprised to find that we could not source evidence of systemic follow up by senior officers at the time or any reports about the work of the Task and Finish Group. We had hoped to clarify matters further with RS but he was not willing to be interviewed and, given the lack of available information we are not able to reach any conclusions about this group, its membership or its work.
- (h) Children and Young People's Trust Board
- (i) The timeline at Appendix 18 suggests that the presentation in December 2004 (which preceded the Task and Finish Group cited at section (g) above) was also made to the

Children and Young People's Board. The requirement for such a Board flowed from provisions in the Children Act 2004. There is evidence to suggest that this Board was established in the Council the previous year and that a Children and Young People's Executive Group reported into it. The Board comprised Councillors including RS and senior officers from the Council including DB and JG. At the point it was formed the Executive Group included GF, DB, JG, JW, SP, RN and also a Police Officer. The draft terms of reference at its inception set out that the purpose of the Board is to *'promote and safeguard the best outcomes for all children and young people so that in all performance indicators we are in the top 25%'*. The purpose of the Executive Group is similar save that they are also to carry out the wishes of the Board. We have not seen any copy minutes from the Executive Group and membership will have altered given that GF left in December 2003 and JW left in September 2004. Although JW has no entries in her diary for a board of this name it was her evidence that this may have been a group (originally known as the Children's Services Development Group and then the 'engine room' both chaired by DB) working on matters in readiness for the implementation of the Children Act 2004 and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Copy minutes from the Board pre-dating 2010 including the minutes where the original presentations were made in 2004 are not available (save for one set dated 7 April 2005 which contain nothing of relevance) but we have reviewed those minutes that are available between 2010 and 2013.

- (ii) Terms of reference dated May 2012 set out that the numerous responsibilities of the Board included (at least by 2012) the publication of a Children and Young People's Plan detailing priorities and evidence base, monitoring existing service provision and to agree how future provision should be delivered. Whilst this was not a forum with direct responsibility for CSE (unlike, for example, the Sexual Exploitation Forum or the Exploitation sub-group) this was another multi-agency forum where matters regarding CSE featured. The attendee list demonstrates that, in 2012, this was attended by a series of senior officers from the Council including MK and JT. There is evidence of a detailed report by Officer G to the Board on 21 November 2012 and a request for quarterly updates along with a further update by JT in January 2013. A further update takes place in March 2013 where there is a reference to the Sexual Exploitation and Strategy Plan which was the lead responsibility of the LSCB (the plan referenced at section 4.6(a)(xxv) above). There is a reference in the minutes in May 2013 about the plan that *'partner perception was that the documents were Council documents'*. The minutes emphasise that...*'it was important that all parties owned their roles and responsibilities'*. There is a reference in the minutes of September 2013 to the revised action plan in 2013 though this too was criticised (see section 4.6(a)(xxv) above).
- (iii) As we report above it was SS' evidence that, after she joined in 2005, *'we made tackling child sexual exploitation a priority in the first children's service plan'* and it is credible that this would have happened in light of both the presentations in 2004 and the establishment of the Task and Finish Group. We have not seen a copy of this first plan but we have reviewed the Children and Young People's Plans dated 2007-2010 and 2010-2013 for which this group were responsible. There is a reference in the 'Staying Safe' section of the 2007 plan to the number of referrals for sexual exploitation being a *'key performance indicator'* and in the Resources section to *'update action plan to improve current strategy and service delivery around sexual exploitation'* (most likely the action plan referenced at (e)(iii) above). This doesn't feature in the review of 'Staying Safe' which appears in the next action plan for 2010-2013 nor does CSE feature as a specific area of focus though there is a focus on looked-after children and on the problems caused by alcohol (both of which feature in some CSE related casework). The reasons for this are not clear but we comment further on other reports produced during the Relevant Period at section 5 below.



(i) Safer Rotherham Partnership

- (i) Though minutes of the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) have not been reviewed as part of this investigation we note the findings at pages 123 to 124 of the Casey Report (Appendix 16). It appears that there is an SRP Board, an Officer Executive Group and a Joint Action Group (JAG). In line with some other groups in existence at the time *'the remit of each group is unclear and we found little evidence of the SRP Board holding officers from the Executive Group to account for delivering SRP's priorities. Both the Board and Executive Group appear to be passive with a large number of reports being 'noted' or 'for information'*. The Gold group (paragraph (f)(i) above) reported to the SRP and it was JT's evidence that *'the SRP had CSE as one of its priorities'*. However the findings in the Casey Report suggest that senior officers saw CSE as a matter for the LSCB (which is a concern in light of section (a)(xix) above).

(j) Children, Young People and Families Consortium

- (i) The evidence we collated suggested that this group was set up in about 2003. Although it was not a group created by the Council the evidence suggests that a number of its senior officers had involvement with it in relation to CSE matters. It was Witness S' evidence, who was the Consortium's Development Worker, that it was *'a forum for voluntary sector organisations with an interest in children, young people and families'... 'it was to bring together collective views of the voluntary sector on matters of strategic and operational relevance to the partnership and it was seen... as a tangible way in which the voluntary sector could work more closely with other partners particularly in the statutory sector'*. Membership included *'all the main voluntary sector organisations you would recognise nationally like Barnardos and NSPCC, Action for Children but it also included other more home grown services'* (although this did not extend to Risky Business as they were part of the Council rather than the voluntary sector).
- (ii) The Consortium had a wide remit. It was not a forum focused on CSE nor was it developed for that purpose. However it is Witness S' evidence that a small sub-group of the Consortium was established: *'we had a small group called the Safe and Well Group which was made up of organisations that were more directly involved in working with young people, looking after young people and others who were clearly...vulnerable to exploitation'*. It was Witness S' evidence that it came about *'because of the frustration within the sector and with those organisations in particular that little seemed to be happening and it didn't seem to be taken seriously as an issue'*. Though the evidence suggests that minutes were taken at the Consortium meetings and at the Safe and Well Group these are held externally and we have not been able to review them for the purposes of this investigation.
- (iii) It was Witness S' evidence that SS established a monthly joint leadership team (JLT) meeting with *'members, different parts of the Council and other partners including Health, the Police and the voluntary sector'* and that he sat on the JLT as a voluntary sector representative. It was SS' evidence that this was her senior executive team and that, in the interests of multi-agency collaboration, she extended membership to include senior representatives from health, police and the voluntary sector. We understand from SS that the JLT was entirely separate to the Consortium and that it *'aimed to provide a unified approach to the leadership and management of children's services across the borough and to steer the design and development of a more integrated children's service'*. The evidence suggests that concerns may have been raised at the JLT with senior officers including SS, PA and later with SP (see section 5(b) below). For example it was Witness S' evidence that

the Consortium was bringing to the JLT *'those concerns voiced by those organisations that there was a present real problem for young people in Rotherham who were being exploited and they were finding it difficult to get a serious response from the Police to tackle some of the concerns they had raised'*.

- (iv) There is also evidence to suggest that matters were escalated by the Consortium to the Chief Executive, MC, in November 2005. It is Witness S' evidence that, following the establishment of the Task and Finish Group in 2004 (see section (g) above) *'we were so frustrated that we weren't getting anywhere that the Consortium decided to write to the Chief Executive [MC] expressing concerns...that the voluntary sector weren't being involved and asked really what was happening'*. This is supported by the evidence of Witness W who read out, at interview, a letter he said was dated 8 November 2005 in which the concerns of the Consortium are expressed and an update on the progress of the Task and Finish Group was requested (a copy of this letter has not been seen). It was the evidence of both Witness S and Witness W that no response was received from MC to this letter although equally there is no evidence to suggest that a response was chased up. It was MC's evidence that he did not recall the letter but it was not his practice to ignore letters or deliberately not reply to them and that he had *'well developed systems to either reply directly to letters within a few days, if I had the information to do so, or to pass letters requiring research to appropriate colleagues with a request to either reply directly (and copy me in) or to draft a reply for my signature'*. The other evidence from MC pertinent to this matter was that his wife had been involved in a very serious head on car crash on 14 December 2005 and was not discharged from hospital until the New Year during which period MC was only at work for limited periods. It is MC's evidence that this may be relevant to the timing of this letter and the apparent lack of follow-up and we are inclined to agree. We have asked the Council if they hold copy minutes of the JLT but these have not been found. In the circumstances it has not been possible to establish what specific responsibilities lay with senior officers at the Council (or indeed whether any of the concerns were minuted) though there is evidence at section 5(b) below about the attitude allegedly displayed by some senior officers at those meetings.

- 4.7 In some context, between 1997 and 2013, the Council appeared to have been involved in a vast range of different multi-agency meetings and groups all of which had some responsibility in respect of its response to CSE: ACPCs, the LSCB, Street Team, Risky Business, Key Players, the Sexual Exploitation Forum, the Exploitation sub-group, the Task and Finish Group, the Exploitation Steering Group, CSE Gold and Silver groups in conjunction with the Police, the Safer Rotherham Partnership, the Children and Young People's Trust Board and the Children, Young People and Families Consortium. The number of meetings that took place and the evidence of the time devoted by a large number of people across the Council and other agencies is apparent based on the documentation (even if that is incomplete) but it is hard to reconcile with the lack of progress detailed in the Jay Report and the Casey Report. It was RN's evidence that *'of course we were always working on the next way of raising the issue. At the time we were saying...'oh well we are trying, you can get rid of the key players and we will have a forum and maybe that will help; we will do that or we will go to councillors directly and brief them and maybe that will. So we were always working on the next thing that would try and break through it'*. In reality the number of different groups does suggest that the wider Council was endeavouring to get to grips with CSE but was struggling to find an effective way of doing so.

- 4.8 The evidence suggests, however, that poor attendance and progress at some of these meetings (whether they were operational or held at a senior level) may have contributed to the position. It was DB's evidence that *'you went to a meeting and nobody did anything and you came away, nobody was challenged with doing anything and you went back next time and somebody said*

*'what's happened to so and so' and nobody knew'*. This is supported by RN's evidence that *'it was more 'a yes we will see what we can do and then everyone goes away and nothing happens'*. This is also supported by the evidence of Officer T who recalled *'we tended to find happened in most meetings, we'd have a meeting to book a meeting to have another meeting to discuss what we'd done in last meeting to have another and it just went on...'*. Similarly PM recalled that *'consistent attendance from regular people who were in the right position in their agency to come and speak with some authority...it's a challenge'* though the fact that there were so many different groups (often running concurrently) likely contributed to this position.

- 4.9 Certainly the number of different forums and the different changes in tack appears to support this position. This was commented on in both the Children First Review who reviewed the position in 2009 (section 3.29 of the Jay Report notes that this Review noted *'excessive number of teams and panels which could lead to confusion and increased risk'*) and this was identified again by the Safeguarding Peer Challenge in 2011 which noted *'roles and responsibilities of the several Boards and Partnerships should be clarified and their plans and expectations made more widely known'*. Similarly the 'Review of the response to child sexual exploitation in Rotherham dated December 2013 *'considered the governance structures to be difficult to understand'* and that there was *'confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the different bodies functioning within the system'*.
- 4.10 Notwithstanding these different forums the Barnardos report in October 2013 and the Casey Report in February 2015 (Appendix 16) suggested that, despite some progress, there remained a great deal of work to be done. The reality is that each multi-agency group and its respective members contributed to that picture over the Relevant Period but that does not mean that any one individual or group of people at the Council can credibly be held out as responsible.
- 4.11 The very nature of multi-agency groups means that a large number of people who fall outside the scope of this report were also involved and this is a cumulative failing on the part of them all. It is, perhaps, best summed up by Officer G (who joined the Council in 2010) that *'it's not that they didn't understand CSE that was not the issue, the issue was they were like headless chickens, they didn't know what to do about it'....'they just flapped and flapped'*. Similarly PM who joined the LSCB in 2010 described a *'disconnect'* with senior officers: *'the reality was that if you are not getting things right on the ground, anything else that you are doing is kind of superfluous, you should get that right first'*. As far as the involvement of senior officers is concerned, there were two external reviews identifying the prospect of confusion in 2009 and 2011. There is no evidence that, across the Relevant Period, any senior manager took a step back, reviewed the multitude of working groups and critically assessed whether the structure was fit for purpose though it is equally difficult to say that this was the responsibility of any one individual.

## **5 WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE ABOUT ANY BARRIERS TO PROGRESS AND WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THOSE ACROSS THE RELEVANT PERIOD IN THE COUNCIL?**

- 5.1 In this section we report on the evidence we have collated about any barriers to progress and who was responsible for those across the Relevant Period. In addition to the matters reported on at section 4 above we have identified a series of other 'overarching' barriers to progress. At a high level these are the relationships between Social Services, Youth Services and Risky Business and other issues within Social Services/Children's and Young People's Services across the Relevant Period including the impact of external evaluations and a reliance on the Police.

## 5.2 The relationships between Social Services, Youth Services and Risky Business

5.3 The tension between Risky Business and Social Services is identified in the Jay Report. The evidence we have collated suggests that the poor relationships that existed were the result of three broad issues: location and structure; approach and attitudes; and mistrust as a result of alleged 'cover-ups' across the Relevant Period.

### (a) Location and Structure

- (i) Although the Risky Business project worked with vulnerable young people at risk of CSE, it sat within Youth Services in the Education, Culture and Leisure Services Directorate rather than with Social Services (so under DB rather than JG or JW). The Corporate Governance report in March 2002 describes working relationships between the (then) separate Social Services and Education directorates 'at both policy and operational levels' as *'much more effective and meaningful than had been identified during previous inspections'*.
- (ii) Despite this the evidence that we collated in respect of the working relationships between Social Services/Children's Services and Risky Business particularly prior to the integration of the directorates in 2004 did not suggest that the two worked closely together even though both were working with young people at risk of *'significant harm'*. It was the evidence of JW and PA that the two directorates operated separately: they had, on PA's evidence, *'different directors, different buildings, different structures, entirely different cultures, different governance structures, different committee structures...'*. This was supported by the evidence of JG who explained that, at the time, *'contact between social workers and youth workers weren't routine'* which contrasts with and further highlights the early efforts of Officer E and Officer P to work together – see section 4.5(c) above. It was DB's evidence that, when she raised issues relating to CSE with JG and JW, they told her they were *'doing...the Social Services arm of it because some of these children were children in care'* but she also agreed that the two directorates *'were operating...in different silos'*. Similarly Officer E described it as *'people were working in silos then that is how things were'* though it should be noted that such an approach was not unusual of local authorities who had to manage the fact that, however they were structured, there would always be potential 'disconnects' between services.
- (iii) However, there was a natural cross over between the work of Social Services/Children's Services and Risky Business given that both were working with young people who may have been at risk of *'significant harm'*. It was PA's evidence that the fact that Risky Business sat within the Education Directorate did not mean that any safeguarding issues identified would not have been the responsibility of Social Services. It was JW's evidence that they weren't *'disinterested'* in the work of Risky Business and that there were operational arrangements between the two (meaning Key Players at section 4.6(b) above). JW explained that, as an example, they got hundreds of referrals every year from health visitors but that wouldn't mean that *'we as a service or I as an Assistant Director would know the detail of the operational arrangements of health visiting services. They were a partner agency in the way that everyone else was a partner agency'*. It is AL's view that this is not unreasonable in respect of a service managed from elsewhere (at least prior to 2004). However Risky Business was managed by the Council and there is little evidence of active interest by any senior manager from Social Services prior to 2004/2005 save that JW had received an update from Officer P about the work of Key Players (see section 4.6(b)(v) above) and had made one referral.
- (iv) We examined whether this position changed following the development of Children's

Services in 2005. Restructuring the Council to create a Children's Department was a requirement of the Children Act 2004. The intention was to provide a complete service to children within one department though it is AL's view that such a requirement meant that all Councils were diverted from operational issues into the challenges presented by complex re-organisations. There is, in any event, limited evidence to suggest that the integration in 2005 as well as further steps to encourage better multi-agency working actually improved the working relationship. For example it was Officer I's evidence that she had worked with one young person in the Youth Offending Team but then, once she was seconded to Risky Business in 2010, she realised that lots of agencies were working with him: *'the Police were picking him up. Youth Offending Service are dealing with him, Risky Business know there is worry because the girls are telling them about girls who have identified him as a worry...there is no communication'*. Similarly Officer E described how *'even now today...and I am not talking about CSE I am talking generally, even though things are much more integrated...my links into education [the Council's education department]...are very limited and I probably know a small number of people I could go to if I wanted something'*. It was Officer O's evidence that *'the issue of sharing information...isn't great...I do find that evolved teams sometimes still do not communicate relevant information'* but that *'it is better'*.

- (v) Whilst the 'silo' approach appears to have been a factor (and one that is not necessarily limited to the Council) the evidence does not suggest that the solution would have been to transfer Risky Business to sit underneath Social Services prior to the development of Children's Services (not least because of the difficulties experienced in 2010 which are detailed at section 4.5(m) above). The evidence suggests that, in practice, the difficulties and the individual failures of those involved were more likely to relate to the very different (and sometimes unfortunate) attitudes and approaches of some of the individuals working in these key services (see section (b) below).

(b) Attitude and Approach

- (i) This section sets out the evidence we have collated about the attitude and approach of some of the individuals working within these key services to one another and also the attitude and approach towards the young people with whom they were working and how these may have influenced their respective responses.
- (ii) First the evidence suggests that there is, understandably, a fundamental difference in approach between working with young people who are engaging voluntarily with Youth Services and then working with them as part of a statutory intervention such as Social Services or Youth Offending. It was Officer E's evidence that the *'mismatch was that the youth work came from a really young person focused place and was about respecting and talking to young people and working with them and what they brought rather than working on something that somebody else wanted you to...there was the difference that the youth work is always a voluntary relationship so nobody has to work with a youth worker...'*. This was also addressed in the evidence of Officer K and Officer I who both had a background in Youth Offending: Officer K said *'there was a difference in philosophy between the youth work way of doing this which is to kinda jog alongside the others and be relatively open ended about where that journey with the young person took you and the Youth Justice philosophy if you like was, well let's have a plan, let's work together on the plan'*. It was Officer I's evidence that *'information would come to light but if I asked Risky Business what they were doing they said well we will just meet her for a coffee in town...they wouldn't commit to a regular session with her or there was no kind of aims....there was no commitment to see her regularly or producing any sort of plan'*. This difference in approach

is the nature of the beast rather than a failing attributable to any one individual: necessarily the two services approached matters in different ways but, instead of using those two avenues to maximise intelligence and information gathering, the evidence suggests that it resulted in a lack of trust between the respective services and the view appears to have been neither was fulfilling their responsibilities in the eyes of the other (see section (iii) below).

- (iii) One of these fundamental differences in approach concerned issues of confidentiality for young people. It was PK's evidence that *'the general view was that Risky Business went down the dangerous channel of offering confidentiality to young girls without the rider that most people would put on which is if you disclose something that is of significant concern for yourself or for others I have to do something with it'*. Similarly it was JW's evidence that *'the way that they dealt with confidentiality was different from the statutory services. So our staff for example would always have a caveat when working with young people which is I respect your confidentiality unless there is a point at which I think you are in danger and somebody else needs to know...[Risky Business] are in a negotiated relationship, it is entirely trustworthy, if you will say you will maintain a confidence then you maintain a confidence and I think that is what the tension was...'* (it should be noted that the idea that Risky Business offered complete confidentiality is not supported by the evidence of Officer T).
- (iv) It is not difficult to see how such a difference in approach as far as confidentiality was concerned, if it existed, could have influenced both what information was shared by Risky Business and how it was shared in practice. There is little doubt from the evidence that Risky Business were sharing information. At page 85 of the RB book Officer T explains that *'At this latter meeting [Key Players] we would regularly share information and intelligence on those we believed were abusing young girls across Rotherham: names, nicknames, car registrations, taxi numbers, mobile phone numbers, takeaways, shops, relationships between abusers – you name it, if we'd been given it we shared it at the Key Players meeting'*. We have seen a sample intelligence report setting out the nature of the information collated and shared by Risky Business though it is difficult to make any finding, in isolation, about further action that could or should have been taken by the Police or others on receipt. At page 86 of the RB book Officer T explains *'For example if we shared a name it might be one known to Police and also identified by housing as a person who'd been seen hanging around a children's home or hostel. We could then check with education to see if the same person had been parking outside local school. So with all this input we could build a really good case for action and the possibility of arrests – or so we thought'*. Officer T told us at interview that *'...regardless of how much information or intelligence we'd got we'd put it in cause it's not up to us to decide whether it was evidence, we weren't Police officers whereas social workers and Police officers kind of work on more evidential information'*.
- (v) Any response by the Police to this information falls outside the scope of this report. However the evidence we sourced from past and present employees of the Council about the information seemed to represent two extremes of attitude and approach: either that Risky Business wouldn't offer up sufficient specific information (perhaps because they did not always have permission from the young person to do so – see section (iii) above); or that they would offer a large amount of general information which was difficult to action. It was Officer T's evidence that the reaction to the information she was sharing was often *'...where's your evidence [Officer T]? Well we haven't got any evidence, this is what this child's telling us, but if you can't evidence it, what do you want us to do about it, so it was always like where's your evidence'*. It was Officer T's evidence that JW had once

complained about her to Officer E for *'sharing information that I could not back up with evidence'* although further details about when and where this was allegedly said are not known. There is not evidence from Officer E to support that and it is JW's evidence that she has no recollection of such a comment. However, the approach of Risky Business is supported by the evidence of Officer N who recalled that the information *'would consist of perhaps part registration numbers, nicknames, part actual names and how difficult it was to try and square that up with what would have been information that would have enabled people to firmly identify individuals or to firmly identify individual taxi cabs'*. Also it was the evidence of SM that *'[Risky Business] may have felt not heard, but actually it was really difficult to quantify sometimes what they were talking about'*.

- (vi) It was PK's evidence that *'[Risky Business] would have disclosures from young girls and have the information but would not necessarily provide that themselves...I remember it coming up in conferences where [Risky Business] would be asked to give us the information in a conference and they would not. They would talk about generalities and Police would get frustrated because it was not the level of information that they could act upon'*. This was supported by JW's evidence that Risky Business believed that they could raise concerns and the Police should investigate them – including to seek out evidence - whereas the Police believed that they had to have a certain level of complaint and supporting evidence in order to act. This was also supported by the evidence of Officer I who explained *'where's the evidence that abuse has taken place...without a young person disclosing that they have been abused...there's no crime been committed...and Social Care are happy with the parenting. So you've only got Risky Business who might be able to do some work with the young person'*.
- (vii) The evidence suggests that this issue about how and what information was shared extended to other areas in the Council (Education, Youth Offending etc) who were also working alongside these young people. For example it was CR's evidence, in respect of Parent Support Advisers working in schools, that *'there was a real difficulty...at that time getting the information from people within Risky Business who they could work with. They wouldn't share that information'*. She said *'I think they'd asked...but what they wanted was a database just for them so the other people couldn't access it'*. It was Officer O's evidence that *'they wouldn't share any information whatsoever so quite often young people we would [not] even be aware that they were under Risky Business'...would be working completely in isolation'*. It was Officer O's evidence that *'everything was very cloak and dagger with them....they'd want everything off you, all your information but they wouldn't share any information with you'*. It was Officer I's evidence that *'they would want information from you but they weren't very forthcoming with information back so as a statutory agency we probably had more ability to put safeguarding in place for that young person but if we don't know what the risks are that are being presented then it is very difficult to be able to do that'*. It was also Officer I's evidence that there *'was preciousness about the information that Risky Business had...we might be given snippets of information but you never would get...a full picture'*. JS said he and the Sexual Exploitation Forum were *'being provided with information but I wasn't being provided with the detail that has been suggested subsequently was available'*. It was JS's evidence that he developed Safe and Well thresholds and needs protocol and practice guidance documents with colleagues which were *'intended to support and promote a common language, better communication and professional challenge, better understood processes and improved multi-agency assessment practice'*. It was JS's evidence that the protocol and practice guidance was *'intended to support improved practice for all children in need and children at risk of significant harm which included children at risk of child sexual exploitation'*.

- (viii) At the other end of the spectrum it was Officer G's evidence that, even when she arrived in 2010, *'Risky Business felt they weren't taken seriously and that they were passing information and it wasn't going anywhere or being dealt with properly and Social Care felt that Risky Business were passing on information just relentlessly that did not make any sense or have any evidential backing or hadn't followed due process...Risky Business had no filter basically, they just shared everything'*. Similarly it was Officer K's evidence that the same information was often repeatedly shared: he recounted an example of an account of a perpetrator who kept a gun in his car and said *'that...just kept repeating itself for about three years'*.
- (ix) The fact that there may not have been specific (or even new) evidence in relation to individual young women did not absolve Social Services/Children's Services (or indeed the Police – see section 5.4(c) below) from taking action. However, if the young person concerned was not prepared to make a formal complaint, it is difficult to see what action might readily have been taken by individual social workers beside raise it with the Police though the evidence suggests this was not always welcomed (see section 5.4(c) below). For example PK said: *'if they are in the community you would be trying to work with them and engage them in preventative work...girls groups...channel them in other directions provided by support. Point them in the direction of Risky Business and other support services. If that did not work...you might think about residential, removing them from the family situation, placing out of authority. Care orders and secure orders would require evidence...for us to get involved we would have to go through a process of initial and core assessments which required co-operation and requires information'*. In practice we understand that the Council could have considered other steps such as removing the young women from the immediate area if they were already in care or looked after provided their parents agreed (although not if they were living at home unless their parents agreed to them being looked after).
- (x) It was SS' evidence that *'there was a lack of effective placements outside the home so we struggled to find good alternatives to care....'out of borough placements would break down because the girls were lonely and they would just come back, very often returning directly to their abusers. I think a major challenge was the brainwashing of the girls and the young women by their groomers. This meant that even a service like Risky Business could not persuade them to leave. It is so easy for young women to slip into an abusive relationship but so hard for them to leave'*. In reality, the best approach was likely to have been to encourage the Police to take further action to identify and detain the perpetrators. There is evidence that some senior officers including JW and DB did seek to raise the issue with the Police at a relatively early stage in the Relevant Period and to encourage a better response. This was positive. However there is, equally, no evidence to suggest that they escalated the issue within the Council or the Police when no further action resulted (see section 5.4(c) below).
- (xi) Whilst Risky Business were criticised about the information they were sharing, it is Officer T's evidence that efforts to gather further evidence and record it on a database also left them open to criticism. It was Officer T's evidence that she was told by PA that it was inappropriate for evidence about alleged perpetrators to be held on a database when their involvement was *'hearsay'* (a matter that PA says is *'sheer fabrication'* as she says she never met Officer T) and that Officer T was told by HW that recording information about alleged perpetrators was a *'human rights issue'* (a matter HW says he does not recall though he does recall concerns about data protection: *'I was aware of data being stored in lever arch files and left on table tops in room, on one occasion in a room where there were young service users present'*). Similarly it is Witness J's evidence that the *'mapping*



exercise' which she undertook in 2001 and which is documented at paragraphs 6 to 8 of her written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (see section (c)(D) below and Appendix 8) was described as *'unhelpful'* as it was *'largely based on anecdotal information'* albeit that this was feedback from the Police rather than from officers in the Council although it did result in a sample anacapa map that we have reviewed. It was Officer P's evidence that *'Police and other agencies considered much of the information as 'anecdotal' which was one of the reasons to get the [Home Office] research project up and formalise the information to be shared in order to access more resources and gain recognition of the problems the girls were facing'*.

- (xii) Also the evidence suggests that another problem which contributed to this overall picture was that youth workers may not have been seen as equal to social workers (albeit that this was unlikely to have been a view that was unique to the Council). As the Casey Report says *'Children's Social Care did not have the monopoly on understanding how best to tackle this form of child abuse'*. It was Officer T's evidence that *'It's kind of like professional jealousy it's described as. I think it's because the girls engage with us and work with us and would speak to us'*. She recalled an occasion when she offered to go and do some training for social workers to be told by JW: *'youth workers don't train social workers'* although further details about when and where this was allegedly said are not known. This is not reflected in JW's evidence who does not recall making such a comment. Similarly Witness J said *'there was definitely a sense that we were not being taken seriously'* though, again, it has not been possible to substantiate this further.
- (xiii) It was Officer E's evidence that *'people didn't value youth workers...there was not an understanding that the Youth Service was as professional as Social Care'*. It was also Officer E's experience that *'I was always on the back foot in the fact that I was not a qualified social worker and I could never ever get to understand what this mystical thing was that they did, but that is how it felt to me, that I was not seen as equal to them because I was not from that'*. This is supported by the evidence of RN who said *'they thought we were non-professionals who didn't know what they were doing...I think sometimes they saw Risky Business as something which provided them with problems...and would not be supportive or appreciative of the skills of my staff'*. This is also supported by the evidence of Officer I who said *'you still see it now in the services that it might be that a social worker has made a decision and it is very difficult to challenge it because a social worker made that decision even if all the other professionals around the table are going no no I don't agree with that...my professional qualification is much better than your professional qualification therefore my opinion is more valid than yours'*.
- (xiv) This evidence was further supported by Officer G who was of the view that *'there was a kind of disrespect for [JT] by the social care directors because she wasn't a social worker and she lost a lot of power and respect I think because they kind of rode rough shod over her...they almost kind of patronised her into thinking she didn't understand social work'*. This view was also supported by SA who said that in his view, *'[JT] didn't have the self-confidence to deal with Children's Social Care because she knew that deep down she wasn't a Social Worker...'*. It is JT's evidence that *'I confirm I am not a social worker by background but I refute this impeded in any way my managing of others within social care'*. Such an approach is not reflected in the evidence of those 'social care directors' that we were able to interview for the purposes of this report.
- (xv) This evidence suggests that this hierarchical approach seemed to extend to those in the voluntary sector too (although again perhaps not an issue that was unique to the Council). It was Witness S' evidence that he was raising issues relating to CSE on behalf of the

Children, Young People and Families Consortium at JLT meetings (section 4.6(j) above). Witness S told us that SS' reaction when she was briefed about their work was *'I think there was an appreciation, a recognition of the work of the sector but clearly didn't seem to be particularly concerned about investigating or digging into the information that the voluntary sector said that it had. All the way along I felt that it was almost as if people within the statutory sector felt they knew more about the subject and no doubt they did, they knew a lot more about what was going on than we knew and so it always felt as if we were on the outside banging on the door being mostly treated politely but not necessarily taken hugely seriously'*. There is, though, no evidence to suggest that SS did not take matters of this nature seriously in practice. It is SS' evidence that her *'natural tendency was to take any concerns raised seriously and investigate them more fully, as required'*. She cannot recall Witness S ever bringing concerns related to CSE to the JLT and it was her evidence that *'his views were not treated superficially'*.

- (xvi) It was Witness S' evidence that SP, who joined the JLT later, was *'quite tactful'* but that he felt that SP thought the voluntary sector were a *'necessary evil'*...and *'certainly didn't embrace their input. He was reluctant to delegate responsibility to voluntary sector partners as he said that if things went wrong, the local authority would be left to carry the can'*. Whilst such an approach is not necessarily a failing (nor one unique to the Council) it is unfortunate if the voluntary sector did not feel that their contribution was sufficiently welcomed or appreciated though it should be noted that the evidence suggests this approach did not extend to all senior officers. It was Witness S' evidence that JT *'always maintained a fairly friendly relationship, positive relationship with the sector'* describing her as *'very personable, very open, incredibly hard working as [SS] was, very dedicated to doing what they did and very people centred in what they did'* and this is, perhaps, evidence of JT utilising her own background as a benefit rather than it presenting as a hindrance.
- (xvii) In addition to this, there is evidence to suggest that, over and above a level of 'professional jealousy' there may have been a dismissive attitude and approach towards Risky Business: that some senior officers may have considered they were 'hysterical' and/or that matters were 'exaggerated'. It is not clear from the evidence whether this is linked to the nature of the information they shared, how they shared it, to the fact that they were women (see section 6.1(b) below), to their place within the Youth Service or a combination of these. For example it was DB's evidence that she visited the Police Station to discuss the issue on one occasion with the District Commander and JW (the date of this meeting is not known but it must have been prior to September 2004 when JW left the Council) and JW expressed a view that Risky Business *'was very secretive and could be a bit hysterical in expressing their concerns'*. Though it is JW's evidence that she would not have used the term 'hysterical' it is her evidence that *'some of the staff were quite florid in their affect – which reflected their passion about the service—but which telegraphed a lack of professionalism at times...this impacted on their credibility'*. Even if that is right it was JW's responsibility to understand whether or not the concerns they were raising (however they were delivered) were credible in practice. It is JW's evidence that she did receive assurance that the project was working well but there is also evidence that she was involved in discussing concerns about its working arrangements (see section (xxix) below).
- (xviii) Similarly it was JG's evidence that, after the meeting in December 2004 (see section 4.6(a)(ix) above) he asked his Head of Service [PA] about the issue and *'she felt that some of the stuff they were saying may well have been exaggerated'*. Again, this did not mean that JG was not under a duty to seek to understand whether or not any view that may have been expressed by PA was accurate and there is no evidence that he did so or that PA

sought to do so prior to 2005. This is supported by the evidence of Witness W who also said PA had described Risky Business as 'hysterical' and by Officer D who recalled that *'there was a feeling that information from youth workers was considered less credible/over dramatised'*. This view isn't limited to senior officers either. It was SM's evidence, who both sat on Key Players and prepared the report in 2006 at section 4.6(b)(vii) above, that *'actually Risky Business did offer something that was very good, it was very informal, it was very responsive in many ways but you had to take a bit of hysteria alongside of it and that is the best way I can describe it'*.

- (xix) It was MC's evidence that he recalled *'there was some difference of view between social work professionals and the Risky Business team on the scale and nature of the problems being highlighted. Nonetheless I did not encounter any denial of the seriousness of the issue...'*. He said he had *'never heard anything describe the concerns raised by Risky Business as 'hysterical' and would have firmly challenged such a view had it been expressed to me'* though he does reference *'comments...questioning the level or extent of problems highlighted by Risky Business'* which were *'always measured and professional and I believe intended as constructive input to discussions about CSE. Such discussions were infrequent but tended to take place around presentations made by Risky Business to management team or members'*. It was MC's evidence that he saw no evidence to *'suggest there was any prejudice against Risky Business in CYPs...'* and that the evidence of funding increases for this service *'would not have happened if Risky Business was thought to be anything other than a valued and effective service tackling serious and challenging problems...'*.
- (xx) It was SS' evidence that she would have been wholly unswayed by the view that Risky Business staff were hysterical, that she does not agree with this and that she did not support such a view at the time. While JS had no recollection of anyone using the term 'hysterical' he could recall some managers in Children's Social Care (he did not give any names) *'expressing the view that the situation was being exaggerated by Risky Business'* and that this view was expressed to him during and after his induction into the Council in mid-2005. Similarly Officer Z, who joined in 2007, described *'some disbelief of their perceptions of sexual exploitation'*.
- (xxi) It was Officer I's evidence that, whilst she was seconded to Risky Business in 2010, she experienced the attitude of others towards the project: *'there was definitely an indifference towards Risky Business...if I said I'm a justice worker seconded to Risky Business I felt like my point of view was taken a little bit more seriously and I think part of that might be about...how the information was sometimes passed across...I don't want to say sensationalism but there was a lot of sensationalism...which I think undermined sometimes the quality of the information that we were given...because of the way it was delivered I think that had an impact on how it was received'*. This is supported by the evidence of Officer O who said that she would *'introduce myself as [Officer O], Youth Offending Services seconded to Risky Business, because if I had just said I were there from Risky Business you were completely dismissed. Any opinion you had...any analysis that you were presenting you were just completely dismissed'*. We have been unable to test the evidence with those in senior roles across the latter part of the Relevant Period including SP, HW and JT (who offered no further view in their written responses).
- (xxii) In addition to the evidence we were able to collate about some of the attitudes allegedly displayed towards Risky Business there is some evidence of a dismissive attitude towards the young women involved. It is Officer T's evidence that *'these were children that it was seen from day one they were consenting to their abuse and it was said on numerous*

*occasions that they were making a lifestyle choice'*. One example from Officer T's evidence was that she recalled meetings about a child who had given birth at a very young age where it was said that *'she'd got 5 lovers'*. Similarly it was Witness J's evidence that *'there was a complete lack of recognition that a sexual relationship with an adult male was a safeguarding issue, even when that male, his brothers and associates were being linked to the sexual abuse of scores of young people across the borough'*. It was Officer G's evidence that, as late as 2010, some individuals were using the term *'vote with your feet'* (although she did not consider that appropriate and challenged it). We heard the same evidence from Officer O about the attitude of others in meetings. She described the *'noughties' catchphrase* as *'they are voting with their feet it's their choice to go out'....'these young white girls who were just seen as you know happy to get drunk and have sex with anyone'*.

- (xxiii) Similarly Witness S, who was attending the Joint Leadership Team (JLT) meetings of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium (see section 4.6(j) above) recalled speaking to both PA and to JS about their concerns. It was Witness S' evidence that PA's reaction was *'generally one of exasperation with the voluntary sector...it's the voluntary sector going on about these young people, why don't they understand that it is lifestyle choice on behalf of these young people, it's child prostitution it's not sexual abuse'*. This has, however, been vehemently denied by PA and is not supported by the evidence of JS (see section (xxv) below) or by any other witness. It is SS' evidence that she never heard PA express these views. In the absence of any corroborating evidence, it simply cannot be substantiated.
- (xxiv) This evidence is also at odds with PA's evidence (see section 4.6(b)(vii) above) about her commissioning of the report by SM and also her involvement with the paper in March 2005 which sets out that *'It is recognised that sexual exploitation is a serious and significant issue in Rotherham that needs to be addressed'*. It is also at odds with SS' evidence which was that PA told her *'this is an issue we need to do something about it, we're not getting enough traction from politicians, we're not getting enough traction from the Police...'* suggesting that, in her view, PA was on top of the issue. SS said that she found PA to be *'very responsible and responsive, she took those responsibilities very very seriously'*. We did ask Witness S whether he escalated PA's alleged approach to SS and it was his evidence that *'it wasn't as direct as that, we didn't, I think it wasn't personalised in that way'*. In the circumstances, if PA was reacting in that way (and we acknowledge that she denies this), it suggests that it was not raised formally or escalated to SS at the time. These are not views that can be credibly attributed to PA in this report.
- (xxv) Similarly it was Witness S' evidence that JS, also attended the JLT meeting on *'two or three occasions'*. He told us that JS *'always denied that there was a systematic or a criminal network that was involved in the sexual exploitation of young people he accepted the fact that it did happen but that Rotherham was no worse than anywhere else'* though *'I cannot recall him actually implying that it was a lifestyle choice of these young people'*. However, at interview, JS said he struggled to understand how someone would have thought he had said this and it was his view that CSE happens everywhere (which we accept is different to dismissing it on the basis that it is 'no worse than anywhere else'). He said he recalled that the Police *'had stated that there was no identified organised widespread network'* and that, whilst he may have reported these views in meetings, they were not his own. It is SS' evidence that she would also have been wholly unswayed by the view that *'it was no worse in Rotherham than anywhere else'*, that she does not agree with this and she did not support such a view at the time. We have been unable to test this evidence with others in senior roles including SP, HW and JT as they were not interviewed.

However it was JT's written evidence that *'CSE exists everywhere in Britain; this is not the same as saying Rotherham was no worse than anywhere else. There are few places that have invested as much time and effort as Rotherham has in exposing and tackling CSE'*.

- (xxvi) Equally, even where Social Services did get involved, though it was Officer T's evidence that there were some good social workers, there is also evidence that those relationships could be difficult. It was Officer P's evidence that *'a lot of these were feisty young women who were refusing and social care's experiences of these feisty teenagers was they were stroppy and difficult to deal with and that they made their own mind up to disengage'*. This is supported by the evidence of Witness J who said *'They were spiky and they were difficult and they were unpredictable and they certainly weren't nice to the social workers and the Police that they had contact with. They didn't act like victims and the fact that they went back to the perpetrators you know night after night and some of them would run away from Police officers, run away from local authority care, would phone the perpetrators to come and get them. You know there was a perception that they won't even help themselves...'*.
- (xxvii) There was also evidence to suggest that the poor relationships between Social Services and Risky Business may have spilled over into the relationships between individual young people and their allocated social workers. For example it was Officer O's evidence that: *'I was led to believe...that [social worker] was absolutely shit, [social worker] would do nothing for these kids, [social worker] didn't believe this kid had even been exploited...just a terrible social worker, weren't worth anything'*. Equally it was Officer O's evidence that [social worker] told her *'they made it really tough for me to actually build any relationship with this girl...I knew that she were putting herself at risk, putting herself in situations, knew that she were being groomed'*. We recognise that this is a limited example but it does suggest that there may have been some poor relationships at this level which continued to present hurdles to progress.
- (xxviii) The evidence does suggest that there were some attempts between 2005 and 2011 to build bridges with Risky Business and to help them to deliver their information in a different way (even if that was not required the evidence suggests that others believed it was necessary—see section 4.5(s) above). It was not unreasonable for Social Services/Children's Services to attempt to tackle these hurdles (as they saw them) as opposed to maintaining the status quo but the extent to which any effort was made to bring RN, CBB, Officer T and others on board with those changes and to explain the reasons for them is not clear from the evidence we have seen.
- (xxix) It was JW's evidence that she identified difficulties back in the early 2000's: *'[Risky Business]' cause was not helped by the fact that their organisational arrangements were poor. They did not keep good records, their management arrangements were very informal and so their supervision was not well managed'*. It was JW's evidence that these concerns were relayed to her by senior staff in Education (where the project was based) and that discussions included where the project should be sited given the safeguarding nature of their work. However, if this was the view (whether or not it was an accurate one) there is no evidence to suggest that steps were taken to address matters until 2005. It is possible that it was because Social Services and Risky Business were still in separate directorates prior to this (the 'silo' approach identified at section (a) above) and Social Services did not consider that it fell within their remit though that did not prevent them from raising matters if they felt it appropriate (and it is JW's evidence that they were being discussed with representatives from Education in any event). Equally it is also possible that the Youth Service were resistant to changes that they felt detracted from the traditional youth work model. Whatever those hurdles were it was the role of senior officers in both directorates to

identify and seek to overcome those obstacles and there is no evidence that anyone sought to do so until 2005 at the earliest.

- (xxx) The steps taken from 2005 onwards ranged from SM's report delivered in 2006 (at the request of SS and PA), the appointment of Officer Z in 2007 and the secondment of Officer I and Officer O in 2010. For example it was SM's evidence that when she went into Risky Business to conduct her review *'there was not a case load list at that time, so the manager did not have a list, she did not know what her workers were working with in terms of specific caseloads at all. She could not tell me these are the young women that we are working with'...**'one of the things that I kept going back to Risky Business was to say you will have more credibility if you are actually clear about what it is that you are doing...'.* It was SM's evidence that *'they did not keep any form of sort of records, part of a very very traditional youth work, sort of models really'* and that...*'one of the things that I did do was work with them to try and actually develop a rudimentary record system'*. Similarly it was Officer Z's evidence from 2007 that *'What I was saying to them was....that actually there are things that you need to do because of the fact that you are working with high levels of risk in terms of...case notes, risk assessment etc so you need to formalise that.* This is at odds with the evidence of Officer T who says that *'Going back really really early...it would be handwritten notes and each girl would have a file and we'd put the handwritten notes onto there...I then designed some sheets on my home computer and printed off and we'd fill them in because we'd got boxes we could write in now and we'd file them'*. Similarly the evidence of Witness J who was working on the Home Office Pilot in 2001 and 2002 (see section (c)(ii) below) told us *'certainly in the early days they were recording everything and copies were going on to young people's files but they weren't, it wasn't systematic, it wasn't consistent...one of the things that I was saying to them is you need to write these up properly, keep the originals but you need to write them up properly and they were having conversations with social care but not formally recording them and the same with the Police so I would say within a very short period of the pilot starting the Risky Business project was recording and they were submitting information prolifically and keeping records of it'.*
- (xxxi) Whether or not a method of recording had been introduced by Officer T, Witness J, by SM or by others the evidence of Officer I and Officer O at the point they began their secondment in 2010 was that further change was required. As far as the information was concerned, it was Officer I's evidence that *'because it was an old house...the office was the dining room come kitchen, the upstairs...would have been the bedroom, the bathroom and the airing cupboard on the landing so it would just have stacks of papers, stacks of papers in it...that was the nature of record keeping really it was stacking bits of paper in an airing cupboard or a filing cabinet in date order but it was very very disorganised'*. This was supported by the evidence of Officer G who recalled *'literally scrap bits of paper lying around the office'* and by Officer O who recalled *'say if you'd got a young person called [X] not everything would be filed under [X], it would be...under date order so you would have to go back through looking through years at different dates to see if anyone had contact with that person'*. We did ask Officer T whether this was right but she was clear that it was not and that *'we never contaminated girl's files...'*
- (xxxii) We have not had access to any Risky Business records across this period but there is a clear conflict of evidence between Officer T and Witness J and others such as Officer G, Officer I and Officer O. The latter evidence appears to accord with the evidence of Officer K, who conducted the LMR as part of the Child S SCR in 2010. It was Officer K's evidence that Risky Business' recording systems were *'fairly chaotic'...**'they were doing what youth workers are supposed to do but they got all these...social care responsibilities thrust upon*

*them and they didn't have the framework around them to manage within that'. Similarly it was Officer G's evidence that in 2010 there was 'no risk assessment so children...who were vulnerable, at risk and those being exploited were not...prioritised in any way particularly. There was no referral process that meant the ones that were actually being exploited would have been picked up any quicker than the ones that were just vulnerable'. However, despite this we have also seen an email from the Police in 2011 where Officer T was commended for the amount of information contained in files she had provided to them in respect of a specific operation: 'Should this case have remained unsolved, I am sure that the information contained within your files would have provided us with positive leads to identifying the perpetrators'.*

- (xxxiii) It is not clear why these attempts to address the way in which information was recorded and shared were not successful (if they were even required at all). If the evidence at section (xxx) and (xxxi) above is accurate we do not consider that it was inappropriate to try and introduce clearer ways of collating and holding that information particularly if the intention and purpose was to maximise the successful delivery of the contents. It was Officer O's evidence that Risky Business were *'very resistant to any kind of change at all* though the reasons for that are not clear. It is possible, of course, that relationships were so damaged by the attitude and approach evidenced above by the time these changes were introduced that they were never likely to have been welcomed in a positive way. As we set out above it is unfortunate that more positive action to address any perceived hurdles was not taken prior to 2005 and, if it was felt that change was required, this is a failing (on the part of senior officers in both Social Services and Education) although, with hindsight, it is difficult to know whether earlier intervention would have made any practical difference.
- (xxxiv) The evidence does, however, point to a series of significant barriers to progress: a difference in approach; a perceived lack of evidence; 'professional jealousy' between the services; and, in some cases, a dismissive approach to Risky Business and to the young people concerned. Whilst all of those may have been factors which contributed towards the Council's response across the Relevant Period none of them excuse it. For example, although there is evidence that senior managers such as JW did intervene in respect of individual young people, there is no evidence that any senior manager in Social Services/Children's Services looked more closely at the information from Risky Business prior to 2005 to determine whether or not there was any substance to it. If any of the senior officers in Social Services/Children's Services did believe Risky Business were 'hysterical' or that matters were 'exaggerated' that does suggest they were familiar with the information that Risky Business were sharing even if they didn't believe it. It is very difficult to correlate this with the equally firm view that, prior to 2005, some senior officers did not appreciate the scale of the problem. For example, it was Officer P's evidence from the early 2000's that *'we saw it as a huge problem and they saw it as something that wasn't that massive...'*. It was PA's evidence, in respect of the period prior to 2004, that *'no-one was jumping up and down saying this is a major safeguarding issue'* yet this cannot be right if, as some witnesses have suggested, PA also said that the information from Risky Business was exaggerated (an allegation that she denies).
- (xxxv) Whilst the evidence we have seen does not support an assertion that officers deliberately 'turned a blind eye' the apparent failure by senior individuals in Social Services such as JG and JW to take more decisive action to examine the work of Risky Business prior to 2005 is, with hindsight, unfortunate (albeit not inconsistent with the evidence they have given about their understanding of the prevalence of the issue). The fact that Risky Business sat within a different directorate prior to 2005, whilst relevant, is not an adequate explanation.

Even after 2005 there is evidence to suggest that the views of some of those involved may not have altered and it seems that inappropriate views were still being expressed by some as late as 2010. Whilst we have been unable to test that evidence with those in senior roles in the later years of the Relevant Period including JT, SP and HW, if such an attitude and approach was prevalent (and the evidence suggests it may have been), ultimately any officer to whom such a view was expressed had responsibility to address and challenge that appropriately. The difficulties are summed up in Officer G's evidence: *'I don't think it was being completely ignored, it just wasn't being taken seriously and Risky Business was part of that problem. I do think the way they handled information, the way they handled professionals, the way they functioned, the way they behaved did not help that. But they had reasons for being like that, they developed like that because of all the hardship they had been through'*.

(c) Allegations of Cover-Up

(i) The other issue that appears to have contributed to the poor relationships between Risky Business, Social Services and Youth Services are the ongoing allegations in respect of cover-up which date back to the early 2000's. Broadly these comprise the allegations surrounding the letters to the Police in 2001, the report to the Home Office in 2002, the 'raid' on Risky Business premises in 2002, the failure to act on the reports of Angie Heal in 2003 and 2006, the report prepared by CBB in 2004, the redactions to the Child S SCR in 2010 and the alleged removal of documentation from Risky Business by Officer G.

(ii) Letters to the Police, the Home Office Pilot Project and the alleged 'raid'

(A) The Jay Report details *'suspicion of collusion and cover-up'* following a series of different issues in 2001 and 2002. The Jay Report makes reference to the involvement of *'senior officers'*, *'senior managers'* and *'officials'* though no individual is named in that report. Both Witness J and Officer T gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee about these matters on 9 September 2014 (Appendix 7) and Witness J produced written evidence (Appendix 8). This section of the report focuses on the alleged involvement of senior officers at the Council in those matters and, in particular: the drafting/sending of letters to the Police (paragraphs 9-13 of the written evidence at Appendix 8 - the "Police Letters"), the alleged raid on Risky Business premises (paragraphs 14 to 29 of the written evidence at Appendix 8) and the preparation/amendment of the report to the Home Office (the "2002 Report").

(B) These matters arose in the context of a Home Office Pilot project with a specific focus on CSE with which the Council were involved in 2001 and 2002. The background to it is explained at page 95 of the RB book. It was Officer E's evidence that the funding bid was submitted to the Home Office in Autumn 2000 and that it *'was entered into in good faith with the hope to develop more effective practice at a time when society as a whole had not begun to engage with the issue of CSE'*. It was Officer T's evidence that the original intention was that the post to which Witness J was appointed *'wasn't going to be based at Risky Business, it would have been based at CROP [Coalition for the Removal of Pimping now PACE] because it would've been Irene [Iverson] that was going to do the role'*. Ms Iverson died in October 2000 and this led to the appointment of Witness J who, on Officer E's evidence, was employed by the Council between 26 March 2001 and 31 August 2002. It was Witness J's evidence that, although the Council employed her and she reported to Officer E, she also reported to CROP (as joint bid partners)



and to the Home Office evaluation team based at the University of Bedfordshire and that '*...even though everybody had slightly different agendas the nature of what I was reporting was the same and they all knew I was reporting to the other*'.

- (C) It was Witness J's evidence that she was '*very clear about what I was there to do, so very clear about what the aims and objectives were, who I was employed by, what I was expected to do and who I was expected to report to*'. She describes the aims and objectives as '*massive*' and these are set out in the funding bid document at Appendix 8 and summarised by Officer T at page 97 of the RB book. However it is Officer E's evidence that '*I did find this pilot a difficult piece of work to manage as there were so many people involved*'.
- (D) It was Witness J's evidence that, in Autumn 2001, she '*was so concerned at the lack of progress being made, particularly regarding suspected abusers, that I sought the approval of the Risky Business steering committee and my manager in doing two things*': the mapping exercise which brought together the information she had collated regarding the suspected abusers (see section (TT) below) and; preparing and sending the Police Letters dated 23 October 2001 (sample at Appendix 8). Although the letter was sent from Witness J to the Police, in the RB book at page 104, Officer T supports Witness J's evidence that the content of the letters were approved by Officer E and by the Risky Business steering committee. Both Witness J and Officer T have acknowledged that, with hindsight, it might have been better if such a letter was going to be sent, that it went from a group rather than an individual. Alternatively, if it was to be sent by an individual, then it should perhaps have been sent by a more senior individual. If this had happened perhaps in conjunction with the support of other senior officers in the Council it may have generated a different response though that is not to say that the response by the Council was justified (see section (H) below).
- (E) Although it is not Officer E's evidence that she denied giving permission for this letter to be sent it was Officer P's evidence that she '*did not recall permission being sought from us for this to the Chief Constable and district commander and wonder if the researcher had done this herself or just agreed it in supervision as I do recall being horrified that this information had been sent to senior officers without my knowledge and without preparation of senior managers who were likely not to be happy*' and that she was '*angry that this had been done without consultation*'...'*I do not believe it was wise*'. It was Officer P's evidence that '*it was not at that point the researchers responsibility to address the concerns we wanted to plan a strategy of how to best get the resources and recognition we needed and the reaction to the letter prevented this happening*'.
- (F) It was Witness J's evidence that any discussion about sending the Police Letters would appear in the minutes of the Risky Business steering committee but we have not seen those minutes so have been unable to verify whether or not the letter was approved and by whom. There is a reference in a note of a meeting with RN on 9 November 2001 (see section (S) below) to '*minutes from steering group 22/10/01*' which is the day before the date of the Police Letters though there is nothing in that note to support an assertion that the steering group did approve the contents. Either way the evidence does not suggest that, if Officer P was '*horrified*' (see section (E) above), then it was because she was looking to cover the information up or suppress it in any way.

- (G) On the contrary it was Officer P's evidence that the wish for *'some recognised academic collated information that we could present to persuade people'* was what had led to the appointment of Witness J and that they were *'anxious to get some recognition and resources for the young woman'*. Also, although Witness J could not say with certainty that the Police knew of this letter in advance (and neither could Officer T) it was Witness J's evidence that it was a Police officer who asked her and Officer T to attend the meeting at the Police station (see section (I) below) and *'certainly there was no element of you know why the hell have you done this or any hostility, there was nothing'*. On balance, the decision by Witness J and others to send a letter like this to the Chief Constable and the District Commander without informing or seeking the permission of anyone more senior at the Council than Officer E was surprising though so too is the way in which the evidence suggests matters were then handled (section (H) below).
- (H) It is Witness J's evidence that, after she sent the Police Letters, and, prior to a meeting at Rotherham Police station (see section (I) below) she was asked to attend a meeting with PRo (the Head of Youth Services at the time who reported to DB) alongside Officer T. It is DB's evidence that she was not made aware of this meeting by PRo and that she dealt directly with RN and Officer E whereas it is PRo's evidence that he cannot recall a *'pre-meeting'* but that he went to the meeting at the Police station as a *'substitute for [DB]'*. It is the evidence of Witness J that, at this pre-meeting, she and Officer T were *'telling [PRo] about the Risky Business project and about the pilot and about what the pilot was finding out, about why I'd written to the Chief Constable...'*. Although it is PRo's evidence that he does not recall any pre-meeting it is Witness J's evidence that he spoke about his daughter who was at University being approached about lap dancing and *'it'd just make it easier to legalise it'* and that Officer T said *'sorry are you talking legalising child abuse'* and that PRo said *'we're talking about children here?'*. It is Witness J's evidence that PRo *'just put his pen down and just said right I think you'd better leave'...he said I'll meet you at the Police station...'*. It is PRo's evidence that issues about child sexual exploitation *'never'* came across his desk and that he *'can't recall anyone saying to me this is a major crisis in Rotherham'* although the evidence from Witness J and from Officer T about PRo's attendance at this pre-meeting and at the meeting at section (I) below does not support this. If PRo's evidence was right it would also make PRo the only senior manager who had any responsibility for the Youth Service across the Relevant Period to claim to know nothing about CSE and that seems unlikely given that RN was reporting to him (and it is RN's evidence that he too spoke to PRo about it). If that is right it follows that PRo either did not effectively line manage the Youth Service or he simply did not absorb information provided to him about the work of the Risky Business project.
- (I) At paragraph 11 of the written evidence at Appendix 8 Witness J gives her account of a meeting at the Police station in November 2001 which she says was attended by Officer T, JW and PRo from the Council at which she alleges she was subject to intimidation by the former District Commander as a result of the Police Letter. The date of this meeting is not entirely clear (it has been previously reported as having taken place in October 2001 and November 2001) though Witness J's contemporaneous comments on the proposed amendments to the 2002 Report (see section (U) below) suggest that this meeting may have been on 5 November 2001. Our investigation has focused on the involvement and/or conduct of the senior officers from the Council rather than the Police. It is JG's evidence that he

did not know about this meeting and that he did not see the Police Letter. It is DB's evidence that she did not know the meeting was taking place. The evidence does not suggest DB's recollection about her involvement is accurate. It is GF's evidence that he *'was aware that a letter had been sent to the Chief Constable. I had not seen it beforehand but recall having a discussion with the Chief Constable about it. The telephone call was initiated by the Chief Constable. I did then ask for a briefing and an explanation from the Director of Education where line management for Risky Business lay'*.

- (J) There is no evidence to suggest that GF knew in advance about the meeting at the Police Station or that he had seen the Police Letter by this stage and it was appropriate for him to raise the matter with DB (though this is not supported by DB's evidence). Equally it is PRo's evidence that he recalls he was asked to attend the meeting to *'substitute for DB'* which, in conjunction with GF's evidence, suggests DB must have known about it unless she was away or otherwise absent at the time. This is also supported by RN's evidence that DB told him that GF was unhappy that Witness J had written directly to the Chief Constable. It is JW's evidence that she recalled that the District Commander was angry (she describes the Police in a meeting with Professor Jay as *'very cross indeed'*) but not that *'senior Council officers'* were (section 10.16 of Appendix 5). Whilst we might have expected senior officers like DB, JG and JW to get involved it is not clear why Witness J and Officer T were called to a meeting at the Police Station if the intended purpose was to reprimand them: if that was warranted (and we are not making a finding that it would have been) it was a matter for the Council not for the Police.
- (K) It is JW's evidence that there is nothing in her diaries for October 2001 or November 2001 to suggest she attended a meeting at the Police Station as alleged and that, prior to publication of an article in the Times about this meeting she sought to clarify the date of this meeting with the reporter but received no response. She sought to clarify this with Professor Jay, Witness J and Officer T as part of the Doncaster Report but they declined to respond. Similarly it is not clear how, when or by whom JW was notified of the Police Letter (if at all) as GF's evidence is that he contacted DB rather than JW. However the evidence of both Witness J and Officer T is that JW was at this meeting (page 106 of the RB book) and the evidence we have seen suggests the date of the meeting was 5 November 2001. In the written evidence at Appendix 8 Witness J says she was subject to intimidation by the former District Commander who was described as *'furious'*. It was Witness J's evidence at interview that the District Commander was *'apoplectic'* which reflects the account of Officer T that she *'tore into [Witness J] with a ferocity I couldn't have predicted from someone so senior'* (page 106 of the RB book).
- (L) It is Officer T's evidence that PRo and JW *'sat there and did nothing'* (page 106 of the RB book). It is Witness J's evidence that PRo *'undermined'* her at this meeting and this is reflected in the notes of her supervision with Officer E the following day. Although it is PRo's evidence that he could *'not recall undermining anyone'* it is Witness J's evidence that he said *'well we all know that [Witness J] has exceeded her role...we all know that [Witness J] had no right to write that letter'*. Those comments are not replicated in Witness J's supervision notes with Officer E or supported by PRo's evidence so there is insufficient evidence to support a finding that PRo's conduct was inappropriate as alleged.

- (M) It is Witness J's evidence that she didn't recall JW saying anything in this meeting (though see paragraph (O) below) but that Witness J did turn and introduce herself to JW who was *'very sympathetic and she was smiling'*. It is Officer T's evidence that JW did speak though she could not recall the details. Even if JW was at this meeting (it is JW's evidence that she was not and PRo did not recall the meeting in any significant detail and was not clear about whether or not JW was there) the accounts of her conduct during it differ and there is no evidence that her conduct was inappropriate. Ultimately the differing evidence available about which Council officers attended this meeting and what may have happened during it remains unclear. Similarly, we have not made any finding about the alleged conduct of the former District Commander as this falls outside the scope of this report.
- (N) The timeline prepared by PACE (Appendix 11) suggests that, in a written report from Witness J in January 2002, *'Reference is made to the (RMBC) Director of Social Services was invited to a meeting with the Police following my letter to the Chief Constable. That motivated her to carry out an internal audit'*. The reference to 'her' suggests this is JW rather than JG (JG would have been the Director of Social Services at this time). No reference is made to what is alleged to have happened during that meeting (section (I) above). A copy of the written report sent to PACE is not held by Witness J and it is her evidence that *'I am certain that the audit referred to never took place. I have no recollection of it being mentioned again'*. Such an audit is not referenced in JW's evidence.
- (O) There does appear to be a reference to this audit in the original version of the 2002 Report though this suggests it was an audit on the practices of both the Police and Social Services. The handwritten comments alongside it are that *'This makes it seem as if there is a simple causal link here whereas a whole load of activity was going on as well and it was this which influenced the report by the SW'*. The author of those amendments is not known. The comments of Witness J concerning the proposed amendments to the 2002 Report state that her notes of the meeting at the Police station (which have not been supplied to us) read *'[JW] will designate a social worker to go through social services files. An assessment and review is to be provided in writing with recommendations'* (albeit this is not consistent with the account at (M) above). This note also references minutes from a Key Players meeting on 18 January 2002 where the meeting with Police is referenced (this does not appear in the Key Players minutes we have seen). We have not seen any evidence of any audit that may have taken place at this time due to a meeting at the Police station or otherwise (see section (N) above) though, if Witness J's notes are accurate, that does suggest that the meeting resulted in some action.
- (P) It is GF's evidence that, after this meeting, *'he had further internal meetings with the Director of Education and with the Director of Social Services to seek to ascertain what the issues were and what actions needed to be undertaken. At no point was there any indication from council staff or from any other source that what was being claimed in the letter had significant evidential foundation'*. It is not clear if or when such meetings took place or what was said in them and there is no evidence to suggest that GF raised the issue with ME or other Members (though it would be surprising if he hadn't done so). The evidence suggests that the intention of the Police Letter was to draw matters to the attention of the Police rather than to Council officers but it does state that *'the amount of children in Rotherham affected by this issue has significantly increased'*. The fact that GF recalls meeting with the Director of Education and the Director of Social Services does suggest that he

considered at the time that the issue warranted further examination. If GF's recollections about the views expressed during this meeting (see above and section (R)) are accurate it was not unreasonable for GF to have relied upon them. There is no reason to believe this was in any way a deliberate strategy to condone or that GF was involved in or aware of any cover up but, if he had taken a more rigorous approach to establish the reasons behind the issues raised with the Police, his understanding of the issues and the Council's response might have been very different.

- (Q) The evidence above about the meeting called by GF is referred to at paragraph 13 of Witness J's written evidence which states that she was told by RN about a meeting between GF, DB and JG. It is DB's evidence that she *'did not see the letter sent by staff to the Chief Constable but was at the meeting which resulted from it'* though such a meeting is not reflected in the evidence of JG who said he never attended a meeting to discuss CSE with GF (it was JG's evidence that he was fully occupied across this period managing Housing and Environmental services). It is not clear if or when such meetings took place or what was said in them. It is not unreasonable for GF to have sought the view of those with responsibility in those areas but, if GF's recollection of those discussions is accurate and events were played down (see section (P) and (R)), it is at odds with the wider evidence of DB who gave an account of trying, on at least three occasions (including once in a separate meeting with JW), to raise the issue with the Police herself (see section 5.4(c) below).
- (R) It was GF's recollection that *'there were concerns expressed by council professionals as to the methodology and the accuracy of the claims being made in that letter'* though he does not attribute this view to any specific individual. Even though JG and JW dispute any involvement it is clear from the evidence that, as a minimum, GF, DB and PPro had some knowledge of the matter. The manner in which the Police Letters were sent was not ideal (and we accept that the intention of the letter was to draw matters to the attention of the Police rather than to Council officers) but, as it had been brought to the attention of senior officers, it was an opportunity to examine the issue in more depth. Although it is GF's evidence that he took appropriate steps to ascertain what further action needed to be taken (see section (P) above) there is not any clear evidence about what was discussed at the meeting he had with senior officers or what steps were taken afterwards. There is no evidence to suggest this was attributable to an active cover-up of the matters in question but the apparent lack of follow up suggests that the concerns raised in the Police Letters may have been too readily dismissed or played down (not least because the letter had been sent without the prior knowledge or support of senior officers in the Council).
- (S) It is Witness J's evidence that after this meeting at the Police station she had a further meeting with RN in November 2001. Her account of that meeting is at paragraphs 12 and 13 of the written evidence at Appendix 8. It is RN's evidence that he was instructed by DB *'to ensure that [Witness J] in future abided by the RMBC code of conduct and that any future external complaint went through line management structures'*. It is RN's evidence that he has no memory of the meeting described in paragraph 12 of Witness J's written evidence but he had no reason to believe it was not essentially correct. In paragraph 13 Witness J asserts that she was told by RN that she had placed the project workers and the young people accessing the project at risk. It is RN's evidence that he was *'not sure how writing*

to the Police could have had this effect' but that he did 'remember that renewed risk assessments were undertaken around this time'.

- (T) The contemporaneous notes of this meeting taken by Witness J suggest that RN said there was '*no criticism of letter contents – it's the process*' and that '*emphasis not on issues but on fallout*' in line with section (S) above. The notes suggest that RN did tell Witness J that she was an RMBC employee and that she '*must work with structures and codes of practice*'. *In terms of any controversial issues must address with RN. Will be supported*. There is a reference to a '*brief for [DB] and [PRro] – not afraid of confrontation*', '*If talking to [RN], [Officer E] needs to be informed. Direct to [RN] if issues of urgency*' and '*when report written – inform [RN] so can be managed*'. There is no evidence to suggest that RN's reference to 'managing' the data was attributable to a cover-up: this meeting took place in the aftermath of the apparent furore around the Police Letters and the evidence suggests that RN had been tasked with ensuring that controversial issues were raised with him before they were raised externally and this would not be unusual in any large organisation. The evidence suggests that this was about managing the process, not about covering up the data.
- (U) Paragraphs 14 to 16 of the written evidence at Appendix 8 set out Witness J's evidence in respect of a submission to the Home Office as part of the pilot project in April 2002 (the "2002 Report"). It is Witness J's evidence that this was '*not my final report, it was more of an interim data submission*' and, whilst that may be right, it was still a sizeable document containing multiple case studies in which the work of different agencies at the Council in respect of individual victims of CSE was critically assessed. It is Witness J's evidence that she sent the data requested to the evaluators with a copy to Officer E and that '*[Officer E] had seen all of those documents, I was talking to her about the information as I drafted it, some of it I'd shown to her and said 'do you think this is phrased right' so there were no surprises in there*'. It is Officer E's evidence that she was '*aware of the data that [Witness J] produced but the case studies sent to the evaluators towards the end of the pilot contained some additional information. [Witness J] knew that I should have seen all the information before it was sent and she subsequently apologised to me for this*'. It is Witness J's evidence that, when she told Officer E that the data had been sent, Officer E said '*I feel sick*' and put the phone down on Witness J but it is not Witness J's evidence that she apologised to Officer E. Similarly CBB stated in August 2014 that '*I was copied into the email with [Witness J's] submission to the Home Office which had the report and cases attached to it. [Witness J] sent the email with the report attached to the Home Office without it being checked by any Management*'. There is also evidence to suggest that Officer T saw this too. It is not clear why Witness J did not send the data to Officer E before it was sent to the Home Office evaluators though it is Witness J's evidence that she understood RN's instruction (see section (T) above) was only in respect of her final report. It is also not clear why a copy of the 2002 Report was sent to CBB given that the evidence suggests she was not yet managing Witness J and others (see section (BB) below).
- (V) It is the evidence of Witness J that, on 18 April 2002 which she originally believed was a Monday but has since clarified was a Thursday as she had been out of the office for a few days on leave (though in her grievance in June 2002 – see section (II) below – she says this was 19 April 2002, so a Friday), she went to the Risky Business offices at the International Centre and '*I was told by the caretaker that it*

*had been a 'very busy weekend'. When I asked him what he meant he told me I should speak to the project workers'. It is Witness J's evidence that she found that someone had 'opened the filing cabinets and removed all of the data relating to the Home Office work' and that 'the office computer had been accessed', 'some documents had been deleted and there appeared to be minutes of meetings which had been created over the weekend on the computer hard drive' (paragraph 15 of the written evidence at Appendix 8). This is supported by Officer T's account at pages 109 to 112 of the RB book who also asserts that the caretaker told her it had been a 'busy evening here' and that there had been 'a lot of traffic in and out of your office'. There is no evidence to suggest that anyone asked the caretaker at the time which 'project workers' had been in the offices and it is unfortunate that this was not clarified at the time.*

- (W) It was Witness J's evidence that the office computer was password protected and that everyone used the same password. It was Witness J's evidence that she could not recall what documents had been deleted from the office computer but the minutes created were *'bland staff minutes' 'we read through them and in both of them there was a specific part that dealt with the Home Office pilot and what I would and wouldn't do with data...and one of the things was that I would not submit the data to the Home Office without management approval which had never been agreed' 'I was listed as being there and agreeing to those conditions'* . We asked Witness J how she knew those meetings had not taken place and it was her evidence that she was on annual leave. The copy minutes allegedly created are not available and there was no record of the documents deleted so we are unable to substantiate what was created/deleted as alleged or establish whether any Council employees were involved.
- (X) We sought evidence about the alleged 'raid' (the removal of the research data) from a number of senior officers: JG, DB, JW, PA, PK, PRo, AS and RN as well as from Officer E and Officer P. None of them had any recollection of hearing about the raid at the time though GF recalls *'I was made aware that there had been a burglary as described but I am not aware of any evidence that this was anything other than that. If anybody had brought evidence to me which strongly suggested that this had not been a burglary, I would have taken action to investigate accordingly. I expect the Police would have done the same. I am not aware that they treated it as anything other than a burglary as reported'*. It is not clear who told GF about a 'burglary' (or indeed that his recollection is of the alleged 'raid'). An assertion that the Police were involved in this particular incident is at odds with the evidence of Witness J and Officer T who told us that the Police were not called. We have not seen any other evidence to suggest that the Police were involved and we do not believe that they were. There is no evidence that GF took any further steps to look into the matter or to seek to establish what had gone missing though this was not unreasonable in the absence of any evidence suggesting inappropriate behaviour on the part of officers.
- (Y) Officer E said she knew nothing about [the raid] (contrary to the assertion at paragraph 25 of the written evidence at Appendix 8) and that [CBB] *'never told me or talked to me that she was involved'*. This remained Officer E's evidence when the issue was further investigated by the Council in 2014 and this is supported by what CBB said during that same investigation. Similarly it was Officer P's evidence that she had never heard of this (though both she and CBB were alleged to have been in the Risky Business office on the day it was discovered by Witness J and

Officer T – see section (V) above). Officer P said that she recalled Witness J saying she could no longer access files but that this was officers restricting her access (see section (II) below). It was Officer G's evidence that she recalled JT telling her that the caretaker, Jim, had called her in the middle of the night and *'said there were loads of papers flying about and someone had broken in'*. However it was JT's evidence that this related to an incident from much later in the Relevant Period at a time when the International Centre was empty and up for sale. She said *'the papers were rubbish, not confidential' and that 'the site was made secure'*. This is clearly not related to the allegations from 2002.

- (Z) The only person we did interview who gave different evidence was Officer Y. He told us that a colleague, [RC] (now deceased), told him at the time that *'she had been asked to come into work on Saturday and retrieve some of her files'* along with CBB. It was Officer Y's evidence that [RC] said she was told to do this by JW and DB but this is entirely unsubstantiated by the other evidence: Officer E was a key holder but neither CBB nor [RC] were (according to the evidence of Witness J and Officer T – though, as Witness J has said in her evidence, there was a caretaker who could have opened the building in their absence); JW and DB along with Officer E all deny any knowledge of the matter and are adamant that they were not involved, CBB declined to be interviewed but in September 2014 she too denied all knowledge of such a raid and RC is deceased. Neither Officer T nor Witness J have alleged that RC was involved. The alleged involvement of CBB and [RC] in the removal of files also does not explain the creation/deletion of documents on a computer in the office. We cannot exclude the possibility that RC did have such a discussion with Officer Y but, given that we cannot ask RC about this, it simply cannot be said with any certainty that Officer Y's evidence relates to the 'raid' in question. Further as the evidence now suggests that this 'raid' was not discovered until a Thursday or a Friday it is not clear when this data might have been removed or that it would have happened over a weekend at all. It was SM's evidence that she was told about this raid in 2006 but was not able to substantiate what may have happened either. It was her evidence that it *'almost seemed to be an urban myth'*.
- (AA) There is a reference in undated notes made by Witness J of a *'discussion re missing data'*. Paragraph 25 of the written evidence at Appendix 8 suggests this meeting was on 24 April 2002 and attended by Witness J and the Risky Business project administrator. There is also a reference to *'concerns re data going missing'* in Witness J's notes of a meeting with CBB on 24 April 2002 suggesting that Witness J did raise this with her despite CBB's assertions to the contrary when she was interviewed in 2014 and again to *'concern over missing items – who did it, who can we trust?'* in a further meeting with the Risky Business administrator on 25 April 2002. Similarly Witness J's grievance of 28 June 2002 refers to *'Data belonging to me had been taken from the filing cabinets'* and *'I formally complained about this to the Project Co-ordinators and my line manager. To the best of my knowledge this matter has not been taken any further. The data has never been returned'*. The notes of Witness J's that we have seen do suggest that there were discussions in Risky Business and with CBB at the time about data that had gone missing but this is at odds with all of the oral evidence except for that of Officer Y which cannot be substantiated. Any Council officer who requested or was involved in the unauthorised removal of data from the Risky Business offices did behave inappropriately if the purpose of doing so was to hinder or cover up Witness J's work. However, based on the evidence available to us, which is (at best)



incomplete and contradictory, along with the passage of time, whilst there is evidence to suggest something may have happened, we have been unable to establish which (if any) Council officers were involved in and/or aware of this. Whatever 'this' was the majority of those interviewed who were allegedly involved consistently claim to know nothing about it.

- (BB) Shortly after the 'raid' had been discovered it is Officer T's evidence that Officer E arrived at the offices and told them 'You've got a new manager, [CBB]' (page 112 of the RB book) and that a Key Players meeting due to take place that day was then cancelled. It was Officer E's evidence in November 2014 when she was interviewed by the Council that *'This had been agreed before the new officers in post...'* and that *'[CBB] took over from me on the role that I had...but they had a re-organisation and they linked Risky Business with Youth Start and Health which all went together'*. If that is right it is not clear when such a decision was made: it appears to have happened shortly after Witness J's submission of the data though it is also possible that it was already planned at the time. We did ask Officer D (who was CBB's immediate line manager) about this and she could not recall any involvement in such a decision re: line management although that would be surprising in relation to one of her own direct reports.
- (CC) It is Witness J's evidence that, afterwards, a meeting took place with CBB at which she was told that there had been *'a meeting over the weekend involving social services, the Police and education representatives'* (paragraph 17 of the written evidence at Appendix 8). It is not clear who is alleged to have attended such a meeting, or why it would have happened at the weekend (particularly as the evidence now suggests the 'raid' didn't happen over a weekend) and there are not any minutes or notes to substantiate this comment. It was Witness J's evidence that they were told by CBB that concerns had been expressed that they were exceeding their roles and that they would no longer be allowed to attend Key Player meetings and that these would be *'convened in a different way with no anecdotal information being given. Other issues regarding how we were to communicate with social services and the Police were also outlined'*. It is Officer E's evidence that *'The focus and membership of the Key Players group did change. [Officer T] and [Witness J] were not part of Key Players meetings instead they were part of a pre-meeting specifically to share information they held and wanted to feed into the Police and social care. I believe that this change was part of trying to re-establish the roles and responsibilities of those working on the CSE issue and to clarify boundaries and remits'*. It was Officer P's evidence that *'I don't know if I was at this failed meeting but do not recall this'* and it does not feature in the minutes of the interview with CBB.
- (DD) There are notes of a meeting on 24 April 2002 attended by Witness J, Officer T, CBB and others where the remit of Key Players is discussed and in which there are references to a 'pre-meeting'. It is Officer T's evidence that Officer E and CBB *'told us that Key Players meetings were effectively over'* (page 112 of the RB book). As Key Players minutes are not available for dates after March 2002 we have been unable to substantiate whether or not this change in approach was attributable to any form of cover-up though there is evidence to suggest that Key Players was still in existence by December 2002 given that Officer B prepared the report referenced at section 4.6(a)(vi) above on behalf of the group. There is also evidence to suggest that Officer T did continue to be involved in meetings where young women were being discussed (see for example section 4.6(c) above).

- (EE) It is Witness J's evidence at paragraph 17 of the written evidence at Appendix 8 that she was then suspended in April 2002 by CBB for submitting confidential data to the evaluators without express permission. The date of Witness J's suspension is not clear: her contemporaneous grievance of 28 June 2002 suggests she was informed of it on 18 April 2002 and that she discovered the missing information on 19 April 2002 whereas her written evidence suggests it happened on the same day – Appendix 8). In September 2014 CBB told the Council that the suspension was on instructions from RN and Officer D which came from DB, [the District Commander] and PA. We have not seen a copy of any suspension letter issued to Witness J. It is Officer D's evidence that she had no involvement in or knowledge of Witness J's suspension (which is surprising given that she was CBB's immediate line manager at that time). It is PA's evidence that she had no involvement in this issue nor does it seem likely that, as JW's report (as PA was in 2002), she would have had the authority to procure the suspension of someone working in a separate directorate. It was RN's evidence that he remembered *'trying to protect the researcher from the threat of disciplinary action'* though it is not clear from whom he received any instruction. Similarly it is not clear why the Police would have any involvement in Witness J's suspension or, indeed, the authority to request suspension of a Council employee. Of those interviewed who were working in Human Resources at the time, AS and Officer XA, neither had any recollection of involvement even though Officer XA is referenced on some documentation.
- (FF) It was JW's evidence that she recalled *'something about [Witness J] being suspended'* but that *'I didn't know the detail of it, she wasn't in my service'* (supporting a finding that PA was not likely to have been involved given that she was junior to JW at the time) and DB's evidence that she *'certainly never did that and whoever – if somebody did it on my watch – it was a very gossipy authority – I would have heard it via [my secretary]'*. The evidence we have seen does not support a finding that Witness J was suspended because of the content of the 2002 Report (i.e. because of what the data contained). A subsequent letter from RN to Witness J's solicitors on 6 December 2002 refers to *'the lack of confidence and trust between the researcher and the Council derived from the discovery that [Witness J] intended to facilitate training courses. On the information available to it the Council was concerned that the training courses might contain reference to research previously undertaken in Rotherham. The issue for the Council was that [Witness J] had not consulted the Council or the Home Office on the potential use of such information'*. We have not examined the circumstances regarding Witness J's suspension further in this report save to say that disciplinary action was not taken by the Council. It is Witness J's evidence that she returned to work later in April 2002 before further meetings took place with CBB and Officer P about the submission of the 2002 Report and efforts to retrieve that data from the Home Office.
- (GG) It is Witness J's evidence that she attended two meetings with Officer E, Officer P, CBB and others from the pilot project on 23 April 2002. The notes made by Witness J of the first meeting appear to have been a pre-meeting prior to the meeting at section (HH) below. There is a reference in these notes to *'[Officer E] sent email asking for case studies back last Weds'*. There is a reference to Officer P and Officer E saying at this meeting *'never been in position where about to lose our jobs before'* suggesting that they were under scrutiny though it is not clear who allegedly said this to them. Similarly there is another reference by Officer E to *'in trouble over fact data – let it go unimpeded'*. It is Witness J's evidence at paragraph

19 of the written evidence at Appendix 8 that there were repeated references by Officer P and Officer E in this meeting to the data needing to be 'managed' though it only appears once in the notes. It is clear from the notes that others on the pilot group, including CROP, had concerns about how the project was to be managed: '*CROP expected to be consulted. Regarded as an equal partner in project. Will not rubber stamp decisions of RMBC*' and that Officer E said '*how could that possibly work? [Witness J] must be dealt with in accordance with LA authority procedures*'. The assertion that data needs to be 'managed' does not necessarily mean that senior officers or anyone else at the Council were involved in a cover-up. It is clear from the evidence that Witness J sent the 2002 Report without getting Officer E's express authorisation to do so (though it is Witness J's evidence that this was not required - see section (U) above). On the face of it this was the second time that Witness J had sent data externally in circumstances where she believed she was authorised to do so (the other time being the Police Letters at section (D) above) albeit that the evidence suggests that the Police Letters may have been seen and approved in advance by Officer E.

- (HH) A larger number of people attended a second meeting on 23 April 2002. It is Witness J's evidence at paragraph 20 of the written evidence at Appendix 8 that '*this particular meeting had been called as a result of [Officer E] asking the Home Office evaluators to return the data that I had sent to them; and also as a result of them being informed that I had been suspended from my employment with the Council*' (though as Witness J was at this meeting it suggests that she had already returned to work by 23 April 2002). The notes made by Witness J of this meeting show that a further 4 months of funding for the pilot had been confirmed (so to August 2002). Under a heading of 'Case Studies' these notes show that '*[Officer E] wants back to anonymise'...'managers want reassurances. Will see reports prior to publication. [Officer E] – Instructed to see things before went. If anything controversial put managers on notice. I have failed to meet that instruction*'. It is Officer E's evidence that she cannot recall details of these meetings. Similarly it is Officer P's evidence that she has no recollection of the meetings at which the return of this data was discussed (paragraphs 19 and 20 of the written evidence at Appendix 8) at which she is alleged to have said '*we don't want to upset senior managers – want pilot to continue in spirit*'. There is nothing in these notes to suggest that steps beyond anonymising the data in the 2002 Report were known to Officer E or Officer P at the time or that they were aware of any alleged intention on the part of senior officers to try and cover up the information.
- (II) It is Witness J's evidence that, before the comments on the 2002 Report were returned to her (see section (KK) below) she worked on policies and procedures for the Risky Business project (paragraph 26 of the written evidence at Appendix 8) and '*I was told that I could not have contact with any of the young people, professionals or foster carers that I had been working with or access to any of the Risky Business data*'. It was CBB's evidence to the Council in August 2014 that '*I felt sorry for [Witness J]. What they were doing to her was horrendous*' though she is not asked to elaborate on that. There is a reference in Witness J's notes of a meeting with CBB on 24 April that she was told that strategy meetings were '*not [my] role*' and which records '*App way forward – reviewing minutes. Going to be sent to me via [Officer P]. Anything in writing now to [CBB]*'. This is supported by Witness J's grievance on 28 June 2002 in which she complains that '*Since the conclusion of the investigation I have been required to send all documents intended for recipients external to the youth service to my line manager for*

*approval. In three months approximately 10% of the documents sent in have been approved, the others remain outstanding'. She also says 'Since the 28 April I have been obstructed in carrying out the research element of my role. I have been refused permission to attend any meetings. I have not been given access to any data or minutes from strategically important meetings that have taken place and that I previously had access to'. We have been unable to verify this evidence with CBB though it is supported in part by the evidence of Officer P. The evidence does suggest that steps were being taken to manage Witness J and control the work she was doing on the pilot though it is not clear whether CBB took these steps herself or whether she was instructed by someone else to do so. This is not necessarily evidence of an active cover-up but it does suggest that Witness J was not trusted with the Council's information on the back of the Police Letters and the 2002 Report (and the evidence suggests that limited information was being approved for release). Whilst this may have felt unfair and perhaps suspicious from Witness J's perspective, it was not inappropriate for officers in the Council to have taken steps to ensure that (in their view) unapproved information was not sent externally again. At the very least, they were entitled to want to manage the impact of the disclosure of any data.*

- (JJ) It was CBB's evidence in September 2014 that, after the 2002 Report was submitted, she was *'aware people in Social Services and the Police were going crackers about the content of the report. I overheard someone in Social Services and the Police saying this to [RN], [RN] was really scared and upset. [The District Commander], [JW], [PA] and a few others were really angry. These were powerful managers in Social Services and the Police. They felt that our service needs to sort this out.* It is not clear how the news about the 2002 Report reached senior officers in the Council and we have not seen any other evidence to support an assertion that either JW or PA were 'really angry' as alleged. Their evidence to us does not support such an assertion. It was Officer E's evidence that it *'filtered down to ...the Government's lead for our region for Social Care and whoever was the regional lead for Education'*. This suggests that senior officers may have been notified of the 2002 Report by an external party though we have not seen any other evidence to substantiate that.
- (KK) It is Witness J's evidence that on 11 June 2002 she had a meeting with CBB at which comments on the 2002 Report were discussed (paragraph 27 of the written evidence at Appendix 8). Witness J's grievance suggests that the information was returned by the Home Office to the Council on 23 April 2002. It is CBB's evidence that she was told by RN and Officer D to sit down with Witness J to give her the alterations to the report (this is not supported by the evidence of either RN or Officer D though they were CBB's direct line and second line managers at this time). We have seen the notes made by Witness J at that meeting. These suggest that a deadline for a response was set by DB and that *'CBB needs info to speak to CB [District Commander] and [JW]. The notes say that 'CBB not happy about how done – when [Director of Education – DB] gives order, follow it' though it is DB's evidence that CBB was not speaking on her behalf and that 'This was not my style at all'.*
- (LL) The notes suggest that Witness J explained her reservations and her problems with the 'order', that she would need to speak to CROP and the Home Office but was told that it was *'confidential'*. The notes say that Witness J had *'deep reservations'* about altering the data: *'Looks like a cover up – overshadows good*

*work. Told just do it...Told as line manager being made clear I had been given an instruction and that I was expected to follow it'. A series of notes about the changes requested then follow though this is not a complete set of the comments.*

- (MM) The text of a handwritten note from CBB about the comments appears at paragraph 27 of Witness J's written evidence which said *'Please amend the work to anonymise individuals and institutions and only include facts and evidence that you are able to substantiate...'*. We have seen a copy of the 2002 Report detailing the comments (which are handwritten). The 2002 Report is detailed and, amongst other things, includes a series of individual case studies of young women who had been the victims of CSE in Rotherham. We have not analysed each of the requested changes in detail in this report as the documentation which formed the basis of the individual case studies is not available to us (though at section 10.18 of the Jay Report it is reported that that team, who reviewed six out of the ten case studies, *'found the case studies to be entirely consistent with our own reading of the files and we considered them to evidence a high standard of professional judgement and accuracy'*).
- (NN) It is clear that comments were made to the 2002 Report by more than one person as the handwriting is different. The written submission by PACE asserts that six people annotated the report (Appendix 11). It is Witness J's evidence at paragraph 27 that she was told by CBB that the comments were made by [District Commander] Burbeary, DB and JW though, at interview, Witness J said RN had also done so. It is RN's evidence that he had no direct involvement in this process though he remembers that DB and JW did. It was CBB's evidence that amendments were made by [the District Commander], JW and PA and, at page 114 of the RB book, JS records that amendments were made by [the District Commander], DB and JW.
- (OO) The actual identity of all those who commented on the 2002 Report remains unclear. We have not interviewed the former District Commander (though section 10.14 of the Jay Report at Appendix 5 does suggest she was involved). It is DB's evidence that she did not comment on this report but that she was involved in amending one report due to be presented by CBB (the evidence suggests this relates to the presentation to Councillors in 2004 rather than the 2002 Report – see section 4.6(g) above). Similarly it is PA's evidence, having viewed the amended 2002 Report, that she had not seen it before and that she had no knowledge of or involvement with any amendments to it.
- (PP) An article in the Times stated that JW's annotations to the 2002 Report *'removed identifying information about the children involved'* (though this would not of itself be inappropriate). It is JW's evidence that she recognises her writing on the amended 2002 Report though she is not certain who else may have annotated it. It is not clear when JW may have made these amendments (though the evidence suggests it would have been between 23 April 2002 when the report was returned and 11 June 2002 when Witness J met with CBB – see section (KK) above). Similarly the assertion that PA received such a report in 2002 and commented on it does not tally with her evidence that she had not seen it before (see section OO) above) but also that it was [RC] who first told her about the scale of the issue in 2005 and that she *'didn't have any contact'* with Risky Business before then.
- (QQ) It is Witness J's evidence that she was placed under pressure to *'change and*

*present her findings in a way that presented services in Rotherham in a better light...'. Similarly when interviewed by the Council in September 2014 CBB alleged that the motivation of the comments was 'to make it look not as bad as it was' and that 'they had handwritten what they wanted changing so on instruction to do so I gave it to [Witness J] for amending. As we said above we have not analysed each of the requested changes in detail in this report as the documentation which formed the basis of the individual case studies is not available to us. Some of the requests are for the data to be anonymised: in the original draft the data includes the names of individual young women, social workers, youth workers, alleged perpetrators, the names of local schools as well as car registrations, addresses and mobile telephone numbers. It is JW's evidence that a number of her amendments requested the removal of this information which accords with the reporting in the Times. Requests that data of this nature be anonymised are not inappropriate and it is not difficult to see why there would have been significant concern about identifying data of this nature having been sent outside the Council. The revised case studies suggest that this identifying information was removed as requested.*

- (RR) Some of the comments are critical of the drafting (some are described in PACE's evidence at Appendix 11 and in Witness J's grievance as 'vitriolic'). For example: *'This is the type of report I would expect from a student or newly qualified worker. It places the writer at the heart of saving the young person where all others have failed...The Risky Business project is placed at the heart of what is described as effective intervention. Other players (such as Bridges) get only a passing mention. Other comments include 'personal interpretation', 'personal opinion', and 'inappropriate language' as well as a couple of occasions where the word 'Asian' is removed from the text (see section 6.1(a) below). There are also some comments such as 'where's the evidence for this?' or 'was this reported to Police?', 'This is half of a story which has been embellished', 'Do we have the figures. Stats need to be referred to' suggesting that the individual making that comment believes further information should be included/clarified. Whilst critical comments about the drafting may not have been welcomed by Witness J there is no evidence to support a finding that the comments were deliberately 'vitriolic' because of the content or that they are, of themselves, evidence of a cover up.*
- (SS) One of the other documents that comprised the 2002 Report was an update on the work of the pilot and this attracts a lot of comment. For example there is a section which talks about a scheme for Foster Carers which Witness J had said was *'incorporated as part of the research and development officer's post. As a result of a lack of interest of social services the support system for the foster carers was not established. The idea was to provide a 24 hour support line. I provided as much support as I could but was not available after 11pm. Fortunately no crisis arose that needed the support envisaged.* This attracts the comment *'This is very damning [JW]'* though the person who has written that cannot be identified. Alongside it is *'NO!* and an amendment that reads: *'These were existing foster carers who all had allocated support workers throughout! This is an outrageous thing to say'. This comment was made by JW and it is her evidence that she was challenging the writer's perception or interpretation of events. It is one example of the sort of amendment that features in this report but the fact that matters were challenged cannot, of itself, be evidence of a cover up in the absence of clear evidence that the original draft was accurate.*

- (TT) The section in which Witness J details the findings from her mapping exercise (see section (D) above) also attracts significant comment. In this section Witness J restates that the District Commander referred to the mapping exercise as *'unhelpful, being too large and containing hearsay information'* and this has been crossed out. Comments alongside it include *'This document was highly inappropriate'* though the fact that the information was sent to the District Commander has not been amended. The identity of the person who made these amendments is not known nor is any reason given for why that document was considered *'highly inappropriate'*. Similarly a sentence which reads *'After concerns were expressed to the Chief Executive the RDO [Witness J] was asked to abandon this part of her work'*. The comment alongside it reads *'Not accurate'* (and this is not reflected in Witness J's written evidence at Appendix 8 or by the evidence of GF).
- (UU) The findings of the mapping exercise are also summarised including information about the alleged perpetrators, the type and number of venues involved and the number of young women involved. One of the comments alongside is *'if this had to be shared would a meeting not have been better – this is dangerous and inflammatory'* which suggests that there was concern about putting this information in writing but not that it could not be shared at all. Other comments which appear in the 2002 Report and which have not been struck out despite their critical nature include views that the efforts of the Police have been hampered by *'disbelief that Rotherham has a problem with sexual exploitation. Judgmental and moral attitudes towards the young women involved'*. On balance we do not consider that the comments/amendments themselves, whilst occasionally critical, are evidence of a cover-up in the absence of clear evidence that they are either incorrect or misleading (however see section (XX) below).
- (VV) The handwritten note from CBB which accompanied the amendments says that Witness J may only include *'facts and evidence that you are able to substantiate'*. It is Witness J's evidence that she said to CBB: *'...I said to CBB well look you know it says here the facts and evidence you were able to substantiate, I can't substantiate them without the data that has been taken and she said then you take it out. So I can't substantiate any of it because it's all in the data that's been removed then she said you take it out'* (though this is not reflected in the notes of this meeting).
- (WW) It is Witness J's written evidence at paragraph 30 of Appendix 8 that she *'went back through [her] data and research (of which [I] had taken additional copies and which were not stored at the Risky Business project office). I did this so I could double check my evidence and prepare a written response defending the integrity of the data and findings as originally presented to the Home Office evaluators in April 2002'*. We have seen a copy of the revised report although, again, we have not scrutinised that in detail given that the supporting material is not available. Neither JW, RN nor DB recall receiving a copy of the final report as detailed at paragraph 35 of Appendix 8 though it is the evidence of Officer E and CBB that they both received copies.
- (XX) Few of the comments/amendments made to the 2002 Report are a direct strike through of information: many seek clarity and/or further evidence. If this was a deliberate cover up then that suggests that the senior officers who reviewed and commented upon this report knew (or believed) that the information flagged could not be substantiated (and then instructed CBB to instruct Witness J to remove it

accordingly). The evidence suggests that the possible explanations appear to be a) they did not know whether the comments could be substantiated and were seeking clarification; or b) they knew the comments could not be substantiated because they knew the data had been removed from the Risky Business offices (see section (V) above). As reported at section (Z) above we have been unable to substantiate the involvement of any senior Council employee in the unauthorised removal of documentation from the Risky Business offices in 2002. We do not believe such a 'raid' on the premises of Risky Business took place. If any senior manager authorised or was involved in the removal of data and knowingly amended the 2002 Report on the basis that the evidence to substantiate it was not available then that would be a very serious matter. However, in the absence of any clear evidence of a link between the alleged removal of documentation and those who amended the 2002 Report (not all of whom can be identified and we have not made a finding that JW's amendments were inappropriate), there is no evidence to substantiate any allegation of cover-up in this respect. We do not believe there was a cover up.

(YY) The evidence does, however, suggest that there was some fallout from the 2002 Report: it led to Witness J raising a grievance the response to which she alleges was *'that the Council sought to negotiate an agreement with me just before I left my employment with the Council'*. We sought evidence about the response from the apparent recipients of that grievance: AS and Officer D but neither recalls any involvement in it. Similarly it is CBB's evidence that Officer XA was involved though he cannot recall that either. It seems unlikely, though, that Human Resources had no involvement in either Witness J's grievance or in the end of her role at the Council.

(ZZ) Although Witness J asserts in her grievance that further funding was given to CROP by the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Fund in March 2002 to fund her role beyond August 2002 we have not seen any evidence to substantiate this. The evidence suggests that the pilot concluded in the Council at the end of August 2002 in line with the extra four months of funding discussed and recorded in April 2002. The project in Rotherham was discontinued (CBB was notified of this by a letter faxed on 4 July 2002) and Witness J was notified that her employment with the Council would end in August 2002. This letter faxed on 4 July 2002 said the evaluation was due to submit a draft report on 30 June 2002 with final reports due on 30 September. The letter said that *'the evaluation had been seriously delayed because of project concerns about the evaluation process, the project's failure to forward requested data as well as difficulties with the interview schedules'*. The letter records that a *'...series of joint evaluation and project meetings have been held to resolve these issues but unfortunately difficulties still remain and as a result significant elements of the evaluation remain outstanding. Given the current timeframe a meaningful outcome evaluation is now impossible...'*. Although further detail of the matters discussed during these evaluation/project meetings is not known this letter also cites *'concern regarding the accuracy of some data submitted to the evaluation team, primarily the case studies...it remains unclear as to whether the data needs to be amended or not'*. This letter suggests that information relating to the Risky Business project will be included in the overview of the young people's evaluation group and that a site report would be completed and sent to the project for information. A request was made that any outstanding data be sent to the evaluation team in the next week. We do not know what ultimately happened to the research data that was submitted by the Council, whether any



information featured in a final research report or whether any site report was prepared.

- (AAA) There is evidence of an exchange between GF and CROP (the joint partner for the project) in February 2003 asserting that the Council '*obstructed significant planned research...*' (Appendix 11). This goes further than the letter referenced at section (ZZ) above which does refer to '*some officers at Rotherham MB Council and on the steering group of the Risky Business Project*' as '*not comfortable with the evaluation process*'. Other letters dated 5 December 2002 and 9 January 2003 are referenced but these are not available. We have not seen any response to this letter from February 2003 so the picture is incomplete. It is GF's evidence that such a letter would have been passed to DB for a response but we have not seen any evidence which substantiates this. Such a letter deserved a response from the Chief Executive and, had he looked at this more closely, his understanding of the issues and the response of the Council might have been different. It is possible that someone in the Council did respond to this letter but entries in the timeline at Appendix 11 for March and April 2003 suggest a response was not received. It is GF's evidence that '*there was no further information or action relating to this research brought to my attention*'. There is a letter from RN in December 2002 to 'Raleys Solicitors' which refers to other correspondence from RN about the end of the pilot but that documentation is not available to us either. There is a report referenced in the RB book at page 115 which discusses the end of the pilot in the Council and which quotes some of the information submitted by Witness J in the 2002 Report.
- (BBB) There is evidence to suggest that CROP's work with the Council continued after 2003 with the appointment of a CROP Family Support and Advice project worker who faced '*hostility from RMBC*' but we have not seen any more detailed allegations in that respect nor is it clear whom at the Council was allegedly involved. Further in September 2009 the evidence suggests that CROP sent a letter to numerous employees of the Council detailing '*a series of concerns and failing towards a Rotherham family with two girls aged 15 and 13 who were being sexually exploited*'. This letter was sent to Officer T, PA, JT, SP and CBB. The action taken on receipt of it is unclear though it is Officer T's evidence that she received a copy. We have not seen evidence of any reply to this letter. There is an email from CBB suggesting that PA had seen the letter and had said she would respond to it. It is PA's evidence that she does recall being copied into this letter but that she did not respond to it. It was PA's evidence that, although she was unaware of the specific case referenced, she recalled that during this time a number of girls had been placed out of area for their own protection. We understand from PA that SP had responsibility for children in care but any further action taken by SP is not known. It is JT's evidence that she does not remember receiving this letter: '*I was fastidious in responding to correspondence and would have placed particular importance on receipt of such a letter*'.
- (CCC) Whilst there is not sufficient evidence to substantiate allegations of a cover-up in respect of these matters the evidence is not clear about what action, if any, was taken to address the matters that actually featured in the 2002 Report. As Officer E put it '*there was so much information there that even if they were cross about things that happened they could have just said...let us just have a look at what is here and what is being said*'. It is not clear from the evidence whether this didn't happen in 2002 because, for example, senior officers already believed they were

doing what they could, because they thought the information had been exaggerated or because they knew (or thought) the information could not be substantiated. In the absence of evidence to the contrary the apparent lack of response should be considered a potential failing on the part of senior officers in both Social Services and Education and particularly on the part of any senior manager at the Council that was involved in the amendment of the 2002 Report. However the only officer who has been prepared to acknowledge their involvement in this process is JW though clearly she was not the only person involved and she cannot, therefore, be held out as uniquely responsible for any failure to take action on the matters it raised.

- (iii) The reports undertaken by Angie Heal in 2003 and 2006
- (A) The Jay Report suggests that a further two 'early' reports were prepared detailing the scale of CSE in Rotherham. These were authored by Angie Heal, a Strategic Drugs Analyst appointed by South Yorkshire Police: one in 2003 (the "2003 Report") and one in 2006 (the "2006 Report"). The main findings from these reports are set out at Sections 10.22 and 10.23 of the Jay Report at Appendix 5. It is also Officer T's evidence that a further report may have been prepared though we have not seen a copy.
- (B) The Jay Report refers to reports having been distributed to managers *'in all key agencies'* and *'organisations working with children and adults involved in exploitation and prostitution'*. In her oral evidence Angie Heal said to the Home Affairs Select Committee: *'They did not go particularly high in the Council from my circulation list but if somebody took the decision not to escalate that up having read those reports then I think questions need to be asked of them as well'* (Appendix 7). This suggests that copies were sent to individuals within the Council in 2003 and 2006 though the recipients are not clear. We have not been able to source circulation lists for these reports to date but we have asked numerous interviewees about their knowledge/recollection of the 2003 and the 2006 Reports from the time.
- (C) The list of interviewees for the 2003 Report and the 2006 Report do not suggest that anyone from Social Services/Children's Services in the Council was interviewed for the purposes of collating the reports though Risky Business is listed each time (and SS appears as a Reference in the 2006 Report in the context of the 2006 'Every Child Matters' conference). There is an account of the 2003 Report at pages 134 to 135 of the RB book. It was JG's evidence that he recalled seeing the 2003 Report but not until a Safer Rotherham Partnership meeting in April 2005 and that the contents *'featured as an objective in the crime reduction plan'*. JG was no longer with the Council by the time the 2006 Report was published. It is the evidence of both DB and JW that they did not see the 2003 Report at the time (which is consistent with the evidence that the circulation list did not go *'particularly high'* in the Council) and, again, neither of them were with the Council by the time the 2006 Report was published.
- (D) It was RN's evidence that he could not recall the 2006 Report but that he had some memory of the 2003 Report though it was *'vague'*. He recalls that it was presented to Councillors and then the Task and Finish Group was set up though those meetings did not take place until December 2004 (based on the timeline at Appendix 18 – see section 4.6(g) above). This is, however, supported by the evidence of CBB in September 2014 that the 2003 Report was one of the

documents referenced in her report in 2004 (see section (iv) below). In the absence of the circulation lists the evidence we have been able to collate about whether and when senior officers at the Council knew of the 2003 Report cannot be verified though it does suggest that the 2003 Report featured in the report to Members in December 2004.

- (E) In respect of the 2006 Report it is MC's evidence that he has *'no recollection of the Angie Heal report and do not believe that I ever saw it'. Moreover I cannot recall anyone who did see it ever mentioning it to me'*. It was SS' evidence that she talked to Angie Heal about her research but she does not recall seeing the report. It was SS' evidence that Angie Heal may have spoken at *'our awareness raising conference'* (likely to be the conference in 2006 referenced above). This is supported by Officer T's account of this conference at page 167 of the RB book: *'It was a full day event with speakers in the morning and workshops in the afternoon. [JT] made the opening speech...Angie Heal was there too'*. We have also seen a sample of the materials prepared by Officer T for this conference. In her evidence to the Home Office Select Committee JT acknowledged having seen the 2006 Report and that the information was *'in Police hands'* but she could not recall what happened with it from there. We have been unable to establish which other senior officers in the Council may have seen this report across this period nor is there any evidence about what further action (over and above SS' involvement in the conference above) that may have been taken by any senior manager in light of the contents.

(iv) The 2004 Report

- (A) It was CBB's evidence to the Council in 2014 that, after she had done the presentation to the Councillors (see section 4.6(g) above) (the "2004 Report") she was called to see RN and PA, that she was informed that they were going to see DB and she was to sit and not speak when she went in. It was CBB's evidence that she went into [DB's] office and there were two Conservative Councillors in there who wanted to know what was going on following the presentation. It was CBB's evidence that RN and PA instructed her not to speak in this meeting, that PA said the numbers had been exaggerated and that there *'are only 2 cases to her knowledge and actually they are on the register for other things, mainly neglect but maybe a bit of sexual exploitation'*.
- (B) There is no contemporaneous evidence to corroborate CBB's account of this meeting nor is there any evidence to suggest that CBB raised it at the time. This account was given some ten years later. Neither DB, RN nor PA recall such a meeting. In the absence of any supporting evidence the prospect of such a meeting taking place immediately after the 2004 Report was presented involving those who prepared and presented that information is not credible. It seems unlikely that DB would look to misrepresent the number of young people involved when it was CBB's evidence that DB commissioned the 2004 Report in the first place. There is no evidence to suggest that RN had any interest in covering up or suppressing the numbers of young people involved. We do not believe he would have done so. Similarly it is PA's evidence that, around this time, she commissioned the report by SM into the work of Risky Business (see section 4.6(b)(vii) above) with a view to establishing the number of young women involved. It seems unlikely that PA or any other Council officer would have expressed such a view to Councillors immediately after a report to the contrary had been presented

and when the other evidence suggests that the 2004 Report led to specific action to look into the work of Risky Business. In the absence of any other corroborating evidence we are unable to find that any senior officers in the Council were involved in such a meeting or that any such meeting took place as alleged.

- (v) The Child S Serious Case Review (SCR)
- (A) The SCR followed the murder of Child S in 2010. The redactions to the Child S SCR have been commented on in the Casey Report. They are of relevance to the extent that they are a further occasion where it is alleged that the Council sought to redact pertinent information related to CSE on publication.
- (B) We have not revisited the outcomes of the Child S SCR as part of this report as to do so falls outside the scope of this report. At pages 250 to 253 of the RB book Officer T recounts her reading of the report: *'I felt our position and approach to [Child S]'s case had been totally misrepresented. [SP's] words came back to me: 'Someone has to take the fall for [Child S]'s murder'*. It is SP's evidence that he did not make this statement and there is no evidence that such a statement was escalated to anyone at the time. We are not able to conclude whether or not such a statement was made. SP was a member of the LSCB but he was not the author of the report nor, on his evidence, did SP have any involvement in the redactions to the report. We have seen evidence to suggest that Officer T provided the authors of the Child S SCR with information about Risky Business involvement (though we have not seen the exact information provided). We have also seen evidence that PM advised Officer T and Officer K that the Terms of Reference for the Child S SCR did *'not include consideration of perpetrators or sexual exploitation in any depth...'* though we do not consider that this, of itself, is evidence of an active cover up.
- (C) We interviewed Officer K who was the author of the 'local management report' (LMR) into Risky Business and who independently reviewed the information provided about their involvement. He acknowledges that he was *'fairly critical'* of them in the LMR...*'they were doing what youth workers are supposed to do but they got all these, almost like social care responsibilities thrust upon them and they didn't have the framework around them to manage within that'*. Although there is evidence about the proposed scope of the Child S SCR (see section (B) above) we have not seen evidence to suggest that Officer K deliberately sought to or was instructed to misrepresent the involvement of Risky Business in any way. We do not believe he intended to do so.
- (D) In his evidence Officer K described Risky Business' recording systems, in his view, as *'fairly chaotic'* and asserted that, in terms of information sharing, *'they either shared everything or they didn't share anything...they didn't see it as their job to kind of weigh that information or to assess that information in anyway'*. We have not been provided with all the information made available to Officer K as part of the LMR so we are unable to report upon whether the conclusions were accurate or whether any assertion by others that matters were misrepresented is warranted. However we have commented above on the attitude of other agencies towards Risky Business, in particular those statutory agencies that had a different way of working with young people, and it is possible that some of those difficulties are reflected in these comments (see section 5.3(b) above). The evidence suggests that the criticisms of Risky Business and the recommendations arising out of this

SCR led to the establishment of the unit described at section 4.5(o) above in 2011.

- (E) It is Officer T's evidence that, as she and SP were waiting for formal confirmation that it was [Child S] who had been murdered, they were visited by a Police officer who said *'we've already been told we can't go down the CSE route, we've got to go down the honour based killing..'* It was Officer T's evidence that this related to senior officers in the Police rather than to officers in the Council. This report does not extend to the involvement of the Police so we have not tested this evidence though, if it is right, it would equally have been difficult for Risky Business to have 'taken the fall' (see section (B) above) when their remit was CSE.
- (F) It was Officer K's evidence that, in conjunction with the author of the report, *'our conclusion was that actually there was very little evidence that Child S was being exploited...but she was a fairly secretive and private individual so I mean she could have been exploited and nobody would have known about it...'* As far as the unredacted report is concerned those suspicions do feature in the 'Child's Journey', in the LMR regarding 'Project 1' (Risky Business) and there is a section reporting on 'Sexual exploitation and grooming' which starts *'At the centre of the Child S case is the issue of Sibling 3's involvement and Child S's potential involvement in sexual exploitation'*. However the findings in the Casey Report were that *'Inspectors are of the view that the SCR into the death of Child S minimised her involvement in CSE in a manner which was overlooked in the furore which surrounded the redactions'*. In particular the Casey Report is critical that information that linked Child S to CSE had been 'discounted' for the purposes of the SCR...on the basis that the information was all second and third hand and therefore unverifiable. Such a view might be indicative of the approach considered at section 5.3(b) above and, in hindsight, even if such information was given less weight for these reasons, it should not perhaps have been discounted altogether (even if the Terms of Reference did not extend to considering it in any depth – see section (B) above). We have not seen any evidence, however, to support a finding that matters related to CSE were deliberately minimised on instruction from the Police or any specific officer from the Council with the intention of covering it up.
- (G) Comments about the redactions themselves and their validity or otherwise appear at page 136 of the Casey Report. We have not re-examined the redactions that were made to this report prior to publication. It was the evidence of AH that he, the author of the report (neither of whom were Council employees) and Officer K sat *'in a room where we actually went through the SCR line by line looking at what should be redacted and what shouldn't'*. It was Officer K's evidence that AH and JT wanted to redact elements of the report: *'the rationale for it was that they didn't want the report published and...for then [Child S] daughter to at some point pick that up and read about some of the things that were said about her mum in that report'*. This is reflected in AH's evidence that *'The point of the review was to find out where the services had failed...What we attempted to do was to keep it as anonymous as we could and private as we could...'* This was also reflected in contemporaneous LSCB minutes where this SCR and the reasons for the redactions made were discussed. It was Officer K's evidence that *'...I think in hindsight there was an element of paranoia in that because I think we redacted too much and then there were subsequent criticisms of us for trying to, it then appeared to be a cover up...but it was more a cock up than a cover up as these things often are because the intention was to protect [Child S's] daughter...not to kind of hide our recollections'*. Though it is SP's evidence that he had no

involvement in the matter it was JT's evidence that she supported the redactions made *'as I believed we needed to protect the victim's surviving child and her family. It was on this basis I also supported limiting the publication of the SCR. I firmly believe this was in the best interest of the surviving child and the victim's family. The family had just lost a mother, sister and daughter. I felt they needed some protection from the media'*.

(H) There is evidence that, with hindsight, PG perhaps accepts that the redactions to the Child S SCR went too far (not helped by existing widespread concerns about revised Governmental policy on the publication of SCRs and then an ill-fated attempt by the Council to restrict its publication in full – as outlined at page 135 of the Casey Report). If there was *'paranoia'* that may have influenced the response but that does not mean that Officer K was involved in a deliberate cover up. The evidence suggests that this was the first LMR (as part of the SCR) that Officer K had completed and it is clear that others such as JT had a clear view on the appropriate course of action as far as publication of the main report was concerned (see section (G) above). It was HW's evidence that he *'may have been in meetings where this was signed off but I and other colleagues felt it was being dealt with and decided by [AH],[JT and the Head of Legal Services]'* but that he was not involved in the decision to try and limit its publication. The author of the Child S SCR was not a Council employee and there is no evidence to suggest that they covered up issues relating to CSE or would have had any interest in doing so. Similarly there is no clear evidence about AH in this respect either although, in his capacity as Chair of the LSCB, he had a closer relationship with the Council than the author did. The evidence we were able to gather about this report and the redactions made to it are supported by the Jay Report which determines that *'We do not believe, however, that a charge of cover-up by the author or by the Safeguarding Board can be justified'*.

(vi) The removal of other documents/records from Risky Business premises

(A) In addition to the removal of documentation considered at paragraph (c)(ii)(v) above the evidence suggests that there are also concerns about information allegedly missing from other Risky Business files after the changes instigated in 2011/2012 (see section 5.3(o) above).

(B) A statement from Officer G suggests that files were archived at the Greasborough Centre and then, from November 2011, at the Youth Offender offices. There is nothing to suggest that archiving, of itself, was inappropriate and the fact that records were archived is supported by CP's evidence.

(C) It was Officer G's evidence that, when the team moved into Chatham Villas (which we understand was early 2012), files were held in secure lockable drawers. It is Officer G's evidence that Officer T and other Risky Business workers had access to children's files across this period as they continued to be used until all staff could record on the social work system. It was Officer G's evidence that she *'convinced the managers to put us on the electronic care system...'* and that this happened from late 2012 onwards. We understand this had not happened previously as youth workers did not have access to the social care system and, in some cases, senior managers had determined that the threshold for social work intervention hadn't been met which meant cases couldn't be held on the social care system in any event (see paragraph 5.4(a)(v) below).

- (D) It was Officer G's evidence that, on the advice of HW, the 'Perpetrator' records were given to the Police where they were stored at Maltby Police station. Officer G reiterates this in her evidence to the Council in 2014. It was HW's evidence that this was not negative *'but in fact is at the essence of good child protection work where agencies are 'required' by statute to share such information and no more so than in the complex area of CSE'*.
- (E) It is Officer G's evidence that when Operation Clover began the Police asked Officer G about the files and she told them that *'there's a load of files in that cupboard and you are free to have them because I've handed them to the Police under the advice of [HW]*. It is Officer G's evidence that there was a fall out between Superintendent Phil Etheridge and CP about access to these files and that Officer G put them in a locked room at the Council at the request of CP. We have not interviewed Superintendent Phil Etheridge so his account of this matter is not known but CP's evidence does not support a finding that there was a fall out between them. It is CP's evidence that *'I did not have a dispute with Superintendent Phil Etheridge about the documents. On my departure I received a certificate of commendation from South Yorkshire Police for my contribution towards improving the relationships between the Police and Children's Social Care'*.
- (F) It was CP's evidence that *'RMBC was asked to source a number of files for the period 1987 to 2003 on young people named by the Police and any associated young people. These were paper files that had been archived when RMBC moved to an electronic recording system. I sought advice on how best to retrieve and share the archived files with the Police, from MK, JT and in particular RMBC Legal Services...the advice given was that the records could not be transferred to the Police at the SI Unit but RMBC would make a secure room available in Riverside House where the Police could base the research phase of Operation Clover. All relevant available documents that staff could find at the time were shared with South Yorkshire Police. These documents were placed in the secure, locked room at Riverside with full agreement from and co-operation with South Yorkshire Police. No documents were removed by [Officer G] at my instruction'*. Even if CP disagrees that there was any 'dispute' about these documents it does suggest that Officer G's account of events (i.e. that files were at Maltby and then they were transferred back to the Council and secured in a locked room) is accurate.
- (G) Although it has been alleged that information which should be held in these perpetrator files is missing there is no evidence to suggest that CP instructed Officer G to remove any information from those files nor is it Officer G's evidence that she did so: *'the Police had not really done a great deal with them up until this woman made a disclosure and then they did start looking through them and saying there is all these missing documents and I'm saying well there might be, I don't know, there might be because I wasn't there because these files go back to the beginning of Risky Business'*. We have not reviewed that documentation to ascertain whether or not anything is missing and we have been unable to establish the involvement of anyone else from the Council. We have not seen any evidence to support an allegation that Officer G or any other Council officer removed documentation from the files and we have been unable to substantiate a cover up or any inappropriate conduct in this regard.
- (H) On the contrary we have seen emails from Officer G in 2011 where she emailed

others reminding them not to store the database and other confidential information on USB sticks or to remove it from the office and also where she reminded individuals to put confidential information away at the end of the working day: *'this includes information relating to adults or young people. Messages to one another should be emailed or confidential information such as names, addresses and dates of births etc should not be written down if there is no one in the building to lock it away'*.

(I) Similarly Officer G recounted an incident where she went to the International Centre one day (she was not clear on the date but thought it was before she started managing Risky Business in 2011 – subsequent email evidence suggests it was August 2011) and found it unlocked although nobody was there. She said the filing cabinets were open. It was Officer G's evidence that she called CR to ask her what she should do and that CR advised her to remove the files (it is CR's evidence that she does not recall this). It is Officer G's evidence that she *'bagged them all up and put them in a locked room because they were not kept safe at all'*. An email from HW to Officer G, JT and CR supports Officer G's account of this issue and that the documentation was moved to Greasborough. We were unable to interview JT about this matter and HW said in his written account that he had no knowledge of it. There is nothing to suggest that Officer G's actions were either unauthorised or inappropriate and the contemporaneous evidence suggests the files were removed with HW's approval.

(J) The importance of keeping information locked away was reiterated in an email from HW on 1 November 2011 concerning the theft of some laptops from Norfolk House (a matter which HW recalled in his written response). This issue is also considered at page 139 of the Casey Report (Appendix 16) and it is reported that *'evidence seen by Inspectors confirms that the Council did cover up the scale of the loss known at the time'* though there is no wider finding that this amounts to a cover up in respect of CSE. It is Officer G's evidence that her laptop was not stolen as part of this break in. It is also Officer G's evidence that she did not remove an iMac computer from the Council. She categorically refutes any such claim (this allegation was put to her by the Council in 2014 though it does not appear to feature in either the Casey Report or the Jay Report). It was Officer G's evidence in 2014 that she had never seen an iMac computer in her employment at the Council (though it was the evidence of Officer T that the Risky Business team were using a Mac computer at some stage. Similar allegations that Officer G's car was broken into and that files and a computer were stolen are also refuted by Officer G in their entirety.

(vii) The allegations of a wider cover-up in respect of CSE in the Council have subsisted throughout the Relevant Period. Whilst we have been able to establish the involvement of some senior Council employees in the matters examined above, the evidence we have seen is not, in our view, sufficient to substantiate allegations of any deliberate and sustained attempt at cover up across the Relevant Period.

#### 5.4 Other problems in Social Services/Children's and Young People's Services

(a) Other problems in Social Services/Children's Services across the Relevant Period have been well documented (see page 69 of the Casey Report at Appendix 16) and we have not scrutinised those in detail in this report since they relate to matters that are wider than CSE alone. We have, however, reported on some of the oral evidence we have collated about the extent to which some



of these problems and criticisms may have impacted on the Council's response to CSE across the Relevant Period.

- (i) The first of these factors appears to have been high levels of vacancies for social workers across the Relevant Period (though we understand that this was a national problem and far from something unique to the Council). It was Officer B's evidence that, prior to the Relevant Period, *'it was a very different landscape in terms of social work availability of jobs and it was actually quite difficult to get posts in South Yorkshire and Rotherham was seen as a really desirable place to work. However, by 2004...they were travelling to different countries to try and recruit staff'* and this is supported by the evidence of PA that *'we did all kinds of initiatives and recruited from Zimbabwe, Australia, Canada, we had offered golden hellos, money for team managers to stay on an annual basis...extra days leave and some of these were successful.* This is supported by the evidence of AR that *'staff recruitment and retention was problematic and remained so despite a number of innovative approaches including recruitment from overseas and a graduate trainee scheme'* and also by PK who said that *'people would work and move around the South Yorkshire authorities where the package was best and where it was envisaged it was least bad.*
  
- (ii) It was Officer B's evidence that, by 2004, *'I think the authority overall were having difficulty recruiting the right level of social workers so it was a really really tough time as a team manager...'* She gave an example in her particular locality team: *'initially there was a team manager post alongside me but I think within that year...there were probably six other team managers...so my team had this relative stability for a year of me, prior to that they had had an agency team manager, they had two or three agency team managers in a year...it was a very unsettled, transient team.* Similarly it was SM's evidence that *'sometimes they would get to child protection conference and then there would be a delay in allocation of [social] worker or it would be allocation to a series of workers because turnover in social workers was very high...'*
  
- (iii) It was SS' evidence that, when she took over in 2005, *'there were issues with instability of staff, consistency and quality of practice evidenced through high vacancy rates, significant issues regarding recruitment and retention, high usage of agency staff and a relatively inexperienced workforce'*. It was also the evidence of SS that *'there was some terrible poaching going on so authorities would offer incredibly lucrative packages to social workers to come and join them'* and that, on her arrival, she *'brokered an agreement between the Directors of Children's Services that we would try to not poach each other's staff and that we would have a much more comprehensive approach across the region'* and introduced a range of measures in Rotherham including a 'back to social work' campaign to try and attract experienced social workers back into the profession and that this, in addition to improving performance issues, led to a 30% reduction in vacancies. If that is right then it was a positive step though the evidence suggests this was not sustained across the later years of the Relevant Period. There was evidence in the minutes from the LSCB particularly through 2009 of PA raising concerns about, for example, a lack of administrative support for social workers, the level of vacancies and the number of unallocated Children in Need cases (which supports PA's evidence about the 'state of the nation' report she prepared referenced at section (x) below). This was further supported by concerns about heavy workloads, high vacancies and a backlog of data highlighted by Ofsted when they made an unannounced inspection of Children and Young People's Services in August 2009. Although the minutes from the LSCB in September 2009 suggest that steps were being taken to try and remedy this, the evidence of GM who arrived at the Council in 2010 suggests that the concerns remained. These concerns are also reflected in

the Imray Report.

- (iv) The evidence suggests that other factors also included the way in which CSE concerns were formally recorded within Social Care/Children's Services along with the development and application of thresholds for intervention. Certainly concerns about the thresholds and how they were applied in practice also feature in the Imray Report. The coding was based on the categories of abuse established by the Working Together guidance (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect) but, as far as we understand, there was no separate coding for CSE. It was JW's evidence that there was *'some change to the coding of the client database so better to identify where there might be CSE concerns in there, that was in 2001'* and that a local preventative strategy was in place in 2003 *'with the aim of securing an increase in the reporting of sexually exploited children and young people'*. Although JW appears to have done some work at an early stage in the Relevant Period it is not clear from the evidence what other steps were taken or by whom and the evidence suggests that coding for CSE was still an issue in 2010. It was Officer G's evidence that she sought to tackle this issue: *'It took me around three maybe two and a half years to convince managers to put a coding thing on the system specifically for CSE...we didn't even have an identifier on the system for Social Care'*. The reason for the delay/lack of action in this respect is not clear from the evidence we have seen though it seems possible that a lack of clear coding could have meant that some CSE related matters were not coded appropriately or that the data was not being accurately captured.
- (v) As far as the thresholds were concerned these were a standard social care practice designed to try and help social workers to assess the kind of intervention required yet the evidence suggests that these were also problematic in the Council as far as CSE was concerned. It was SM's evidence that thresholds for intervention were *'very inconsistently applied'* and that a thresholds group was running in 2006 to *'not only set clear thresholds...but also to set them in such a way that would be explainable to other sectors'* though the outcomes from such a group are not clear from the evidence we have seen. The evidence suggests that this issue wasn't limited to referrals from Risky Business either. It was Officer K's evidence that, in terms of Youth Offending, *'most of our referrals to Social Care didn't get taken on and that's partly because I think we were operating at that kind of low threshold to them'*. It was Officer Y's evidence that HW (who was in post in 2011 and 2012) put *'ridiculously high thresholds in place'*. This is supported by the evidence of Officer A who recalled that *'it was a bit of a joke at the time that everything was NFAd [No Further Action]*. It is also supported by the evidence of Officer T who described an attitude of *'we do nothing at lower risk, we do nothing at medium risk, we might do something at higher risk but they're being abused now we can intervene...'*
- (vi) The position in respect of the difficulties caused by thresholds is supported by the evidence of Officer G that when she joined in 2010, there were two extremes as far as referrals were concerned: *'they would knock it back because it wouldn't meet the threshold because it perhaps was not an allegation of abuse...but perhaps the indicators of sexual exploitation had been identified so a young girl might be going missing...or a change in her behaviour at school which is not necessarily enough for a social work assessment so they would reject it but they would make a referral to Risky Business and then the other extreme would be cases where children were being abused and a referral would go in because of the evidence sometimes from Risky Business, sometimes from the school, sometimes from health professionals. A social worker would go out, do an assessment, identify sexual exploitation and refer to Risky Business and close'*. This was supported by Officer Y's evidence that, in 2012, *'we were making drastic cutbacks and it was around managing the front door and bouncing things back...to keep the numbers down and make it look like we*

were operating efficiently. It was HW's evidence that he did not put the thresholds into place because these were produced and agreed by the LSCB. It was HW's evidence that *'what I did was to restructure the front door as when I joined it was a wholly unqualified service meaning decisions were being made about what was safeguarding or not by admin staff who had no professional accountability'* and that he *'introduced qualified staff to the front door to exercise initial decision making'*. We have not examined what thresholds were in place across the Relevant Period and we are not able to make any finding about whether or not they were appropriate or whether they were being used as a means to manage the number of cases coming through the 'front door'. However, if the thresholds were changed and/or changes were made to arrangements at the 'front door' it is not difficult to see how this could have impacted on the number of CSE referrals making their way into Children's Services.

- (vii) There is an assertion in CBB's evidence from 2014 that in 2004 (at the meeting referenced at section 5.3(c)(iv) above) PA was under pressure to reduce the number of children on the register. It is PA's recollection that there were only a small number of young people subject to a child protection plan for CSE. The notes of the LSCB from December 2004 suggest there were 134 children on the register in September 2004 but the reasons are not specified. As the information about the number of children on the register for CSE was not available to us, we did not investigate this point further (not least because it was a comment allegedly made in a meeting that PA and others do not recall taking place and about which we are unable to make any finding). However we did seek to understand more generally whether such a pressure may have existed across the Relevant Period and how that might have impacted on the Council's response to CSE. We understand from AL that social care officers across the country were under pressure to keep the numbers low as it impacted on their ability to meet performance targets set by the government. For example we understand that it was widely known that children's names were removed from the register if they were already 'looked after'. It is not clear to what extent this 'pressure' may have contributed to the position in the Council in respect of CSE. It is possible, though, that similar difficulties arose in respect of targets that the Council set for itself. For example there is a reference in the 'Staying Safe' section of the 2007 Children's Services plan to the number of referrals for sexual exploitation being a 'key performance indicator'. In those circumstances it was, perhaps, in the Council's interests to keep the number of referrals low either by not recording them as CSE (see section (iv) above about the lack of a separate code) and/or by keeping the thresholds for intervention high and referring cases back to Risky Business. Whilst this is not indicative of cover up it is an example of the unintended consequences of trying to meet government targets.
- (viii) The evidence suggests that the large amount of work required to establish an integrated Children's Services was also a factor (though it was likely also a factor in place across every other local authority across the country at the time) and not without its challenges. It was SS' evidence that the requirement was to *'establish a fully integrated model of service delivery ranging from integrated governance at the highest level, through to strategy, processes and front line services'*. It was SS's evidence that it was a *'significant reform requiring an extensive development process with far reaching cultural and practice implications'*. It is AR's evidence that the *'strategic vision was one of integration across the children services spectrum realised operationally through the creation of locality based area teams'*. This is supported by the evidence of PA who explained that *'[SS's] vision was that we would be more effective in children's lives if we approached this in a holistic responsive mentality...'*.
- (ix) It was SS's evidence that *'the favoured approach was based on a co-location model. There*

*had been a pilot project in Clifton prior to my arrival which had proven effective. By co-locating services all the people who worked in the local area would be physically based together....one of the big barriers to people collaborating was that they were physically dispersed and it was difficult for them to collaborate'...'We specified that the overall managers of the locality areas had to have experience in child protection and safeguarding....the first tranche of locality managers were mostly senior social workers and one senior health manager – all of whom had sound experience in safeguarding'. We spoke to a sample of individuals involved with this arrangement in practice. It was Officer X's evidence that this arrangement was difficult on the ground '...to manage 20 odd people from all those different disciplines'. This is supported by the evidence of Officer B who explained that 'it felt like some of them were out of their depth and didn't know what they were doing...'. In particular it was GM's evidence that some people working as Team Managers, and managing social workers, may not have been social work qualified. We did raise this with SS but it was her evidence that this was not her recollection and that the actual appointments took place as she was leaving so, if it is right, this would not be a matter for SS but for JT as her successor. The evidence suggests that this was not a short-term issue in practice though. For example it was GM's evidence that when she arrived in 2010, just after the 'Inadequate' Ofsted inspection, Children's Services was 'quite a mess' and some of the things that concerned her was 'unqualified managers managing social workers, there was a lot of temporary staff...lots of agency workers, there was no monitoring of work...it was really very basic poor quality work in terms of social work practice and poor management oversight'.*

- (x) The evidence suggests that this new co-located method of working may not have worked well in the Council but not that the difficulties are also attributable to any one individual. For example the evidence suggests that by later in the Relevant Period a lack of resources and 'change fatigue' was also having an impact. It was PA's evidence that '*We were doing some really fabulous stuff and then [SS] left and the cuts started to hit and Baby P - it all accumulated really*' (the case of Baby P [Peter Connolly from Haringey] led to a big increase in social care referrals nationally). It was PA's evidence that, by November 2008, '*I already felt that we were on the verge of some major disasters because of our resources. I wrote them a kind of 'state of the nation' report...a summary report which I took to the management team and gave a copy to [SW]. It was a report that outlined our pressures, demands and the efficiencies and the cuts and the impact this was having*'. We asked PA if a copy of that report was available and what the findings were but she had not seen it since she left the Council in 2009 so the contents and the outcome are not known. It is SS' evidence that PA had come to see her to discuss these concerns (SS had left the Council in early 2008) and that SS had advised her to put them into writing. Similarly it was Officer Y's evidence that, by 2008/2009, '*it was just change upon change upon change upon restructure...I had six jobs in five years, we were constantly being re-interviewed and rejigged and moved around and given different areas of focus...*'.
- (xi) The evidence suggests that pressure and a high workload has also been a factor throughout the Relevant Period though this is, perhaps, reflective of the experience of social workers across the country. The pressure and the high workload was described by a number of those interviewed including Officer Y who explained that, when he started in December 2001, '*I walked into...masses and I mean masses of unallocated work, referrals, the bombardment rate was just beyond belief...It was just relentless. I just remember there being baskets of paper referrals piled that high and sort of working through them and prioritising them...*'. This was supported by the evidence of Officer A who said '*I think it can't be underestimated how busy Rotherham is for referrals, I've worked in Barnsley and Leeds, Sheffield for over 30 years, I've never experienced anything like coming to central*

*Rotherham*'. This was supported by the evidence of others including GM in 2010.

- (xii) The other potential factor that warrants comment is supervision. Again supervision and an apparent lack of senior manager oversight is something that attracts specific comment in the Imray Report. The evidence we have suggests that the level of supervision (and the quality of the supervision) that officers and senior officers received could vary in practice but that it was often 'exception reporting'. It was PA's evidence that this meant performance issues or exceptional pieces of work may have been discussed if the individual considered it appropriate to raise the issue but day-to-day operational issues were not discussed as a matter of course. This is supported by the evidence of AC that unless people were coming to him to say '*[AC] I need to talk to you about this [he] would assume they are...getting on with it*'. This was not necessarily the approach taken by every senior manager. For example it was SS' evidence that she had regular one to ones, plus daily informal contact with each member of her senior management team. Those discussions featured '*progress against priorities, successes, constraints, issues of concern, post bag issues, service and individual development needs, additional support required*'...'*Staff did email and come talk to me which makes me feel that I was accessible*'.
- (xiii) It is a natural consequence of a hierarchical structure in any organisation that a senior manager will rely on their direct reports (and others) to escalate issues if they believe they warrant specific attention. There was some evidence to suggest that matters relating to CSE were being escalated in supervision. It isn't possible to determine what individual actions may have resulted from those in practice and the evidence suggests there is some risk that matters could have been diluted as they made their way up through line management. Despite that there is evidence to suggest that, on occasions throughout the Relevant Period, information about the scale and scope of CSE in the Council was delivered directly to some senior officers. In the circumstances, whilst supervision and escalation may have been lacking at some times and in some areas (which was not likely to have been an issue that was unique to the Council), it would be difficult for any senior manager across the Relevant Period to try and say that this excused any failure to act (not least because the quality of supervision was their responsibility rather than the responsibility of their direct reports).

(b) The impact of external evaluations

- (i) A number of external evaluations took place across the Relevant Period and the findings from some of those, summarised in the Jay Report (Appendix 5), are not repeated in this report. The overall findings relate to more than the Council's response to CSE though some of them may well have contributed to the overall position. The apparent absence of a reference to CSE in reports prepared prior to 2006 (those referenced in the Jay Report and others such as the Corporate Governance inspection in March 2002) is unlikely to be pertinent. The evidence we have collated in respect of this report suggests that CSE was known about by individuals in senior roles at the Council prior to 2006 (see section 3.6(a) above).
- (ii) It features in a report for the first time in 2006: the Joint Area Review (JAR). It was SS's evidence that '*we deliberately included Rawmarsh because we wanted them to go and look at Risky Business*' and we have seen a copy of the de-brief document prepared by Officer T after the visit. It was RN's evidence that the JAR was his '*last throw of the dice*' in an attempt to raise the profile of CSE and that he '*sent an Inspector to see the young women – she had a meeting with six or seven or eight of them*' but that CSE was not mentioned in the report. It was SS' evidence that RN '*did not have to push to have the service included*

*in the review. [RN] may well have put forward the suggestion to include Risky Business – we asked all senior managers to nominate services they would like to be highlighted and [RN] would have been involved in those discussions'. There are references to CSE in the report but it does not report CSE as a problem. The overall finding was that 'children and young people appear to be safe from abuse and exploitation'. In the main report the conclusion is that 'Effective systems are in place for sharing information about, and responding to, children at risk of...sexual exploitation...' and that 'Good support is provided to children at risk of sexual exploitation, or who have been sexually exploited, through the Risky Business project'. There is not any evidence about what the Inspectors heard from the young women directly but it is likely that those interviewed were positive about the work of Risky Business.*

- (iii) Whilst there is a section setting out 'what things are not so good for children and young people' there is no mention of CSE. We do not have any further evidence about the basis for these conclusions and we understand that, in practice, other issues identified for improvement would have become an immediate focus. Equally it cannot be concluded that the absence of any criticism about the Council's response to CSE in a report like this is evidence that the issue was either properly understood or being properly dealt with in light of the other evidence available.

(c) Reliance on the Police

- (i) The Casey Report (Appendix 16) makes a general finding that the Council failed to recognise their own role in pursuing perpetrators of CSE and, similarly, the Imray Report references an 'over-reliance' on police. We have commented on the possible difficulties, as far as Social Services/Children's Services were concerned, in progressing referrals in relation to CSE in the absence of any specific evidence and/or engagement by the young people concerned. The evidence suggests that those working at an operational level in the Council including Officer E, Witness J, Officer P, Officer T and others engaged regularly with the Police about CSE through forums such as Key Players (section 5.3(b) above) and, on one occasion, the Police were written to directly about concerns though the evidence suggests that this was not well received (see the Police Letters at section (5.3(c)(ii) above).
- (ii) This report does not comment on the response of the Police or the possible avenues available to them. We have not interviewed any Police officers but one of the criticisms levelled at senior Council officers is that they had a responsibility to encourage the Police to do more (and indeed this may have been the most credible action they could have taken in light of the difficulties considered above). For example it was Witness J's evidence that *'On more than one occasion I encountered an attitude of 'if the Police won't act there is nothing we can do'. I was challenging this, arguing that the lack of Police action increased the risks to the young person...and placed a responsibility on the local authority to act to protect these young people and challenge poor practice in the Police. I cannot recall that ever happening'.*
- (iii) We have reported, in this section, on the evidence we have collated from senior officers in Social Services/Education and Children's Services including JG, JW and DB about any attempts to engage directly with the Police about matters relating to CSE to encourage further preventative and/or disruptive action. The evidence we have collated relates, in the main, to the period before 2006 primarily as a consequence of those we were able to interview though it may be no coincidence that, on Officer T's evidence, the approach of the Police appears to have altered when Matt Jukes took over as District Commander (page 157 of the RB book).

- (iv) The evidence suggests that, when the issue was raised with the Police, the message to the Council was that they knew about CSE and that they were tackling it and/or that other action was not feasible. For example it was Officer H's evidence that he helped to establish the link between the Police and Risky Business in the early days of the Relevant Period. It was Officer H's evidence that *'the Police knew in 1998/1999 all about the incidents that have recently come to court. I didn't know the names but I passed on the contacts and [the Police] would always say well we can't tell you anything but yes we're looking into it'*. This was supported by the evidence of DB that she shared information passed to her from Head Teachers directly with the Police: *'I raised this subject with [Police officer] on numerous occasions and was always assured that the Police were aware and were taking the necessary action'...**'My officers informed me that three brothers appeared to be in charge of the operation...I repeatedly spoke to [Police officer] and informed her re the brothers. This information she said was already known to the Police who continued to work on the problem'*. This was also supported by JG's evidence that *'Staff were genuinely confident in working alongside the Police...but for some reason it seems as though staff were left thinking well the Police are looking at this to see if there is anything'*. It was JG's evidence that no concerns about a Police failure to take things forward made their way to him.
- (v) It was JW's evidence that she had involvement with the Police at an operational and a strategic level in respect of a number of issues and that she did approach the District Commander of the Police directly about a CSE situation. In particular it was JW's evidence that she escalated concerns about a girl found *'naked in a car with an older man and she wouldn't make a complaint about it. Her parents wouldn't make a complaint, her parents weren't abusing or neglecting her...they weren't concerned so I went to the Police, I went to see [the District Commander]...I asked her if they would put covert surveillance in place against this chap...'*. It was JW's evidence that this *'was a good solution...and the Police said that they weren't prepared to do that because of the costs involved and [I] can remember [the District Commander] saying to me 'it costs a lot of money to have people hiding up trees' and my thought after that was that we have nowhere else to go with that'*. So the approach was to continue working with the girl to keep her safe and to encourage her to make a complaint. It is JW's evidence that the older man allegedly involved in this incident was Arshad Hussein, one of a number of individuals who was found guilty of multiple offences and imprisoned in February 2016. There is not evidence that JW escalated this issue further within the Police or at the Council though this is consistent with her view that she felt there was *'nowhere else to go with that'*. We have not interviewed the former District Commander so we do not know whether she agrees with JW's account of this meeting though clearly, with hindsight, this was another missed opportunity.
- (vi) It was the evidence of PK that he recalled *'identifying issues around Asian taxi drivers and the bus station in Rotherham and encouraging the Police service to undertake surveillance and investigations because there was the issue of these vulnerable young women not being prepared to provide evidence and there was very much a dependency at that point in time on evidence based action, especially for the Police...'*. This is supported by the evidence of Officer E who said *'...but the Police would just say that they didn't have the resources, because [I] remember saying why can't they just watch the property, you know why can't they just have it under surveillance and they would say that they just didn't have the resources'* and also by the evidence of Witness J: *'this man phoned up and offered to let the Police use I think it was his front room or his bedroom to watch a take-away over the road where he said he could see young girls coming and going and he thought they were being abused...and the Police said it wasn't necessary or proportionate under the surveillance and I was saying don't do it under surveillance go round for a cup of coffee. Just sit there for an hour with this guy, have a cup of coffee and see what you see and then*

*decide whether it's necessary or proportionate...no no we haven't got a vice squad we can't do that...'. Similarly, it was Witness W's evidence that 'we asked [the Police] about why nothing was happening in terms of strategy to deal with perpetrators of sexual exploitation, why couldn't you follow them and the answer was that it would be a breach of their human rights. That the line that the Police were taking in 2005/6'.*

- (vii) It was DB's written evidence that she went to see the District Commander four times about the issues (including once with JW). The exact dates of those meetings are not specified. On the first occasion it is DB's evidence that she *'expressed my serious concerns and offered the information I had available. [The District Commander] said the Police were aware and were dealing with the issue but agreed to put unmarked Police cars outside Kimberworth and Old Hall schools where we knew the girls were being picked up in cars by Asians...'*. On the second occasion DB went with [JW]: *'We expressed our concerns, but again were met with 'We are aware of this and are doing what we can'. [JW] was inclined to agree with [the District Commander]...'*. It is not clear whether this is the same meeting at which JW asked the District Commander to put covert surveillance into place (see section (v) above). It is JW's evidence that DB's account of this meeting suggests a level of passivity on her part which she does not agree with and which is not supported by her own requests for action. The fact that two such senior managers chose to visit the Police Station together to speak directly to the District Commander does suggest this was a matter about which they had significant concerns. On the third occasion DB went with Member [GB]: *'again we were listened to but no obvious action was taken'*. Again, as we have not interviewed the former District Commander, we do not know whether she agrees with DB's account of these meetings.
- (viii) On the fourth occasion, which on DB's evidence, post-dated the 2004 Report, she said that *'I again went to see [the District Commander] who said she would show me a diagram/web. This diagram was hand drawn and had Manchester at the centre, words such as drugs, shooting etc were around the middle. On the outer edge appeared Rotherham, Sheffield, Bradford etc with references to further crimes including prostitution and sexual exploitation. [The District Commander] said Rotherham were involved in a serious operation involving major crimes...She said it was vital that I did not undermine this major Police operation'*. It was DB's evidence that *'I didn't know what the operation was, I expected any day to hear on television and national press that these people were sorted, I was not aware other than we continually had comments about sexual exploitation that either little or nothing was done'*.
- (ix) The understanding at the time that a Police operation was underway was also supported by the evidence of RN and of Witness S: *'there was a belief that the Police were going to start gathering evidence to bring cases and so there was also a sort of coded message that if you make too much noise about this or pursue any other information course of action outside the mainstream then that is going to jeopardise the Police's investigation'*. Notwithstanding this there is not evidence to suggest that DB escalated her concerns about lack of action within the Police or that she raised them with GF, MC or with Members and she could have chosen to do so. It is DB's evidence that she trusted the Police and that this was an *'obvious mistake on my part'* though clearly this is not a matter for which DB can or should be held solely responsible. The difficulties that DB appeared to have experienced were also supported by SS' evidence *'I raised our concerns with Matt Jukes' predecessor without success. When Matt Jukes came in 2007 the police response began to improve – it was like a breath of fresh air'*.
- (x) Evidence about interaction with the Police later in the Relevant Period is limited (primarily



as a consequence of those we were able to interview) though we understand that work on Operation Central began in 2007/2008 and that senior officers including MC, SS, PA, JT, and others were involved in that work. Evidence of other attitudes towards CSE tie in, to some degree, with the attitude and approach highlighted at section 5.3(b) above. This included Officer Y's evidence that *'I was saying to the residential staff, every time she goes missing from this unit and you think she is there, I want you to report that to the Police and insist that the Police go round there and fetch her back...they wouldn't look or even consider things like abduction because she was looked after, she was 16 and she was seen as able to go and consent to have sex with this man'*. This is supported by Officer I's evidence that she could *'remember talking to a Police officer who told me that one of the young people on our case load at the time was one of two prostitutes operating in Rotherham...'*.

- (xi) The evidence we have collated does suggest that, while some senior officers such as JW and DB did take active steps to try and raise matters directly with the District Commander of the Police (for which they should be credited) they were also, perhaps, too prepared to take the response at face value (i.e. that surveillance was not possible and/or that operations were underway).

5.5 The evidence we have reported on above suggests that there wasn't one single barrier to progress in the Council: it was multi-faceted. The evidence suggests that some of the barriers were, perhaps, a product of their time such as the 'silo' approach prior to the integration of Children's Services and the impact of increasing budget cuts and workloads though these would equally have been relevant to many other local authorities across the country. Other factors appear to have been a product of the Council itself and the way that its senior officers operated across the Relevant Period including the attitude and approach of some people to Risky Business; and a tendency to rely on the Police. Whilst we have not made a finding that any individual senior manager was involved in a deliberate cover-up we have, where the evidence permits, flagged the extent of their involvement in the specific incidents examined.

## **6 HOW DID THE CULTURE AT THE COUNCIL ACROSS THE RELEVANT PERIOD INFLUENCE ITS RESPONSE TO CSE?**

6.1 In this section we report on the evidence we have collated about the culture at the Council across the Relevant Period and how that might have influenced the response of senior officers to CSE. There are two elements to this: the response to the race and ethnicity of those involved; and the wider culture at the Council including the approach towards women. Both of these feature in the Jay Report (Appendix 5) and also in the Casey Report (Appendix 16).

### **(a) Race and Ethnicity**

- (i) It was the finding in the Jay Report (section 11 of Appendix 5) that there was no evidence that social care staff were influenced by concerns about the ethnic origins of suspected perpetrators when dealing with individual child protection cases. However there was a finding that, in the broader organisational context, there was a widespread perception that messages conveyed by some senior people in the Council and also the Police were to 'downplay' the ethnic dimensions of CSE. Similarly in the Casey Report (page 32 of Appendix 16) it was reported that *'...from the outset the added dimension of the ethnic background of perpetrators was an awkward and uncomfortable truth which, in the view of the inspection team, affected the way that the Council (and the Police) dealt with CSE'*. We have sought to understand from those who were interviewed whether they had any experience of this and how this may have manifested in practice.

- (ii) The evidence we collated suggested that concerns about race and ethnicity was an issue as far as the Youth Service was concerned. As Witness W put it in his evidence *'I think that one of the factors was this stance about political correctness and there was a commendable commitment in Rotherham to ensuring that there was harmony between the various communities. No one would argue with that but it developed to the point where if we were talking about sexual exploitation and the obvious racial elements that were there were discussed then anyone who raised them in that manner was in danger of being accused of racism'*. This was supported by the evidence of Officer D: *'I think the whole of Rotherham...was very concerned about not making negative comments about or any negative responses around the Asian community'*, of Officer O: *'I think people could've took notice and...not be scared of being called racist'* and of Officer T *'...you were always afraid of having the racism card thrown at you, the whole of the Youth Service had that ripple going through it not just Risky Business...I think it was probably one of the key reasons why a lot of things weren't acted on and still believe that now'*.
- (iii) For example Officer Y recalls being at a Key Players meeting where there was *'bizarre terminology like 'men of a particular ethnic origin engaged in a particular economic activity'...so I said 'Do you mean Asian taxi drivers?' and it was though I had said something really inappropriate'*. This was supported by the evidence of Witness J who described attending a meeting of other officers at the Council and *'one of the comments that I'd made...said that we thought that they were British Asian...and the chill that dropped over that meeting was just horrendous and you know when you know you've said something wrong but you can't quite figure out what you've said wrong...and [Officer E] came in and said you know you shouldn't have mentioned that...somebody's complained about it and I have been told that you need to attend an equality and diversity course so I did. I had to attend a two day equality and diversity course...and I just couldn't get past that because it wasn't a racist comment, it was a factual comment'*. It should be noted, however, that it was CBB's evidence in 2014 that everyone went on a 2 day ethnicity course following the Stephen Lawrence inquiry not just Witness J.
- (iv) It was CBB's evidence in 2014 that there was *'huge nervousness from Members and we were told it was the Leader'. He didn't want Rotherham to be known as the 'kiddie fiddling capital' and he didn't want race riots'*. This view is also supported by the evidence of SA though we have been unable to verify that account with RS as he was not interviewed. Similarly Officer H said *'I knew that there was a concern about Asian taxi drivers...but in managing that I was not prepared to allow every Asian taxi driver to be labelled in the way that if it wasn't managed carefully could have been suggested'*. He gave another example of an occasion where a black member of staff was allegedly dismissed for stealing. The decision was overturned at appeal as Members told him *'[Officer H] we've got so few black staff we can't dismiss one'*.
- (v) The view in Youth Services contrasted to some degree with the view of officers working in Social Services/Children's Services or at a higher level in the Council. It was GF's evidence that there were *'ongoing concerns regarding race relations during my time at RMBC. This is not unusual in a demographic that has a large ethnically diverse population coupled with a significant number of socio economic challenges...'* but he did not detail any particular sensitivity in relation to 'child prostitution' as it was known at the time. It was JW's evidence that she *'never made any such statements to staff about downplaying ethnic dimensions in CSE or any other cases nor was I aware of anyone else doing so'*. Similarly she said that the Council's Members were *'the least PC people I'd come across in a long time. You know there'd been some of that really awful head wobbling and mocking south Asian accent and I remember one of them always used to talk about 'our coloured friends'*. This is supported

by the evidence of SS who recalls *'I didn't get the sense that it was covered up or there were problems with political correctness. In fact I would characterise Rotherham as having more of a racist culture than a politically correct culture'. 'I didn't have the sense that people were covering this up because they were Pakistani or that they were from any particular minority group or ethnic group. It was more that it was very hard end organised crime and needed a very specialised approach from the police'* and also by DS-C who said *'I certainly don't ever recall any conversations where it was explicitly said we can't deal with this because there's an issue of race or we must respond to this because there's an issue of inequality...'*. Similarly it was MK's evidence that he was *'clear from information that had largely begun to emerge through the press towards the end of 2012 that there had been an ethnic dimension to CSE within Rotherham though the visibility of this was not initially made apparent to him as a continuing ongoing problem'*.

- (vi) There is some evidence to suggest that this sensitivity did feature in the way in which matters relating to CSE were reported in the Council. For example the word *'Asian'* has been struck through on a number of occasions in the amendments to the 2002 Report though it is not clear who made those changes (section 5.3(c)(ii) above). Similarly in respect of the 2004 Report (see section 5.3(c)(iv) above) it was Officer N's evidence that *'I can remember it being described as a sensitive report clearly because of the direct implications...I think there was a significant sensitivity to the fact that such a high proportion of local taxi drivers were of Asian descent and of the potential for that being a difficulty'*. It was DB's evidence that she recalled amending a report due to be presented by CBB and, though she could not recall removing references to the perpetrators being Asian, she did recall some concern about the report and that she removed *'emotive language'* as there were some concerns at the time relating to demonstrations by the English Defence League in the local area (it is anticipated that this is the 2004 Report to the Councillors and not the 2002 Report - see section 5.3(c)(iv) above). This is supported by CBB's evidence that she was tasked with preparing a report by DB which she presented to the *'Engine Room'* (the group working on the forthcoming integration of Children's Services) and that DB asked her to present this report to the Members and to the Safeguarding Board. It was CBB's evidence in 2014 that this report did specify ethnicity.
- (vii) In December 2007 a meeting was held to discuss how the Council should respond to an article in the Sunday Times about young girls being groomed into sexual assault and exploitation by Asian men where Rotherham was briefly mentioned. The notes record *'Historically both SYP and RMBC have been reluctant to take action against Asian men known to be exploiting girls but there are positive signs that this is changing and leading elected members and senior officers are supportive of a proactive approach'. There is a need for a more proactive approach against all perpetrators regardless of race'. They should be treated as criminals and where there are potential community cohesion issues these must be managed'*. This note suggests that, *'the current policy of statutory agencies and Risky Business is 'no comment'. This has been the position because of fear of drawing attention to Rotherham having a particular problem'*. This supports the view that there may have been such concerns in the past but that there was some recognition that this could not continue. It is possible that the early work on Operation Central also contributed towards this change in approach though this note suggests that concern about how the Council might be portrayed in the media was a significant driver.
- (viii) The evidence suggests that concerns over the ethnicity of perpetrators also impacted on the redactions made to the Child S SCR in 2010 for example. Although MK did not have any role in the redactions that were made it was his evidence that he subsequently reviewed the SCR to try to establish if the criticism of an attempt to hide ethnicity had any

substance. It was MK's evidence that *'there were sections where the ethnicity of offenders was redacted as part of deleting whole sentences or paragraphs and sections where ethnicity had been retained. He 'did not form the view that sensitivity regarding ethnicity was the driver of the redactions'* but it was AH's evidence, who was one of those involved in redacting the SCR, that *'we also redacted a couple of parts about the ethnic nature of the men involved...what we didn't want to do at the time was to produce in the media a white versus non-white issue'*.

- (ix) Despite the evidence suggesting that individuals had felt that race and ethnicity had hindered the Council's response there was also evidence of other matters that were tackled appropriately and successfully. For example JG gave an example of a former Member who wanted to intercede in a domestic violence issue and be given the address of a refuge where a young woman was staying so he could put the husband in touch and mediate. This request was refused. Similarly PA referenced a piece of work she undertook with the mosques in Rotherham in 2005/2006 in relation to child protection concerns within the Asian community where she met with the leaders of the Asian communities: *'the purpose of these meetings was to examine the attitudes of the male leaders to child abuse but also educative from a legal and procedural perspective'*. This work was also referenced by Officer U who recalled *'a really good piece of work working with the Madrasa for example in challenging them on the way they disciplined children in the Madrasa...we invested so much time and resource in child safety issues in the Madrasas – while absolutely not tackling child safety issues about sexual exploitation'*.
- (x) Even though there is evidence of the Council tackling some issues with success the evidence suggests that there may have been some 'paralysis' as far as matters relating to CSE were concerned but the Youth Service alone cannot be held accountable for this. We have not seen evidence to suggest that individual senior officers were challenging this view if it came to their attention but, equally, there is evidence to suggest that Members may have had a significant influence in practice.

(b) The wider culture

- (i) As reported at section 13.61 of the Jay Report (Appendix 5) organisational culture is a powerful force that guides decisions and actions. Whilst every employee is responsible for the culture of an organisation it is ultimately directed by those at the top: here the Chief Executives, those in the senior management team and the Members. The Jay Report at sections 13.61 to 13.69 cited numerous examples suggesting a negative culture towards women in the Council. Similarly the Casey Report at pages 28 to 31 commented on the culture in the Council (Appendix 16) both in terms of the behaviours of Members and a culture of sexism and bullying. This report is not an investigation into the wider conduct of individual officers beyond the impact on the Council's response to CSE particularly where there is limited evidence that the examples cited below were raised at the time, nor is any officer being held out as individually responsible for the culture at the Council (not least when we heard evidence from numerous interviewees including GF, MC, JG, JW, SS and MK about steps they did take to try and tackle instances of challenging behaviour). However we have sought to understand from those who were interviewed whether they had any experience of the culture cited in the Jay/Casey reports and how this manifested in practice and some of those examples are summarised below.
- (ii) Not everyone that we interviewed (including men and women) recognised the culture described in the Jay Report and the Casey Report. The culture was described in the Casey Report as 'variable'. We have only interviewed a very small proportion of those who worked

at the Council across the Relevant Period so it cannot be said that the examples below are reflective of everyone's experience at the Council or that they subsisted across the Relevant Period – it is a limited snapshot and the views expressed are subjective. However the evidence from those we were able to interview (most of whom worked in Social Services/Education, Culture and Leisure/Children's Services) did include, for example, a reference to the culture as *'a traditional northern labour led local authority'*, words used by interviewees included *'hierarchical', 'dictatorial'* and Members were described as *'status-conscious'*. Other descriptions were *'the cultural history round here is primary industry – coal mining, steel works – a lot of elected Members came from that working environment which is fairly brutish...and a very strong, male, macho environment'*. The evidence from ME (who was the only Member we were able to interview for this report) cited examples of tension at Member level (between for example RS and others though as RS declined to be interviewed this could not be substantiated further) but not in respect of officers in the Council. Other evidence suggested that *'...it was run by the Leader [RS], he ruled the roost, no-one upset him'*. The Leader was described by MC as *'a big man with a big personality'* but also that *'those who worked closely with him respected him and trusted him to do his best for the Borough, the Council and the staff'*. Similarly it was SS' evidence that RS was *'passionate about getting a good deal for Rotherham's people, willing to go out on a limb and do things in a very unconventional way, not in an inappropriate way but rather he wasn't afraid to do things differently...'*.

- (iii) The evidence from the Chief Executives in post across the Relevant Period, AC until 2001, GF until 2003, MC until 2009 and MK until 2014, varied. It was AC's evidence that he had *'heard some behaviour on behalf of one or two councillors where they are sort of dismissive of women'* but it hadn't happened while he was there. It was GF's evidence that he had *'no recollection or evidence of the anti-woman culture that was described in the Jay Report. Equality and diversity were very strong themes of change and improvement during my tenure at RMBC'*. GF was described as a *'breath of fresh air in Rotherham, in terms of leadership'* though that is not to say that none of the examples we sourced arose during his tenure.
- (iv) It was the evidence of MC that he could recall some examples of inappropriate and sexist behaviour by others and that *'I witnessed attempts at humour that were clearly sexist and not appropriate in the modern workplace but some of the comments quoted by Prof. Jay go well beyond that and would have led me to take action had I been aware of them'*. It was SS' evidence that she actively supported MC and his Assistant Chief Executive *'in their work to lift morale, strengthen relationships across the wider community, challenge deeply ingrained sexism and racism in some pockets of the organisation and encourage whistleblowing amongst staff who did not feel able to raise their concerns through normal routes'*, that, *'to the best of [her] knowledge, the negative cultural issues that have been raised by some were not issues in [her] area'*. In particular MC refers to a practice of monitoring staff morale and opinion through organised surveys (though some former officers alleged that those surveys may have been open to abuse by people other than MC in practice). There was evidence to suggest that, in line with MC's evidence, some limited examples of poor behaviour by male officers were escalated to MC during his tenure though it is SS' evidence that she *'has no recollection of formal complaints of bullying, harassment or misogyny being brought to [her] attention'* whilst she was in role. Similarly, whilst MK *'had not heard or witnessed such statements which are distasteful...whilst [he] cannot guarantee that such instances have not happened had they been brought to [his] attention [he] would have taken them seriously'*. There is specific evidence of a matter concerning a senior officer which was dealt with by MK though this attracts some criticism in the Casey Report (Appendix 16). MK also offered other examples of him challenging the

behaviour of the Leader and of other Cabinet Members on behalf of female officers. It was MK's evidence that staff satisfaction surveys *'continued to show sustained improvement'*.

- (v) Those we interviewed who worked in Human Resources across the Relevant Period including AS and Officer XA had no recollection of issues being raised with them: *'it's foreign to me, it's not the Council that I understood we had'*. This suggests, in line with the evidence summarised below, that issues were rarely escalated formally (though there is some evidence to suggest that matters had been raised with HR across this period albeit not necessarily with those interviewed).
- (vi) The evidence of female employees in senior roles across the Relevant Period including JW, PA, DB and SS, KC and DS-C also varied. A limited number of the examples below were raised formally (there is evidence to suggest that individuals including JW and PA raised specific issues and were unhappy with the Council's response for example) but they do provide some insight into the environment in which some senior female officers were working.
- (vii) While the evidence of one officer was that *'there were quite traditional views of gender and race, particularly amongst the male Councillors. I never felt this was malicious – more driven by ignorance'*. Other examples we were given from early in the Relevant Period included appraisal feedback that one senior female officer *'wore their feminist heart on their sleeve'*, that the Mayor said it was *'his right to kiss all the pretty officers'*, verbal aggression from Members in council meetings, concerns expressed over the discovery of pornography on the laptops of three Members (which AS had heard about and ME ensured the Members concerned were dealt with through disciplinary routes), incidents of shouting by Members and an officer being told she was *'only good for cooking, washing and darning'*. Allegations about comments made over the appearance of female officers included being told *'you know you're an acquired taste but I'm getting a bit of a taste for you'*. It was described by one former senior officer as *'not an environment where an officer felt empowered or enabled to challenge Members'* and by another as an *'old boy's club'*. It was the evidence of one female senior officer who sought to escalate issues at the time that the attitude was *'Don't let em get you down'*.
- (viii) Allegations from later in the Relevant Period included affairs being conducted between senior male officers and more junior members of staff and being referred to as *'the girls'*, as well as incidents of sexual harassment including being propositioned in bars and *'groped'*. One officer recalled an incident where, during a conference, an elected Member was showing pictures of women on his phone who he had met on dating sites and *'had spent the day in bed with'*. Other allegations from later in the Relevant Period included comments that an officer had said *'I want tits and teeth in my team'*. Another officer explained that *'[he] would have no trouble shouting down any of the women in that meeting in front of everybody else...it never ever happened to any of the men'*. Again, when one senior officer did try and escalate her specific concerns to HR it was her evidence that she was told *'Well nobody will ever deal with [x] because he gets the results, so the best thing you can do is find another job'*. Though we did not have evidence from JT (who was in a senior role between 2008 and 2014) the evidence of others was that she was *'marginalised'* and *'bullied...ignored, you know [JT] wouldn't be invited to some meetings, she'd be invited into meetings and then asked to leave even though other people at her level weren't...to me [JT] has suffered horribly through all of this'* and the evidence suggests that this wasn't exclusively the experience of female officers either: *'If we were in meetings and one of us had a suggestion, he'd listen. If it was [male officer] then he'd just shut him up'*.

- (ix) The examples above are limited and they cannot be said to characterise the experience of every female senior officer across the Relevant Period or indeed to be reflective of the Council's culture in the round. Not all of the examples cited above were escalated formally within the Council at the time. Save for the specific examples above there is not evidence to suggest that the raising of such issues was actively discouraged but the limited number of formal complaints in comparison to the number of examples cited from interviewees is difficult to reconcile. Other evidence included the view that *'What I was able to witness over a 20/25 year period was that there were many able and committed and skilled women that came into Rotherham...some came in and from my perspective they either conformed and bought into the culture that was prevalent in Rotherham or they were marginalised and left'... 'they very rarely appointed from outside and even more rarely appointed women...'*
- (x) The evidence also suggests that the experience of senior officers in the Council was not dissimilar amongst some junior officers. Officers in post across the Relevant Period described *'a culture of fear...if you challenged things', 'people being victimised, people being subject to disciplinary investigation, moved jobs without any explanation and treated badly and treated unfairly',* being *'torn off a strip'* by a senior manager, being told by another *'you don't want to put your head above the parapets otherwise we won't be able to protect you', 'it has been quite a horrible place to work', 'we learnt to argue so much and then shut up really'*. Some officers were described as *'vindictive', 'she screamed at all of us, it was her service, she made decisions...'* and *'working in that environment for officers was absolutely toxic'*. Again whilst these examples are illuminating, they only offer a limited view and cannot be said to be reflective of everyone's experience or the approach taken by every senior officer nor is there evidence to suggest that any of these concerns were escalated at the time.
- (xi) The evidence also suggests that the culture may have extended to how the Council was portrayed externally (see section 5.4(b) above). Examples from early in the Relevant Period included *'reputational damage was really important to the Council in a really misplaced and misguided way'... 'I do think people were encouraged to put a positive spin on things'*. One person told us *'people toed the line and didn't rock the boat and given the prevailing atmosphere around the time I think it were that a lot of people within Youth Service in particular felt it was rather difficult to challenge or make unpopular announcements'*. Similarly another former senior officer in post later in the Relevant Period told us *'there was often some pressure to present information in a certain light even when you knew that really wasn't the proper analysis of it'*. This is perhaps qualified by SS' evidence that *'It was not about pretending to be better than we were. At the time there was a lot of pressure on councils to do well – all Councils were rated by the Audit Commission. Council performance on this rating was important and could influence recruitment and retention, the ability to attract further funding as well as general morale...It was a harsh external environment but internally the drive was on genuinely improving performance and practice'*. Despite this other evidence was that *'it was a fairly stagnant environment in which to work...people who weren't in senior positions or even people who were in senior positions had this attitude where they told managers what they felt their managers wanted to hear not what they needed to hear or what the truth was'* and that *'...I'm fairly certain to me it would have been pretty impossible to get anything done without whistleblowing'*. Again, whilst we have included this evidence in the report, these were views expressed by a limited number of interviewees. It was not a view reflected in all the interviews we conducted nor can it be said to be illustrative of the Council as a whole.
- (xii) The impact of the wider culture on the Council's response to CSE is not one that is easy to assess and the evidence does not suggest that this was everyone's experience without

exception. However, in a culture where some women were experiencing the issues at sections (b)(i) to (x) above), it is not difficult to see how this may have impacted on the Council's response to CSE particularly when many of those in the Youth Service and in Social Services/Education, Culture and Leisure/Children's Services across the Relevant Period were female and so too were many of the victims. Neither of those points excuses the failures to act highlighted elsewhere in this report but the evidence does provide some relevant context of the environment in which CSE was being handled across the Relevant Period.

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**August 2017**



## APPENDIX 1

### Public documents

	<b>Framework Documentation</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Legislative Framework Report (Author: Alison Lowton)	10 October 2016
	<b>Report Documentation</b>	
2.	Home Affairs Committee Evidence –witnesses – Emma Jackson and her father Mr Jackson	8 January 2013
3.	Home Affairs Committee Evidence –witnesses – Martin Kimber and Joyce Thacker	8 January 2013
4.	Home Affairs Committee Evidence – Written evidence from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council – Questions on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	8 January 2013
5.	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997 – 2013 (Author: Alexis Jay)	21 August 2014
6.	Letter to the Chair of the Committee from Shaun Wright, South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner – re Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: follow-up Oral evidence on Tuesday 9 September 2014	8 September 2014
7.	Home Affairs Committee, Oral evidence: Child Sexual Exploitation and the Response to Localised Grooming: follow up, HC 203 – Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 9 September 2014.	9 September 2014
8.	Evidence Submitted by a Former Home Office Researcher including Annexes	9 September 2014
9.	Letter to the Chair of the Committee from Shaun Wright, South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner – re Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: follow-up Oral evidence on Tuesday 9 September 2014	12 September 2014
10.	House of Commons, Communities and Local Government Committee. Oral evidence: Jay Report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, HC 648 – Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 13 October 2014.	13 October 2014
11.	Written Evidence submitted by PACE: Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation – Rotherham including Annexes. (Author: Gill Gibbons)	15 October 2014
12.	House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Child Sexual Exploitation and the Response to Localised Grooming: Follow up 2014-2015 .Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 15 October 2014	15 October 2014
13.	Letter to the Chair of the Committee from Martin Kimber, Chief Executive, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	17 October 2014
14.	Explanatory Note - Independent Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham 1997 – 2013 – Alexis Jay OBE	22 October 2014
15.	House of Commons, Communities and Local Government Committee. Child sexual exploitation in Rotherham: some issues for local government	18 November 2014
16.	Report of Inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (Author: Louise Casey)	February 2015
17.	Written Evidence submitted by Roger Stone	March 2015
18.	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Chronology and Timeline – Sexual Exploitation and Risky Business plus attachments	Undated
19.	Oral Evidence: Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: follow up, HC 203 (Martin Kimber, Joyce Thacker, Shaun Wright)	Undated

