



Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Northern Ireland

Call for Evidence: Respondent Information Form for Organisations

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately.

1. Name of Organisation

NSPCC

2. Name of Person completing Submission

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr Other (Please specify)

Surname

Anderson

Forename

Neil

3. Position within the Organisation

Head of Northern Ireland Services

4. Postal Address

Regional Office		
Jennymount Business Park		
Belfast BT153HN		
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Permissions - I am responding on behalf of an organisation

The name and address of your organisation may be made available to the public on the CSE Inquiry website.

Are you content for your response to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate:

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If "No", please state why: _____

We will share your response internally with relevant Inquiry personnel who will consider the issues you have identified. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but will require your permission to do so.

Are you content for the Inquiry to contact you again in relation to your response?

Please tick as appropriate:

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Some organisations may be called upon to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Please indicate whether your organisation would be willing to give oral evidence. All oral evidence will be given in private.

Are you willing to give oral evidence, if approached?

Please tick as appropriate:

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If "No", please state why: _____

INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

EVIDENCE FROM ORGANISATIONS

Please structure your evidence along the following lines if possible:

The NSPCC welcomes the opportunity to share written evidence into the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Northern Ireland. The NSPCC is the lead child protection NGO in Northern Ireland providing a range of evidence-based therapeutic and protection services for children and young people. We have statutory child protection powers under the Children (NI) Order 1995, and in addition to our membership of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), we are also a member of Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI).

This response has been informed by our child care professionals, who by delivering local and national services seek to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse by ensuring best practice and the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration.

1. Please describe work undertaken by your organisation that is relevant to CSE, even if it is not the main focus of your work. This should include structures, procedures and processes currently in place.

- NSPCC's primary objective is to focus on the most acute forms of abuse and support the most vulnerable children at highest risk in our society; this involves protecting children and young people from all forms of abuse and exploitation [please see the Annex for a narrative on each of our services relevant to CSE]. We provide a range of specialist sexual abuse programmes and services; professionals work directly with children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse and provide therapeutic treatment and support to help them recover. The children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour are supported to develop healthy sexual attitudes and boundaries. These interventions will enable children to develop, recover and rebuild their lives.
- It is well documented that looked after children (LAC) are increasingly vulnerable to the risks of sexual exploitation, our Face to Face service seeks to increase access to independent help and emotional support for all LAC and provides short term support using a brief solution focused approach. NSPCC continue to encourage LAC and all children and young people to seek help through ChildLine when they are in distress and danger.
- NSPCC have particular experience of working with child victims of sexual abuse in contact with the Northern Ireland criminal justice system. The Young Witness Service provides support for vulnerable victims and witnesses who have to go through the trauma of giving evidence in criminal trials.
- NSPCC's primary contribution to a multi-agency response to the discovery of numbers of young people likely subject to CSE in Northern Ireland was the provision of a dedicated NSPCC helpline specifically to support the agencies' investigations. The bespoke CSE helpline provides 24 hour advice and support for anyone who is concerned about a child at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse; and is staffed by the existing NSPCC Helpline which has, as part of a UK-wide service provided support in Northern Ireland for the last 25 years.
- Additionally, the NSPCC's Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) which provides a service to NI is recognised as a First Responder in respect of the National Referral Mechanism specialises in offering advice and assistance to professionals with concerns about child trafficking.

2. Reflecting on the current definition of CSE, can you indicate whether this definition enables your organisation to identify appropriately and capture information about CSE.

NSPCC considers the current definition of CSE to be appropriate; however our current processes do not take account of the definition as we do not capture CSE as a subcategory of sexual abuse.

3. From the information held by your organisation, can you provide an indication of the nature and extent of CSE in NI for both genders?

NSPCC cannot provide an indication of the nature and extent of CSE for both genders because we do not capture data in this format. We would like to highlight that since the launch of the CSE Helpline in September 13 we have received 16calls and made 11 eleven referrals.

4. What measures are required to improve the arrangements for preventing and tackling CSE in NI?

- Professionals and frontline staff require specialist safeguarding training to enhance practice and develop the skills, confidence and knowledge to spot possible signs of sexual abuse or exploitation and protect the child. This is an area currently under consideration by NSPCC NI and we have prioritised CSE as an agenda for our staff practice day and continue to promote learning in this area.
- We firmly believe that early intervention via appropriate preventative education plays an important role in both identifying children who have been victims of CSE and in embedding self-help messages into the curriculum. Professionals coming into contact with children must be able to spot possible signs of sexual abuse or exploitation whatever the context, and be confident of what they need to do to protect that child. NSPCC's recent research *'No-one Listened No-one heard'* highlighted the importance of teachers in facilitating young people's disclosure of abuse. NSPCC NI is taking forward a five year preventative education project in partnership with the Department of Education in Northern Ireland which will build schools' capacity in years six and seven to engage and embed effective preventative **'keeping safe'** education in all aspects of school life.
- Special attention must be given to the situations of risk that digital and online developments present in preventing and tackling CSE. We know exploitation includes non-physical contact through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition as a method of grooming and coercing victims, often through social networking sites and mobile devices. We strongly welcome the development of an E-Safety Forum to coordinate the protection of young people accessing social media in Northern Ireland and we agree there is significant scope for work to be undertaken in this area.
- The recent CSE investigation has heightened awareness of child sexual abuse and is a sharp reminder to members of the public and professionals to remain vigilant *'Don't wait until you're certain'* and take action if they have concerns about the safety or protection of a child. The NSPCC UK Helpline protects children by providing advice and information to adults and professionals, and by making referrals to social work services and the police when necessary.
 - In 2012/13 the Helpline responded to 750 contacts from people in Northern Ireland. This is an increase of 8.5 per cent on the previous year.

- Of the contacts in 2012/13 424 resulted in referrals involving 713 children to children's services or the police in Northern.
 - 326 were calls where helpline counsellors provided information or advice, helping an estimated 652 children.
 - In total, 182 people contacting us from Northern Ireland reported that they had concerns for more than a month; with 93 of these being so serious we had to make referrals. In cases where the concerns were so significant we had to make referrals, 52 people (27 per cent) had waited more than six months before getting in touch.
 - The majority of contacts leading to referrals came from members of the public, not from family members or professionals.
 - Our Helpline counsellors make these referrals when they believe that the information shared warrants further assessment or investigation. Referral contacts are where concerns about a child's safety are so serious they have to be referred on to children's services or the police. In order for this to happen, we must have enough identifying information about the child.
- **You may be interested to note that NSPCC is establishing a NI Helpline team as part of its UK Helpline operation from May 2014, this will be a multi-disciplinary team that will allow us to develop bespoke NI wrap around services, strengthen child protection planning provision and provide a first point of contact for supporting major child protection inquiries.**
 - NSPCC would like to highlight our Memorandum of Understanding with the PSNI and the Health and Social Care Board in the operation of the service in NI to raise awareness for professionals who come into contact with children and young people who may have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked. We continue to strengthen our links with CTAC and in doing have recently trained a practitioner on child trafficking to build our capacity of understanding in this area.
 - NSPCC alluded to the link between children going missing from home or care and the risks of CSE in our response to Michelle McIlveen MLA Private Members Bill in 2010. This included a provision of better data by the Health and Social Care Board. We think there is merit in some further work on the policy environment to improve the arrangements of working with missing children and it would be helpful to look at the adequacy of regional guidance in this respect. We would suggest it needs a refresh and to separate out into a different document the chapter on police and residential units. More emphasis should be given to children missing in the community, many of whom will not be known to statutory agencies.

5. What barriers exist in preventing, identifying, disrupting or prosecuting child sexual exploitation (CSE) perpetrators? How might these be overcome?

- Significantly, the recent review of the prosecution processes and principles by the Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales have placed a renewed focus on the experience of child victims of abuse in the criminal justice system. While we have seen considerable improvements to the position of victims and witnesses of which the recent Department of Justice (DOJ) Strategy is an example, we believe there is considerable scope to further enhance the prosecution process here in line with developments and in particular best practice in England and Wales.
- Whilst the NSPCC have had a focus through our Young Witness Service and Live Link on children and young people giving evidence; we are also developing research in partnership with Queens University Belfast, DOJ, Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) examining the current practice in conducting ABE video recorded interviews. These are conducted at a

very early stage when a young person has reported abuse and is often a crucial part of a child's later evidence. We hope this research will be a timely contribution in light of the CSE Inquiries and increase knowledge and expertise on the key issues impacting on child victims in contact with the criminal justice system in NI.

As mentioned, CSE has an interface with trafficking; an emerging issue in Northern Ireland which you may wish to pick up on in more detail for the purpose of preventing and disrupting CSE activity. NI is the only part of the UK with a land border (which is not monitored) and this may be used to exploit children. The Inquiry Team may also wish to take account of this interface in regard to cross border issues in this area.

6. Please provide any examples of local initiatives which have been taken in relation to preventing and tackling CSE.

- Our CSE Helpline number was implemented specifically to support the investigation; staff provide 24 hour advice and support to callers so that protective action can be taken to safeguard children and young people.
- There are early discussions around a centre of excellence for sexual abuse at NSPCC's Craigavon service centre, which would build on the existing specialist therapeutic services and support provisions for child victims of sexual crimes and provide an advice and consultation service.
- The NSPCC strategy states that a core part of our role is to continually inform and educate professionals; parents and carers; to change attitudes and behaviours towards children. Our role in local campaigning is to contribute to persuading everyone to take personal responsibility for preventing cruelty to children. We run sexual abuse campaigns and although there are no current plans for a specific CSE campaign, there is potential here to promote and conduct raising awareness campaigns addressed to the general public providing information on CSE and sexual abuse of children and on the preventative measures which can be taken. We would like to note that of the 16 calls and 11 referrals made to the CSE helpline; 10 referrals and 13 calls were received within the first month of its launch – this highlights the effectiveness of awareness raising and media exposure. The NI Helpline base is a possible avenue to further promote this service for parents and professionals who are concerned about their children being exploited.
- We also provide face to face training or/and develop E-learning packages for agencies who work with children and young people. We can provide resources and work with agencies in the development of safeguarding frameworks for organisations including the review and evaluation of policies and procedures on CSE. NSPCC sits as a member of the regional SBNI training group and progress is being made on the development of a regional child protection training programme; there may be opportunities to look at training that may assist staff and professionals on identification of and working with CSE affected children.

7. Please add anything else you wish to say that is relevant to the work of the Inquiry.

- We would urge the Inquiry to challenge the way sexual exploitation is conceptualised and communicated in light of the recent focus on CSE. The very unhelpful and at times alarmist media response has focused primarily on children who are looked after in residential care, when in fact many vulnerable victims of CSE will not be known to social services. We would draw your attention to the NUJ/NIASW reporting guidelines at: <https://www.basw.co.uk/resource/?id=1543>. In addition, we hope that the focus brought by the Inquiry on CSE is not to the detriment of all other safeguarding and child protection priorities.

- You may feel it helpful to examine a number of issues such as: Education and Library Boards responsibility for tracking and monitoring children and young people's absence from school, professionals working in EOTAS and NEET projects with children and YP on the periphery of the school system, as well as professionals in FE colleges, Principals and Designated Teachers for child protection in schools, and Designated Officers for child protection in ELBs.

Service Users' Experiences

The Inquiry will be consulting children and young people about CSE in a variety of ways. If you work with people who are likely to have or to have had experience of CSE, it would be helpful if you could submit any anonymised views or experiences of service users that can ethically be provided. You may also wish to suggest to the Inquiry how the views and experiences of your service users could best be ascertained to inform the Inquiry.

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Please write down here what you want to tell the Inquiry.

ANNEX

- **Face to Face** provides looked after children and children on the edge of care with support through face to face solution-focused brief therapy. The service has proven highly beneficial in enabling children to recognise their increased vulnerability and better protect themselves from potential harmful situations. Face to Face could target young people at most risk of harm of CSE where work is required on avoiding risk situations.
- **Letting the Future In** is a post-disclosure therapeutic recovery programme for children and young people aged 4-17 who have been sexually abused. The programme encourages the young person to explore, express and manage their feelings and teach them how to keep safe. The teams have extensive experience of dealing with post abuse recovery work leading to better outcomes for children and young people who have been sexually abused and will enable children to recover. Letting the Future In is delivered in our service sites in Foyle and Craigavon and provided on an outreach basis to a number of trusts.
- **Turn the Page** is a structured treatment programme for children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour (HSB). NSPCC research has found that young people are responsible for two thirds of the sexual assaults inflicted on children. Sexual abuse becomes more common during teenage years up to the age of 17 with girls as the main victims. The 'Change for Good' manual aims to establish a consistent and rigorous approach to treating these children that can be compared against techniques already being used.
- **CSE Helpline** available on 0800 389 1701 is staffed by professional, trained and experienced child protection practitioners. Our staff provides 24 hour advice and support for anyone who is concerned about a child at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **NSPCC Helpline** is a multi-channel, UK-wide helpline where adults and professionals can report or seek advice about the welfare of a child or young person. Anyone can contact the helpline free via telephone; text; e-mail or online, 24 hours a day / 365 days a year.
- **The Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC)** is a free UK-wide specialist service offering advice and support to professionals where there is a concern that a child has been trafficked into the UK which research indicates is synonymous with CSE.
- **ChildLine** volunteers offer support for children and young people 24 hours a day, either by phone on 0800 1111 or online through live 1-2-1 chats and e-mail. During 2012/13, ChildLine carried out 278,886 counselling sessions across the UK with children and young people whose main concern was sexual abuse; ChildLine also referred 49 children who were at risk to agencies in Northern Ireland. NSPCC will continue to raise awareness locally in response to CSE to encourage all children and young people to seek help through ChildLine when they are in distress and danger.
- **The Young Witness Service** is a free, independent and confidential service which supported 776 young witnesses during 2012-13 to reduce pressure and undue stress when giving evidence in criminal trials. We know that young and vulnerable victims make up a significant proportion of the criminal justice system, not all of whom meet the threshold for use of a specialist judge and many barriers exist well

before a case reaches court. The NSPCC believes access to justice for these young people shouldn't be compromised as a result and more should be done to support all vulnerable young victims in a system which currently struggles to meet their needs.

- **The ChildLine Schools Service** has visited 555 primary schools and reached 32,000 key stage 2 pupils across Northern Ireland to deliver key messages on how to be safe. Often children who suffer abuse don't recognise what is happening to them as abusive and wrong, we aim to give an entire generation of children and young people the knowledge to protect themselves of abuse and enable them to recognise where they can go for support should they need it.

1. Submissions should be no more than 5 sides of A4
2. Please feel free to include additional information in support of your submission
3. Submissions should be emailed to: cseinquiry@rqia.org.uk no later than Tuesday 18 March 2014