



# CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

## AN INSPECTION OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM'S RESPONSE

JUNE 2020

### WHAT IS CSE?

- ▶ CSE is child sexual abuse.
- ▶ Any child can be a victim and it's never the child's fault.
- ▶ Perpetrators can exploit any child including those who are in care, have issues at home or in school.
- ▶ It's a problem in our community that demands a robust response.

### WHO DID YOU INSPECT?

- ✔ This inspection looked at how the PSNI and PPS were tackling CSE.
- ✔ Other agencies like the Youth Justice Agency and Probation Board for Northern Ireland were also involved.

### WHAT DID VICTIMS AND THOSE AT RISK OF CSE SAY?

Getting victims to talk about CSE was hard. They said:

There have been a couple of good police officers that work well with me and they were very good. In fact, they still call in to see me now. They were very nice and tried to help me... I have met others who don't care; they just said I was 'wasting their time'...

Evidence gathering is shite. Always managed to say nothing they can do. You were under the influence. Not enough evidence.

Always just took me and brought me home. They asked where I had been but don't try to get it out of you. Just take you home and close missing report.

### WHAT DID INSPECTORS FIND?

#### Generally...

- ▶ There was some evidence of good practice.
- ▶ Police, prosecutors and others were dedicated to helping children and disrupting offenders.

#### In the PSNI...

- ▶ We were concerned about the police response to children at risk of CSE.
- ▶ Actions to safeguard children and disrupt suspects were not always evident.

#### In the PPS...

- ▶ Prosecutors could not easily identify CSE cases and clearer guidance was needed.



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### WHAT NEEDS TO BE BETTER?

#### At leadership level (strategic level)...

- ▶ Clear leadership and strategy on tackling CSE across and within Government Departments at all levels that results in good frontline practice.
- ▶ A better understanding of the extent of CSE in Northern Ireland is needed to make sure children at risk are identified and protected by those who have a statutory duty to do that whether it is in the justice, health, social care, education or any other sector or service.

#### On the ground (operational level)...

- ▶ Identifying children at risk, working proactively with them and pursuing all lines of enquiry.
- ▶ Taking factors related to exploitation into account when building a case, like going missing, apparent affection or loyalty.
- ▶ To build in a safeguarding response for exploited children who commit crime.
- ▶ Routine quality assurance of PSNI and PPS decisions.

### WHAT NEXT?

- ▶ Children need to be better protected and change is needed now.
- ▶ Greater focus on disrupting the activity of perpetrators.
- ▶ We all need to be more aware of CSE and the harm it causes.
- ▶ The report recommendations need to be implemented to better tackle CSE.

