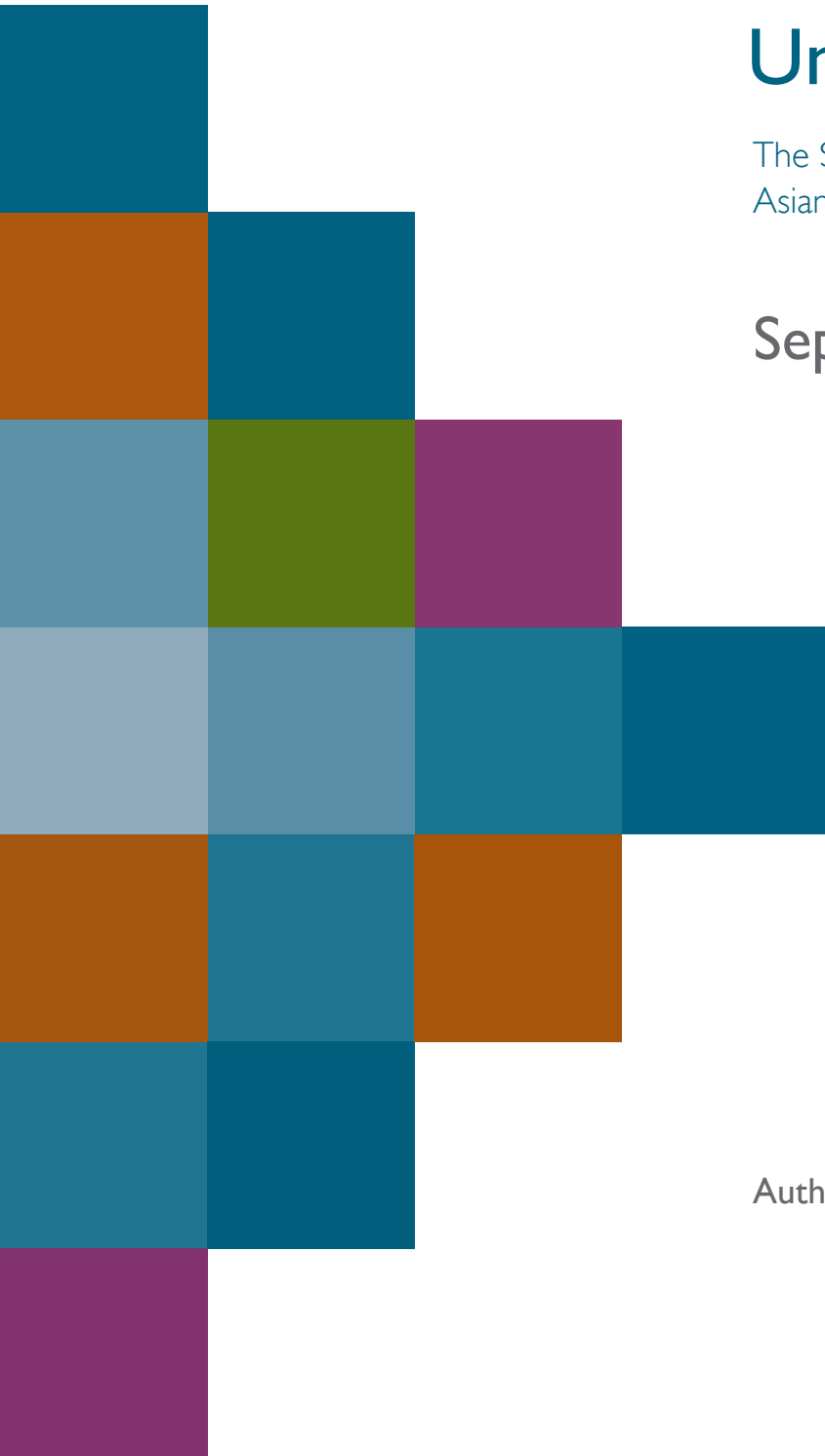# Unheard Voices

The Sexual Exploitation of
Asian Girls and Young Women

September 2013

Author: Shaista Gohir MBE

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the victims of sexual exploitation highlighted in the case studies in this report. Their experiences will hopefully help prevent others from suffering as they did, and pave the way for policies and procedures to be developed that help protect those at risk of sexual exploitation.

Although this report concentrates on the grooming of Asian girls, we recognise and acknowledge the many victims of sexual exploitation across different backgrounds.

As you read through this report, please remember the many girls and women (as well as boys and men) from all ethnic and faith backgrounds caught in a cycle of sexual violence and who are suffering in silence.

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FOREWORD

Baroness Haleh Afshar OBE

**Honorary President and one of
the founding members of
Muslim Women's Network UK**

This report is a welcome path-breaking work focusing on the experiences of Asian and Muslim abused children. There has been a deafening silence concerning this group in the existing body of work on sexual abuse of children and young persons. In all communities victims of such violence find it difficult to report sexual abuse and seek support. Among Asians and Muslims this is exacerbated by a culture of honour and shame that is so powerful as to mask the reality of lived experiences. As a result the team were not able to talk to the children and young people who had suffered sexual exploitation; therefore the report is based on reports by key informants who knew, had helped and supported and / or worked with the victims. Nevertheless this report sheds light on an important section of society where the risks to vulnerable children have been less well known to professionals. This may have resulted in Asian and Muslim children and young people being overlooked by statutory services and not identified as victims of sexual abuse. Similarly absence of information may well have contributed to an assumed collusion of communities who would have taken action had they been aware that the problem exists.

The findings of this report highlight the importance of recognising the factors that prevent victims from resisting and reporting violence. In part this is due to a general culture that recognises authority as being vested in men and respect demanded of women. This may in turn create an endemic experience of gender violence where perpetrators rely on customs and traditions of male superiority to justify and / or hide these abuses. These case studies indicate that, contrary to media studies that accuse Muslim men of grooming non-Muslim girls, the majority of the abusers were from the same ethnic /faith background as the victims and perpetrators targeted girls that were most vulnerable and accessible to them. Like their non-Muslim counterparts some of the victims were silenced by fear of violence against them or their family, others had an emotional attachment to their attackers and others feared that they would not be believed by their own family and others. In addition, the attackers relied on the deep sense of honour and shame in their family and community to silence and control their victims.

Where a male perpetrator was a relative and older than the victim, he assumed the right to control the victim by intimidation and, when he deemed it useful, exercise physical violence and enforce submission. In some cases, in order to mask a history of abuse, he resorted to arranging a forced marriage as a means of masking the abuse.

This report shows the necessity of working with and amongst minority groups on the ground be it within schools, women's groups or other appropriate grassroots organisations and / or with young men willing to help change society. Although the findings of this study are specific to Asian Muslim communities, the findings are important for all minority communities as well as the host society and provide a first step on the long road towards the eradication of violence against women and children.

The findings of the report highlight the importance of training and raising awareness among grassroots activists within communities of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the offenders are from the same background as the victims. The Muslim Women's Network UK hopes and expects to be an active partner in this process. The Network began with its year-long series of conversation across the UK in 2006, which transformed the group and connected it to grassroots organisations across UK. *She Who Disputes,* the landmark report that ensued, was launched in 2007 by the Rt. Hon Patricia Hewitt. The work was funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and facilitated by the Network members, assisted by a team from the Women's National Commission. This marked the recognition of MWNUK, by the government and the public, as one of the important channels for voicing Muslim women's views and demands.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi

Senior Minister of State at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Minister for Faith and Communities at the Department for Communities and Local Government

Child abuse is the scourge of our society. As we have seen over the past year, with high-profile cases involving celebrities and convictions of gangs of street groomers, it comes in many forms and affects many different types of people. This means though, that certain types of abuse – underreported, misunderstood – may be overlooked by the authorities.

The case studies collected together in this report are finally shining much needed spotlight on a problem that has largely, and tragically, gone unnoticed in the past. The cases of Asian and Muslim female victims make for hard reading, but this report, and other research like it, is necessary if we are to take the action needed to stamp out these abhorrent crimes.

The government is absolutely committed to dealing with child abuse and exploitation in whatever form they take. But government action can only take us so far. I have long argued that the problem must be tackled at its heart – in communities, by the communities themselves. In some places, women are seen as second-class citizens - not given a proper voice, not given opportunities in the public sphere, and not given the chance to shape their own destinies. That is something we need to change, from the bottom up.

When I was campaigning for forced marriage to be criminalised, I said it was an inverse form of racism when teachers, neighbours and others would all too easily ignore the fact that an Asian schoolgirl had suddenly disappeared from class and 'gone home' or 'gone to stay with relatives'. Their response to a white classmate disappearing, I argued, would have been very different. All communities deserve the same rights and protections in this country, no one more so than children. It's the same with child abuse and exploitation: we mustn't be allowed to ignore one type of abuse or one type of victim, just because their plight is better hidden, or their community is less well understood.

So we must all continue to speak up, just as we did about forced marriage. There is nothing more important than protecting our children.

Rt Hon Sadiq Khan MP

**Shadow Lord Chancellor and
Shadow Secretary of State for Justice
Labour Party**

I welcome the publication of *'Unheard Voices: The Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Young Women'*. By bringing to light and documenting the hidden experiences of Asian girls and young women, the evidence gathered in this report enables us to better understand ways of how to support and protect them.

Child sexual exploitation is clearly a complex and widespread issue that is not limited to one community. This timely research shows that sexual grooming is not about race but about vulnerability, the exploitation of that vulnerability and opportunism.

By raising awareness of the experiences of Asian girls and young women as victims of sexual exploitation, it is hoped that steps will now be taken to ensure they no longer continue to be overlooked by service providers and support agencies. I would urge all relevant agencies to ensure this research, and the testimonies of those victims who have contributed to it, is taken into account when determining new policies and resources to tackle this important issue.

Sue Berelowitz

**Deputy Children's Commissioner/
Chief Executive of the Office of the
Children's Commissioner**

The Muslim Women's Network UK is to be congratulated for producing this extraordinarily courageous and important report. During the course of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups, we uncovered, for the first time, the scale, scope and extent of child sexual exploitation in England. The results have been a wake up call for agencies charged with protecting children. However, despite the deeply troubling findings, we knew that there were likely to be many more victims than we had identified.

Myths and stereotypes prevailed, impeding agencies' capacity to find and protect victims wherever they were. Similarly, we found a kind of "blindness" to the reality that offenders are operating within every community. One of these myths was that only white girls are victims of sexual exploitation by Asian or Muslim males as these men only abuse outside of their own community driven by hatred and contempt for white females.

This belief flies in the face of evidence that shows those who violate children are most likely to target those who are closest to them and therefore, most easily accessible. Incisive questioning during the Inquiry uncovered many ethnic minority victims and we became extremely concerned by the failure of agencies to seek out and identify these children.

Muslim Women's Network UK took on that task, fearlessly gathering evidence on the hidden sexual violence perpetrated by some Asian and Muslim males within their own communities. The accounts, recorded faithfully in this report, make chilling reading. The stories of some of the victims are amongst the most shocking I have encountered and never again should anybody doubt that Asian and Muslim children are not as at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation as other children.

Leaders and representatives across all walks of life should learn from the bravery of the women who undertook this investigation. The perpetrators of sexual violence against children are in the midst of every community, ethnic and faith group. It is time for everyone to face up to this fact and ask the same searching questions as Muslim Women's Network UK. We must be a society that demonstrates that the abuse of children has no place to hide and will not be tolerated. Muslim Women's Network UK has shown us the way.

Nazir Afzal OBE

Chief Crown Prosecutor of the Crown Prosecution Service for North West England.

There is sadly no community where women and girls are not at risk from men and sexual predators. In the last two years, we have prosecuted people, invariably men, from 25 countries not including the European Union for sexual offences and trafficking. Victims come from all communities, as do perpetrators. In the last two years, the victims of trafficking and sexual offending in the UK came from 64 countries. We have to deal here with the United Nations of abusers of women and girls. It needs to be clear, however, that white British men constitute the vast majority of offenders in the United Kingdom.

The perpetrators in these so-called group-grooming cases do not limit their criminal behaviour to white girls, though most were. We know that women and victims from minorities are even more reluctant to report these crimes, in part because of honour and shame issues. That is why this research is so important. It is the availability of victims coupled with their vulnerability that leads to them being targeted by these predators.

Vulnerability is universal and not confined to particular races. That said, victims who already have troubled lives must surely be entitled to greater protection from the state and must rightly expect that they will be believed.

This criminality is not driven by a person's ethnicity, but by men demanding power and control over women. Having spent a lifetime challenging all communities on their harmful practices, I think it is right that each community examines those within it who are capable of such horrific behaviour.

We cannot tolerate breaches of basic human rights, the abuse of women or children. These men who prey on these women and girls do not care where she comes from, just that she is there.

Responsibility begins and ends with the criminals who commit these acts, not collectively with the law abiding communities of this country. There is, however, a collective and individual duty to report what you suspect. Silence only breeds harm.

Jon Brown

**Head of Strategy and Development
(disabled children, sexual abuse)
NSPCC**

This excellent and groundbreaking qualitative study by the Muslim Women's Network UK into the sexual abuse and exploitation of Asian girls takes forward our understanding of this terrible crime. It also reminds us that fundamentally sexual abuse is driven by the abuse of power and that if we are going to make significant steps towards preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation is all its forms it is (primarily) men's abuse of power that needs to be fully understood, acknowledged and addressed through measures encompassing deterrence, treatment and prevention.

Through this study we learn and have confirmed to us that Asian and (mainly) Muslim girls and a smaller proportion of boys are also victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation, that offenders are often from the same ethnic background as their victims and that threats of and fear about shame and dishonour can effectively silence Asian Muslim victims. We are reminded that specific vulnerabilities such as disability and a lack of knowledge about sex and relationships can make victims particularly vulnerable to abuse and that abusers can come from a wide age range and that their motivations to abuse their power can be varied and sometimes complex.

This important study should act as a valuable template for further work of this type into abuse within different minority ethnic and faith communities. We should remember, as this study points out that child sexual abuse and exploitation occurs in all communities and that the most statistically significant group of perpetrators are white men. We should also remember that blowing away the secrecy of abuse through, providing information and education for children, parents and professionals and through supporting, enabling and empowering communities to do this provides some of the most effective anti septic to this public health problem that impacts, differentially, on us all.

Ratna Lachman

Director of JUST West Yorkshire

The Report produced by the Muslim Women's Network UK brings to life the voices and stories of the victims of child sexual exploitation that have hitherto been silenced and invisibilised. The insistence of the press and media and mainstream politicians to portray grooming as a mainly Asian-on-White crime has racialised and polarised the issue resulting in the needs of young victims from minority ethnic backgrounds being ignored.

The Report clearly highlights deep institutional failures at the heart of public sector responses to young minority ethnic victims. The accounts must provide a spur to those charged with safeguarding children to put the issue of victims' vulnerability at the heart of public and statutory policies.

I look forward to the government working with the Muslim Women's Network UK and committing real resources to developing a culturally-appropriate specialist victim-support infrastructure that translates the recommendations of the Report into action.

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra

Assistant Secretary General of Muslim Council of Britain

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) welcomes this vital piece of research carried out by the Muslim Women's Network UK. The report provides crucial empirical data which demonstrates the true extent and pervasion of sexual exploitation of non-white children. The MCB's own position and that of the many participants at its National Conference on "Protecting all Our Children" on 20th June 2013, is that CSE is an issue, not of race or religion, but of the most vile form of criminality. Perpetrators come from all races and religions. This report shows that victims also come from all races and religions. It points out the clear and present danger to Asian, and particularly Muslim, girls as they are less likely to report abuse due to family honour and shame. These girls are therefore more vulnerable. The recommendations proposed by MWNUK will serve as very important and effective tools in tackling this abhorrent crime. I pray we are all successful in our collective effort, amin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Contributors, Advisers and Supporters

We would like to thank the following people without whom this project and report would not have been possible:

- Those who contributed to the case studies – social workers, police, teachers, voluntary sector organisations, individual community activists, friends and relatives of victims

- Those who participated in research interviews even if they did not provide any case studies, including the young people who voiced their concerns and views

- Muslim Women's Network UK members who contributed information and case studies

- Board members and staff of Muslim Women's Network UK

- The anonymous donor for funding the design and print of this Report.

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- All those who read the draft Report and provided valuable feedback and guidance. These include: Sue Berelowitz (Deputy Children's Commissioner), Dr. Sandra S. Cabrita Gulyurtlu (Researcher on the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation by Gangs and Groups), Carlene Firmin (Principal Policy Adviser on Child sexual exploitation, victimisation and abuse), Nazir Afzal (Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England), Ratna Lachman (Director of Just West Yorkshire), Dr. Khursheed Wadia (Principal Research Fellow at University of Warwick and MWNUK Board member), Jon Brown (Head of Strategy and Development at NSPCC), and Alyas Karmani (Co-Director of STREET)

We are very grateful to all those who took time from their busy schedules to speak to us. They are all willing to support this research to bring greater attention to this issue and make further urgent action possible.

Project Team

Shaista Gohir MBE

MWNUK Chair, Lead Researcher and Author of Report

Shaista Gohir was the Executive Director of MWNUK between 2007-2011. In this role she transformed a small informal group of Muslim women into an independent national organization before joining the MWNUK Board and moving on to work for internationally renowned NGOs. Shaista is also a member of the highest decision-making committee, the International Advisory Group, of Musawah – a global Muslim women's movement promoting equality and justice.

Mussurut Zia

MWNUK General Secretary and Assistant Researcher on Report

Mussurut Zia has been involved in community cohesion, community enhancement and diversity for over thirteen years. Her work has included developing a project for disadvantaged women and children in a deprived area of Lancashire and working for Lancashire Constabulary on community cohesion. Through her community organisation, Practical Solutions, Mussurut raises awareness of forced marriage and honour based violence. She also currently chairs Lancashire Wide Network for Minority Ethnic Women.

Nazmin Akthar

MWNUK Vice Chair

Nazmin Akthar is a lawyer working in civil litigation including housing, family and immigration law; and supporting victims of domestic and sexual violence. Her LLM in Advanced Legal Practice focused on gender based violence and sexual offences and her Masters dissertation specifically focused on analyzing the laws of prostitution and the treatment of prostitute women by the UK legal system. Nazmin has volunteered for Independent Advocacy as a Citizen's Advocate assisting those with mental health and learning difficulties.

Dr. Khursheed Wadia

MWNUK Board Member and Editor of Report

Dr. Wadia is a researcher and teacher at the University of Warwick. She has researched on aspects of gender, ethnicity and politics and carried out studies on the political and civic engagement of migrant and Muslim women in Britain and France. She has also worked on migration and the integration of migrants in EU countries and has written reports for the EU Commission and short pieces in books and journals. Relevant books include *Women and Politics in France: 1958 – 2000* (with Allwood, Routledge, 2000), *Gender and Policy in France* (with Allwood, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and *Refugee Women in Britain and France* (with Allwood, Manchester University Press, 2010).

Dr. Iram Sattar

MWNUK Board Member and Treasurer

Dr. Sattar is a full-time GP with a keen interest in addressing inequalities in health and has helped set up an innovative way of treating patients in the community. She has volunteered for a medical charity to run free clinics for the homeless, non-documented migrants and commercial sex workers. She has also provided free health check stalls for the Muslim community in mosques and bazaars. Dr. Sattar is a board member of a homeless charity and enthusiastic about teaching and medical education and has co-authored a chapter in a book, "Learning to Consult".
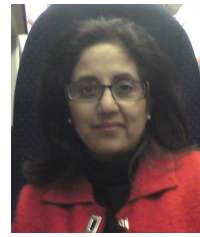
Robina Iqbal

MWNUK Board Member

Robina Iqbal is a community worker at Birmingham City Council and has worked with diverse communities for the past fourteen years. She has managed health and capacity building projects with third sector and voluntary organisations. Robina is the Chair of Sparkhill Asian Women's Association, a local grassroots based organisation working with women to address issues of empowerment, social isolation and language / cultural barriers. She has been also been a Board Director of WAITS (Women Acting in Today's Society) since 2009.

Faeeza Vaid

MWNUK Executive Director

Faeeza is the Chairperson of a grassroots group called "Sister 2 Sister", in Birmingham, which provides women and girls with opportunities to explore and learn through spiritual, intellectual, sports and social activities. After completing a law degree in 2005, Faeeza went on to do an Honours degree in Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, focusing on feminist theology and its relation to Islamic laws. She has also completed an LLM in Socio-Legal Studies and the topic of her dissertation was; "Notions of Scholarly Religious Knowledge Authorities in Muslim Societies and Muslim Women's Movements as Challenges to the Current Status Quo".

Shahin Ashraf

MWNUK National Network Coordinator

Shahin is a trained Counsellor and a Muslim Chaplain at the University of Birmingham and leads key theological debates on women's issues in the context of the Quran and Sunnah, and what it means to be a Muslim woman in 21st century Britain and Europe. Shahin also volunteers on a sexual violence helpline and provides training on this issue. As a human rights activist, Shahin has also worked in Pakistan and Afghanistan and spent 8 years in the US helping to set up and develop an international Muslim NGO.

ABOUT MUSLIM WOMEN'S NETWORK UK

Vision:

"Our vision is of a society where Muslim women have an effective voice and opportunity to contribute to society."

Mission:

"A UK Network of women to share knowledge, connect the voices, and promote the needs of diverse Muslim women".

ABOUT MUSLIM WOMEN'S NETWORK UK

Muslim Women's Network was formally established in 2003 with the support of the Women's National Commission (WNC), to give independent advice to government on issues relating to Muslim women and public policy. In 2007, Muslim Women's Network decided to establish itself as an independent organisation to ensure its autonomy from government. We renamed the group Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) and became a Community Interest Company in 2008. This was only possible because of seed funding granted by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, which has continued to support and recognise the importance of our work.

Our aim is to gather and share information relevant to the lives of Muslim women and girls in order to influence policy and public attitudes; to raise the profile of issues of concern to Muslim women; and to strengthen Muslim women's ability to bring about effective change in their lives.

At the time of writing this report, MWNUK has a membership of 500 that includes individuals and organisations with a collective reach of tens of thousands of women. Members are mainly Muslim women living and working in the UK while our non-Muslim members work with or on behalf of Muslim women. Our membership is diverse in terms of ethnicity, age, religious backgrounds, lifestyles, sexual orientation and geographic location and members are from a range of employment sectors including: higher and further education;; the voluntary sector and support services; health and legal professions; the police and criminal justice sectors; and local and central government.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of one of the founder members of the network, our former Chair Cassandra Balchin. She sadly lost her battle to cancer in July 2012. Cassandra was a great women's rights activist and worked tirelessly on advancing the rights of Muslim women. The advice and guidance Cassandra provided and her achievements cannot be measured. However, the positive impact of her work and research will be felt for generations. She has played a crucial role in planting the seeds of change in many activists. We are grateful for all the opportunities and words of wisdom she gave.

She will be deeply missed by everyone who knew her across the world. It was a great honour and privilege to have her as Chair of MWNUK. She will certainly remain in our memory forever.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- Conclusion
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

The purpose of this pilot study is to uncover the hidden experiences of Asian / Muslim girls and young women so that we may better understand how to support and protect them. It is important to stress that this study is not suggesting that sexual exploitation is more of a problem in Asian and / or Muslim communities. In any case the scope of this research does not enable us to make such propositions. In fact, this research shows that sexual grooming is not about race but about vulnerability, the exploitation of that vulnerability and opportunism.

By raising awareness that Asian / Muslim girls and young women are also victims of sexual exploitation, it is hoped that they will not continue to be overlooked by service providers and support agencies and that their experiences are also taken into account when determining new policies and resources to tackle this issue. It is important that vulnerable girls and young women from all backgrounds are helped and supported.

DEFINITION OF VICTIMS

The main focus of the work of Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) is highlighting the experiences of Muslim girls and women as well as promoting and protecting their rights. Given that this research was unfunded and that the largest Muslim population in the UK has its roots in Asia, the investigation mainly focused on case studies of Muslim children and young women from an Asian background. However, case studies of victims who were Asian but not Muslim or Muslim but not Asian have also been included.

WHY CARRY OUT THE RESEARCH?

Child sexual exploitation is clearly a complex and widespread issue that is not limited to one community. However, the media and public attention has mainly focused on White British female victims of sexual exploitation and Asian offenders, suggesting that that the motivating factors behind such cases of abuse are to do with race, faith and ethnic culture. We were concerned that this paradigm ignores the reality that sexual predators, regardless of their ethno-cultural or religious background, will target the most vulnerable and the most accessible children and young people.

We were also concerned that the needs of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) victims of sexual exploitation and in this case Asian / Muslim girls would be neglected during the development and delivery of appropriate intervention and prevention measures because their voices are unheard. MWNUK wanted to therefore contribute towards filling this gap in knowledge about BME victims and also act as a catalyst for similar investigations to be conducted in other minority communities. It is important we collectively build a more accurate national picture of patterns and work together to address the problem.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 35 cases were collected over five months. These were constructed after talking to key informants who had knowledge about the experiences of the victims – for example, they either knew them or had helped them. Case studies were not constructed on the basis of first-hand interviews with those who suffered sexual exploitation for practical and ethical reasons. A total of 73 people participated in the research interviews. We spoke to men and women from a range of sectors that included: social services, police, youth work, health care, education, justice and voluntary organisations. We also spoke to friends and relatives of victims. Finally we interviewed several Asian youth, both male and female, who provided useful insights into attitudes and behaviours amongst youth in secondary schools and colleges. Further details about the methodology are contained in the full report under section 2 of the report. A full profile of victims is contained in section 4 of the report and the case studies are presented in the Appendix.

The reach of the investigation was limited to the networks and connections of MWNUK. This meant not having equal reach into all Asian or Muslim communities, which may have resulted in the under-representation of victims from some ethnic backgrounds. As this research was not funded, there were no funds available for travel to many different locations to gather data; we therefore only managed to collect case studies from England. However, the cases are drawn from different geographical regions.

KEY FINDINGS

Of the 35 case studies collected, a number of cases were very detailed and among these, some information was too graphic to be included. The cases included examples of both online and street grooming. The cases gathered provide a snap shot of the experiences of Asian / Muslim girls who have been sexually abused. They exemplify the types of victim-offender models in existence, the forms of sexual abuse which takes place, the barriers victims face in disclosing their experiences to family and professionals and they also enable a construction of offender profiles and factors driving offending behaviour. That so many accounts of sexual exploitation were revealed was unexpected, considering time and resource constraints. We can only surmise that had this constituted a full-length rather than a pilot study, many more victims of sexual exploitation would have been discovered and demonstrated that the problem is more widespread in Asian / Muslim communities than initially expected. It is important to stress again that this phenomenon is not isolated to these communities.

Most cases dated back to less than 3 years, with some dating back 3 to 5 years and only a couple of case studies were between 5 to 10 years old. This indicates to us that the kind of sexual exploitation that is being reported is not a new phenomenon but that it may have worsened because it is unchallenged. It should be noted that our findings do not allow us to draw firm conclusions about the rate of incidence of child sexual exploitation. However, a community is unlikely to take action unless there is an awareness that a problem actually exists.

Key findings that emerged include:

- Asian / Muslim female victims are also vulnerable to grooming and sexual exploitation and are also being targeted and sexually exploited and include children, young persons (16 to 18 years) and adults.

- Asian / Muslim female victims are most vulnerable to offenders from their own communities as the overwhelming majority of the offenders were from the same background as the victims.

- Asian / Muslim children, young persons and adults have specific vulnerabilities associated with their culture which are exploited and also constitute a barrier to disclosure and reporting.

Scale of the Problem

It is difficult to ascertain the true scale of sexual exploitation within Asian / Muslim communities through this research alone due to the reluctance of victims to disclose and report and the methodological limitations related to data collection. However, the number of case studies found in such a short time and without dedicated resources is alarming. These 35 cases are only indicative of the scale of the problem and the reality may very well be that sexual exploitation is taking place (and has always taken place) at significantly higher levels.

Profile of Victims

During the investigation we were able to gather information about the characteristics of each victim. We found that the overwhelming majority of the victims were of Muslim faith with almost two thirds of British Pakistani heritage. We recognise that this may be to do with the way in which our case studies were obtained; i.e. through our organisational contacts and networks. The majority of girls being targeted were under 16 years old, mostly between 13 and 14 years old. Some case studies included accounts of young women over 16 (the age of consent to sexual activity). However, it was made clear to us (by the key informants from whom case study data was   obtained) that these young women were also victims of sexual exploitation because they were not consenting to sex and because their vulnerability was being exploited. Such vulnerabilities include disability, being from abroad, or fear of shame and dishonour.

In a number of the case studies, information was provided about the victim's familial and health background, which provided useful insights into any underlying issues. Many had underlying vulnerabilities, which increased their risk of being exploited.   Examples included sexual abuse within the family; mental health problems including self harm; the witnessing or suffering of domestic violence; disability; living in a dysfunctional family; and having strict or neglectful parents. One marked feature was that at least one third had suffered sexual abuse as a child. Another marked feature that needs further exploration was the targeting of those with a disability, such as a learning difficulty. Bullying and sexual harassment in schools and limited knowledge of sex also increased the vulnerability of Asian / Muslim girls to sexual exploitation. The findings showed that the girls are not being made aware of the predatory nature of some men and boys and the consequences of being lured by them – they are not being adequately warned in order to safeguard themselves.

Consequently, most victims had not received or been supported by long term after care and when the family became aware of any abuse they re-victimised them, which meant not believing them, blaming them, forcing them into a marriage, forcing them to leave the family home and in one case forcing the victim to have hymen repair surgery prior to a forced marriage. Other long term impacts of sexual exploitation and abuse included: mental health problems and feeling suicidal and self harming; post traumatic stress; health problems associated with drug and alcohol addictions; gynecological problems as a result of sexually transmitted infections and brutal rapes; unwanted pregnancy; living in fear; being isolated; and vulnerability to further abuse.

Profile of Offenders

The offenders who had sexually exploited Asian / Muslim girls in the case studies we gathered came from the following backgrounds: Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Afghani, and White. In some cases only information about their faith and not their ethnic background was available while in some cases only a broad category of their ethnicity was provided – we were told they were Asian but details of their specific ethnic group was not provided. A key finding was that the offenders in this study were almost always from the same ethnic background as the victim. For example, nearly two thirds of victims were of Pakistani background and in most of these cases the offenders were also Pakistani, even though in some cases offenders from other ethnic backgrounds were also involved. In cases involving Bangladeshi victims, the offenders were mainly Bangladeshi. In one case, a girl of mixed White-Asian heritage was groomed by a man also of mixed White-Asian heritage before being passed around to Pakistani men. In another case an Indian Sikh girl was sexually exploited by a group of men that included Indian men but who were of Hindu background.

However, there were some exceptions to this rule. For example, a Somalian girl was abused by Afghani and Pakistani men; a Pakistani girl was raped by an Indian Sikh man; and a Bangladeshi girl was abused by Pakistani men. Even in these exceptions, there was a shared background whether this was being Asian or having a shared faith. Also, one case study involved a White 11-year-old girl who was abused by Bangladeshi men. This has not been included in the main set of case studies as it falls outside the scope of this report which focuses on Asian / Muslim girls. However, we believe that it is worth mentioning having received information about it. Our findings indicate that sexual exploitation is not a race issue only involving Asian offenders who target White victims. Offenders do not respect girls or women of any race or faith. It is about vulnerability and exploitation of that vulnerability. It also appears that girls from offenders' own backgrounds are more accessible because of their shared heritage, culture, faith and ethnicity.

Perpetrators had no distinctive profile apart from sharing the same ethnicity as the victim. They varied in age from 15 year old school boys to pensioners aged 60 plus. They also included visibily observant men, respected members of the community, men connected to the restaurant and takeaway business, students, British-born men as well as men from abroad, married and single men, taxi drivers and drug dealers. There was also evidence of female involvement. The participation of girls and women often consisted of them assisting the offenders to getting to know the victim, witnessing abuse and even encouraging it.

Nature of Sexual Exploitation

Our research found that the sexual exploitation was often planned and organised rather than opportunistic. Several different sexual exploitation models of grooming were observed. The most common were the "older boyfriend" and "peer pressure" models, which appeared to be closely connected. Peers had the best access to victims. Younger men connected to schools and colleges, who were either pupils at the same school or had not long been out of the education system would groom girls before introducing them to older men. The "older boyfriend" followed a typical pattern of giving gifts and lots of attention. They also recognised that many of the girls were seeking escape from an often harsh, conservative and controlling environment and were purposefully exploiting these vulnerabilities through promises of love and marriage. Secret Islamic marriage ceremonies also emerged as a method to "trap" the victims. Other tactics used included: providing free access to drugs and alcohol; buying takeaway food; and impressing girls with rides in flashy cars. Perpetrators also encouraged girls to run away from home. This included manipulating girls to contact women's groups and the police and to report that they were in danger of a forced marriage or honour based violence so they would be found accommodation, making them more accessible to the offenders.

In some instances the victim was related to the perpetrator. A typical pattern observed was of the perpetrator sexually abusing the victim first and then progressing to introducing the victim to adult males outside the family. A few cases also involved online grooming. It seems likely that social media will play an increasing role in the targeting of children and young women, especially those that are harder to reach such as Asian and Muslim girls.

Offending behaviour mostly involved men operating in groups. A striking feature was that in 86% (30 out of 35) of the case studies, the victim was being passed around and prostituted amongst many other men, whether they were friends or loosely connected associates within a group or network. Our research also revealed that in some cases complex grooming "hierarchies" were at play. The physical abuse included: oral, anal and vaginal rape; role play; insertion of objects into the vagina; severe beatings; burning with cigarettes; tying down; enacting rape that included ripping clothes off; and sexual activity via the webcam. Sometimes the victims were drugged to such an extent by alcohol and drugs that they were unaware of the extent of their abuse and of the different ways in which they were being violated or by how many men.

The grooming and abuse of the girls and young women took place in various locations including vehicles, parks, flats, house parties, school, takeaway food outlets / restaurants, alleyways and hotels. Evidence of trafficking also emerged, which included movement within cities or towns, between nearby cities and towns and also between regions. Considering the numbers of men involved in the abusive groups and networks, the offenders appeared to be increasing their risk of being exposed and caught. Their apparent confidence arises from the belief they would not be caught because their victims were unlikely to report them.

Blackmail connected with shame and dishonour appeared to be a key and unique method of control for victims of Asian and Muslim backgrounds. Shame, dishonour and fear were used to blackmail the victims; e.g. threats of circulating images and recordings of the victims. Other methods of manipulation and mental control exercised by the offenders included: building a close attachment which was used then to emotionally blackmail the victim, such as promises of marriage; issuing threats of violence towards the victim and family; creating dependency on drugs and alcohol; and manipulation so the girl or young person does not recognize she is a victim.

Barriers to Disclosing and Reporting

A consistent feature in the case studies was that the victims were not willing to report their abusers even after they had escaped from the groups exploiting and abusing them. Common reasons for not reporting included blackmail connected to shame and dishonour; emotional attachment; dependency on drugs and alcohol; fear of violence; not being believed (especially by families) and getting into trouble; and not believing they are victims. It was clear that Asian girls and young women were considered a less risky option compared with girls from other backgrounds because they seemed less likely to report the abuse particularly because of shame and dishonour.

Although it was not clear in every case study as to how the girls managed to escape their situations, it was noted that in some cases they were able to break the link if they moved away from their town or city. However, even moving areas did not always prove to be a sufficient measure. Some victims had successfully broken away from the men who were sexually exploiting them once they were over the age of 16. They felt they managed to escape because their value to the offenders had dropped and they were being replaced by younger girls. The girls who had been successfully supported and were taken far away from the offenders to a safe place did not want to report the abuse because their experiences were too traumatic to talk about. They did not want to relive the ordeal or risk their families finding out.

Factors Driving the Sexually Abusive Behaviour

Nearly all of the offenders in the case studies were of Asian background and mainly of Islamic faith. Although perpetrators of sexual exploitation come from all ethnicities and faiths, it is important to determine whether there are any specific factors that link sexual abuse and exploitation to the offender's background. We attempted to find possible reasons by asking our informants (including those who did not contribute case studies) their views based on their knowledge and experience of sexual exploitation in the communities in question.

It was clear that one single factor cannot be blamed for causing deviant sexual behaviour in Asian and Muslim men. The likelihood is that sexually abusive behaviour is complex and a result of a combination of factors. Possible explanations provided during the course of the research included: societal influence; cultural influences; peer pressure; monetary gain and organised crime; wanting to boost reputation; familial child sexual abuse not being challenged; inadequate sex and healthy relationship education and influence of Bollywood films

Family and Community Responses

There appears to be little or no understanding among families and communities about sexual exploitation and there is a tendency to blame the female victims rather than the male offenders. Girls were being regarded as "temptresses" and assumptions were made about their lifestyles. Denial about sexual exploitation was also raised as a major concern. There is a tendency to prioritise protecting the "honour" of the community over the safeguarding of vulnerable girls. According to the findings of this pilot study, it does appear that silence in the name of avoiding shame and preserving honour, is allowing men to continue operating with impunity, therefore fueling sexual violence against girls and women further.

It was noticed that since the highly publicised prosecution cases involving Pakistani men in places such as Rochdale and Oxford, the debate on sex offending behaviour had started amongst some sections of the Pakistani and Muslim communities. However, this was taking place amongst activists and community organisations rather than the ordinary members of Asian and Muslim communities. Many of our informants felt that attitudes were mainly dismissive or disbelieving in relation to the issue of child sexual exploitation. Despite community attitudes and responses being criticised, most of those interviewed, particularly those from an Asian and Muslim background, strongly believed that community action was the best solution. However, there is concern that some families and communities may respond by imposing further social restrictions on Asian / Muslim girls instead of tackling the root cause of the problem, which is the attitude of boys and men towards women and girls.

Frontline Professional and Service Provider Responses

It was also noted that most of the case studies were identified through BME interviewees most of whom were from third sector minority organisations. Only 19% (7 out of 35) of the cases were collected from White interviewees working in mainstream agencies. Our small-scale pilot project was mainly restricted to our network of contacts, which could explain why most of our cases were from the BME third sector. However, there was a general consensus amongst the people interviewed that front line professionals were failing to identify many cases involving BME victims.

Although it was generally acknowledged that girls were not reporting their abusers, the police were accused of being reluctant to intervene in suspected cases involving Asian and Muslim victims due to cultural sensitivities. Schools were criticised for not intervening and raising awareness of the dangers of sexual exploitation early enough, not educating pupils about healthy relationships, not doing enough to combat sexual bullying and harassment. There were concerns that risk indicators were not being used by health professionals to recognize victims of sexual exploitation as perhaps Asian and Muslim girls were not considered vulnerable to sexual abuses. It was argued that frontline professionals and service providers need to find ways of reaching Asian / Muslim victims and of giving them the confidence and channels through which to disclose and report.

CONCLUSION

It was noticeable that in the majority of cases the offenders were from the same ethnic / faith background as their victims. This seemed like a calculated choice even though Asian and Muslim girls were in some ways harder to reach; e.g. because of parental control on their daily movements and lifestyle. A key driver for targeting Asian and Muslim girls could be that they were considered as a "less risky" option because they were unlikely to seek help or report their abuse due to "shame" and "dishonour" issues. This finding could indicate that Asian / Muslim girls are possibly more vulnerable than White girls to exploitation by predatory Asian / Muslim men.

Statistics already confirm that the majority of offenders are White and the majority of victims are also White. Our research shows that Asian offenders are more likely to target girls from their own communities. The intra-community model where the perpetrators and offenders are from the same ethnic background appears more common than the model promoted by the media where they are from different ethnic backgrounds. Our project findings lead us to put forward a different picture than the one presented by the media where Asian men supposedly only target and sexually exploit vulnerable White girls. It is clear that sexual predators of Asian background, like those from any other ethnic background, have no respect for women and girls of any race, faith or culture. This shows that child sexual exploitation is not about ethnicity or faith but about male attitudes towards women. A distorted picture of grooming and sexual exploitation is not only unhelpful but also dangerous - perceptions that grooming is an "Asian only" problem will result in offenders from other backgrounds being missed. It will increase the vulnerability of children and young people as the relevant professional services will only look out for one type of offender. The prevailing perception that only White girls are victims means that victims from BME backgrounds are already being missed and will continue being missed in future.

While we must be careful not to tarnish entire communities by providing a false perception that grooming is restricted to Asian communities, cases involving Asian offenders must not be swept under the carpet either. Those communities that are under the spotlight must also accept that they too have networks of pedophiles operating amongst them. If this issue is not addressed then the number of grooming cases in these communities will continue to rise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations are proposed to reduce the levels sexual exploitation and to improve means of identifying victims and of providing them with the necessary support.

National Plans to Tackle Sexual Exploitation

Relevant government departments (e.g. Department for Education, Home Office, Department of Health and Ministry of Justice) should produce national plans that include strategies for the prevention of sexual exploitation, to ensure better identification of victims, intervention and support for BME children and young people suffering from sexual exploitation. These plans should include dedicated funds to tackle sexual exploitation in BME communities.

Local Plans to Tackle Sexual Exploitation

Robust plans must be put into place to ensure that multi-agency and multidisciplinary approaches also work for BME victims and frontline agencies should implement processes and practices to ensure they proactively reach out to and identify BME victims. The Crown Prosecution Service and police force in each region should also work together to ensure they become more effective in bringing forward prosecution cases involving BME victims.

Awareness Raising and Training

Child sexual exploitation training must be provided to frontline professionals such as social workers, youth offending practitioners, youth workers, teachers, police and health workers that includes an understanding of sexual exploitation of BME victims and of different types of offender-victim models. This training should demonstrate links with other safe-guarding issues such as forced marriage and honour-based violence. Although most cases of forced marriage and honour-based violence are likely to be genuine, being alert to the possibility that offenders could be exploiting these issues is important. These issues may be used by offenders to encourage girls to run away from home and seek assistance from the police or shelter from women's groups so that they become more accessible.

Police and local authorities (especially Local Safeguarding Children's Boards) should work in partnership with local community organisations (e.g. religious institutions, women's groups, youth groups and other civil society organisations) to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and prevention / protection strategies amongst BME communities, including parents, families and young people. The learning gained from such partnership work should be cascaded down to parents and community organisations in order to build the resilience of Asian /Muslim children and youth and prevent them from becoming victims or offenders in online and street grooming circles.

Awareness raising about child sexual exploitation in schools should start before or upon starting secondary school. More should be done to address sexual harassment and sexual bullying within schools and colleges. Sex education in schools should include relationship education and foster respect for women and girls aimed to promote healthy relationships and a better understanding of what constitutes consent.

Culturally Sensitive Specialist Helpline

Third sector BME organisations should be supported to set up specialist sexual violence projects and helplines, as they are most likely to be a trusted point of contact for victims. In view of the findings in this report, a national specialist helpline should be set up for Asian / Muslim girls and women. Alternatively, a culturally sensitive national helpline that also covers a range of other issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual violence, domestic violence, mental health, discrimination and Islamophobia etc could also be considered. There is a gap at present, as no such national helpline exists.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Data collection needs to be improved and become consistent across agencies and across the country; e.g. in terms of recording detailed information on ethnicities rather than using generic categories such as "Asian" for both victims and offenders. This is vital to determine the scale and nature of sexual exploitation and to identify any trends that can help with intervention and prevention work.

Further Research

Further work needs to be carried out to establish and highlight different offender-victim models in different communities, to establish a fuller national picture. Research should also include the investigation of the sexual exploitation of BME victims with disabilities and of those categories deemed "vulnerable adults".

1. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Main Objective and Aims of the Research

The main objective of this Report is to provide a better understanding of the sexual exploitation of Asian / Muslim children and young women whose experiences have been largely hidden and hence unknown so that tailored interventions and prevention measures can be developed and implemented.

The primary aims of this research are to:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of the sexual exploitation of Asian / Muslim girls and young women;

- Demonstrate that Asian girls and young women, in common with girls and young women from other ethnic groups, can be prey to sexual exploitation;

- Identify additional specific vulnerabilities associated with the cultural background of Asian / Muslim girls;

- Raise awareness of Asian / Muslim victims amongst front line professionals and agencies so they can improve identification, support, intervention and prevention processes;

- Raise awareness among Asian / Muslim communities that sexual predators also exist in their midst so they are better prepared to tackle this problem.

The secondary aims are :

- Reinforce the fact that sexual grooming is not about race but about vulnerability, the exploitation of that vulnerability and opportunism;

- Challenge the myth that Asian / Muslim men avoid abusing girls from their own communities and only target White girls;

- Ensure new policies and resources do not neglect the needs of some victims of sexual exploitation and ensure that vulnerable girls and young women from all backgrounds are helped and supported.

1.2 Definition of Asian / Muslim Victims

This research gathers and analyses information on victims of sexual exploitation in Britain who are from:

- An Asian ethnic background (e.g. Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Afghani), who may or may not be of the Muslim faith; and / or

- A Muslim background who could be from any ethnic group.

The main focus of the work of Muslim Women's Network UK is highlighting the experiences of Muslim girls and women as well as promoting and protecting their rights. Muslims in Britain are the second largest religious group with 2.7 million people making up 4.8 per cent of the population (ONS 2011). They are diverse and originate from continents across the world from Africa, Asia, Middle East and Europe.

However, more than two thirds of Muslims are from an Asian background. The following 2011 Census statistics show the Muslim population according to some of their ethnic groups: Pakistani (38%), Bangladeshi (14.9%), Indian (7.3%) and Other Asian including Chinese (7.5%). Given that the largest Muslim population in the UK has its roots in Asia, this research focused on case studies of Muslim children and young women from an Asian background. Although people of Pakistani or Bangladeshi or Afghani (which falls under the Other Asian group in the Census) background were most likely to be Muslim, people with an Indian and "other Asian" background can have religious affiliations other than Islam; for example Sikhism, Hinduism etc.

Therefore we decided to also include case studies of all Asian victims of sexual exploitation regardless of religious background. Moreover when we came across cases of Muslim victims who were not of Asian background, we included them also. So this research focuses on victims of Asian background who may or may not be Muslim and on victims who are Muslim of backgrounds other than Asian.

1.3 Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation

This research utilises the same definition for child sexual exploitation as the one used by the Inquiry, launched in 2011, by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. The sexual exploitation of children and young people (CSE) under 18 is defined as that which:

"involves exploitative situations, contexts, and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterized in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social / economic and / or emotional vulnerability." (Department for Education 2012)

However, during the course of the research, we also discovered cases of sexual exploitation involving women over the age of 18 years old whose vulnerabilities were also exploited and which we felt were vital to highlight. We have therefore expanded the above definition to also include women aged over 18 and under 40 years of age. Vulnerabilities included learning disabilities, being a spouse from abroad and fear of shame and honour, which made the women prey to exploitation and which could indicate a particular pattern of exploitation.

1.4 Why Carry Out This Research?

Although the media and public attention has mainly focused on White British female victims of sexual exploitation, the myriad reports of the last few years on this subject have emphasised that all children and some young people are potentially at risk. Victims from a range of ethnic backgrounds have been identified in various pieces of research. According to the Office of the Children's Commissioner study into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) (Children's Commissioner, 2012), 28% of victims reported to the Inquiry were from black and ethnic minority groups of which 5% were recorded as Asian. The report acknowledged that BME victims were significantly represented in the pool of children and young people reported to the CSEGG Inquiry, but less is known about them and further research is required. In fact the report recognises that their risks are less well known to professionals and that BME children and young people may be overlooked and may not be identified as victims by statutory services. The potential under reporting of BME victims has also been echoed in the report by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, *Out of Mind, Out of Sight* (CEOP, 2011).

In view of the fact that all children are at risk, that there is a gap in knowledge about BME victims and that concerns were raised by MWNUK members about girls in Asian / Muslim communities being exploited, we decided to carry out a pilot project to find out about and report on their experiences.

Concern was also expressed that the media was only highlighting one offender-victim model. Despite the fact that most offenders and most victims are White British (Children's Commissioner, 2012), considerable coverage has been given to the sexual exploitation cases involving British Pakistani male offenders and White victims. This has resulted in public discourses which suggest that that the motivating factors behind such cases of abuse are to do with race, faith and ethnic culture. The presumption is that Asian men have no respect for White girls and consider them fair game for sexual exploitation, whereas Asian girls are respected and are therefore safe from such abuse. There is also a presumption that Asian girls are protected by virtue of associated cultural factors; for example, there is a presumption that Asian girls are confined to the home by family members with little or no interaction with men and therefore would not be at risk of exploitation due to these barriers. This paradigm ignores the reality that sexual predators, regardless of their ethno-cultural or religious background, will target the most vulnerable and the most accessible children and young people and makes an assumption that the lives of all Asian girls are the same.

There was a danger therefore that the needs of BME victims of sexual exploitation and in this case Asian / Muslim girls would be neglected during the development and delivery of appropriate intervention and prevention measures because their voices are unheard.

Prior to commencing the research, important anecdotal evidence had suggested that the offenders who were targeting Asian /Muslim girls were most likely from the latter's own backgrounds and communities. This created a dilemma for MWNUK. The disproportionate media coverage being given to British Pakistani offenders meant that sexual exploitation was being portrayed as a Pakistani, Asian or even a Muslim problem. Right-wing populist groups in particular have used this issue to fuel racism and Islamophobia, ignoring evidence that sexual exploitation occurs in every community and that the majority of offenders are White. As it was likely that our research would also highlight Asian offenders again, we were concerned that our data could be manipulated and misused to promote racism and anti-Muslim sentiments and that we could then face criticism from Asian / Muslim communities for placing them in the glare of public attention.

After careful consideration, we decided that it was important to prioritise the voices of Asian / Muslim female victims over and above the potential risks that the research results may pose to the reputation of Asian / Muslim communities. We also took inspiration from Quranic verse, which orders justice even if it means speaking out against one's own:

"O you who believe, stand firmly for justice as witnesses for God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin and whether it be (against) rich or poor." (Quran 4:135)

However, it is important to stress that this study is not suggesting that sexual exploitation is more of a problem in Asian and / or Muslim communities. In any case the scope of this research does not enable us to make such propositions. The purpose of this investigation is to uncover the experiences of Asian / Muslim girls and young women so that we may better understand how to support and protect them. We want to show that sexual exploitation exists in Asian / Muslim communities also in order to ensure that victims from these communities are not overlooked by service providers and support agencies.

1.5 Racialisation of Sexual Exploitation

The debate on street grooming and sexual exploitation has become polarized. For example disproportionate media coverage of Asian offenders is resulting in sexual exploitation being perceived as an "Asian only" problem. Some media commentators and politicians are suggesting that Pakistani or Muslim men are specifically targeting White girls because of their race. Some sections within Muslim communities are pointing out that most offenders are White and this problem is therefore disproportionately attributed to their communities, which could be leading to inaction.

However, all sides are forgetting about the victims and these attitudes are in fact, placing victims in greater danger as illustrated by the British National Party leaflet distributed in late 2012 (BNP). It was titled "Together we'll beat em" and is aimed at young white girls warning them against grooming gangs. However, they portrayed child sexual exploitation as a specifically Muslim issue and showed 45 photographs of only Asian / Muslim offenders on the leaflet. Racialising crime is not only irresponsible but also dangerous. Young White girls reading these BNP leaflets are being made to believe that sexual predators are only from these communities, leaving them vulnerable as they will be less vigilant at spotting offenders from other backgrounds, including White offenders.

Moreover, it is not just right-wing political parties but also other high profile public figures and some sections of the media that have also been giving disproportionate attention to the Asian offender-White victim sexual exploitation model. The following quotes express this message:

Kris Hopkins, Conservative MP for Keighley in the Bradford district:
"We shouldn't get away from the fact that there are gangs of Muslim men going round and raping white kids." (Lachman 2012)

Jack Straw, Blackburn Labour MP
"Some men of Pakistani origin see white girls as 'easy meat" (BBC News 2011)

Trevor Phillips, then Chairman of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission:
"Anybody who says that the fact that most of the men are Asian and most of the children are white is not relevant, I mean that's just fatuous." (Martin, 2012)

Academic, Ella Cockbain has examined the validity and foundations of grooming being constructed as a racial crime threat. Her analysis shows that the coverage by The Times newspaper, which portrayed grooming as a racial crime, was based on shaky foundations, i.e. anecdotes, opinion and spurious statistics. She also states, "victims' whiteness and offenders' otherness are both regularly overstated, while white offenders and ethnic minority victims are downplayed." Cockbain also questions whether grooming would have attracted so much attention if it was not for the promotion of this offender-victim model. She also provides an example of parents of victims being frustrated at the low level attention their trial received, because it involved mostly White offenders, compared with similar cases involving Asian offenders. She concludes that sexual grooming is not uniquely Asian and states,

"the full responsibility for child sexual exploitation should not be shifted on to the British Asian population absolving the indigenous majority from addressing the involvement of their own." She adds, "child sexual exploitation is not an Asian problem, it is everybody's problem." (Cockbain, 2013)

Labeling grooming as mainly a Pakistani, Asian or Muslim problem will therefore result in other offenders being missed. Implying that White girls are the only victims, will also mean that victims from other ethnic backgrounds will be missed. In fact this is already happening. The CSEGG states,

"Far less is known about individual characteristics of perpetrators of CSE than is known about victims. Public and media attention on the perpetrators of CSE has been largely focused on high profile court cases. These have primarily involved adult males of British Pakistani origin and White British female victims. Given the publicity surrounding these cases, it is clear that police and children social care services and other agencies have been effective in readily identifying perpetrators and victims with similar individual characteristics to those involved in such cases studies. Examples of this featured prominently in evidence provided at site visits and call for evidence submissions." (Children's Commissioner, 2012)

However, the Asian /Muslim community must not ignore the fact that the same report also revealed that the second largest category of perpetrators after White, were of Asian background:

"Individuals classified as White formed the largest group of perpetrators in both gangs and groups. But individuals, particularly those loosely recorded or reported as Asian are the second largest category of perpetrators." (Children's Commissioner, 2012)

Analysis of ethnicity data submitted to CEOP following their intelligence request for the assessment of localized grooming in the UK, showed that 30% of offenders were White, 28% were Asian and that the ethnicity was unknown for 38% of offenders. This figure is striking considering that Asians make up 7.5% of the population (ONS 2011). However, the CEOP report is also careful to state that no national conclusions can be drawn about ethnicity because it was reliant on a relatively limited number of areas where agencies had been proactive and where there had been substantial police investigations. Further exploration is therefore required on the ethnicity of offenders and whether this reflects the local demographics of particular contexts but this is outside the scope of this study.

Cases of child sexual exploitation among minority ethnic groups should not be swept under the carpet for fear of offending those groups either. Unfortunately, there is also denial in Asian / Muslim communities where the perception exists that only White girls are being groomed. Statistics confirming that the majority of offenders are White, are often used by some community leaders to suggest that Asian offenders are insignificant in number. This results in complacency and inaction, which means offenders continue to operate with impunity. Irrespective of the extent of child sexual exploitation, Asian / Muslim communities need to tackle the problem. If this issue continues to be overlooked, there is a danger that both the number of offenders and victims in these communities, will increase. Our network members are already reporting on increasing levels of violence, including sexual violence, against women and girls and therefore the need to act is apparent.

Child sexual exploitation is clearly a complex issue. As it appears to be a widespread issue, we hope that our research will encourage other minority communities to conduct similar investigations so that we can collectively build a more accurate national picture of patterns of exploitation and work together to address the problem.

2. METHODOLOGY

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) Board members decided to undertake a piece of qualitative research in early November 2012 and began sending out requests for information later in the same month.

As MWNUK is already under-resourced, there were no funds to carry out this study. MWNUK board members therefore offered to conduct this pilot project voluntarily while acknowledging its limitations in terms of constructing and applying a systematic methodology, using a multiplicity of methods to enable triangulation of results and in conducting the research in various locations across the UK. The limitations of the study are discussed below under 2.4.

2.1   Who did we speak to?

Due to the hidden nature of sexual exploitation, we were unsure if we would be able to find many cases. We did not try and directly speak with young people who had been exploited because this may not have been possible for a number of practical and ethical reasons, thus making it harder to find the case studies. Also, recounting and reliving experiences again may have caused the victims potential upset and trauma and in any case, many of the case studies are historical, i.e. they include events which have taken place in the past and the current whereabouts of victims involved in these case studies are unknown.

We started by contacting MWNUK members and other individuals already known to us and who may have been working with sexually exploited children or young people. We then adopted a snowballing approach asking our preliminary research interviewees for other contacts who might be able to assist us. Evidence was gathered either by speaking with the participants face-to-face or via telephone interview.

A total of 73 people participated in the research interviews. We spoke to men and women from a range of sectors that included: social services, police, youth work, health care, education, justice and voluntary organisations. We also spoke to friends and relatives of victims. Finally we interviewed several young Asian people, both male and female, who provided useful insights into attitudes and behaviours amongst youth in secondary schools and colleges.

Some of our interviewees wished to remain anonymous while others were happy to be identified. For consistency's sake, we decided not to name any of the people who were interviewed for this research.

2.2 Data Collection

Although we made enquiries across the UK, we only managed to collect case studies from England. However, our cases come from different geographical regions. To protect the identity of the victims, we do not specify towns or cities they are from nor do we name the individuals or organisation that provided us with the information. Not all details associated with each case have been provided in this report, both to protect the identity of the victim and ensure that the accounts were not too lengthy. However, the additional unreported information provided rich data and has been captured in other parts of the report. For example, young female women victims of sexual exploitation form the main focus of this study. However, our case studies also yielded considerable important information about perpetrators and we have therefore incorporated this information in sections 5 – 8. Following the interviews, our key informants were asked to review the exemplary cases they had provided in order to ensure they had been presented accurately and to their satisfaction.

The interviews were semi-structured and explored what key informants knew about the victims, as follows:

- Background of the victim including age, ethnicity, faith and vulnerabilities
- The offender's age, ethnicity, faith, numbers of offenders involved in any particular case
- How victims were groomed and information about abuse suffered
- How the victims came to their attention and how they escaped their situation
- What year the case studies were from
- Any other useful insights into sexual exploitation

A short questionnaire was also sent out to MWNUK members to ascertain whether they knew of any cases of sexual exploitation and if they did, whether they could provide the above information. A limited literature review was also carried out.

2.3   Quality of Case Studies

The cases collected are exemplary cases of sexual exploitation because they vary in detail. Some are very detailed while others are brief because the key informants only wanted to provide an outline of the case or had been unable to ascertain all the details. However, those that contained limited information were included in this report because they are considered important in showing patterns of exploitation and vulnerabilities of victims. These exemplary cases will be referred to as case studies in this report.

2.4   Limitations of the Research

The research was also affected by the following limitations:

1. As this research was not funded, its geographical scope is not UK wide - for example we were unable to collect case studies from Wales and Scotland.
2. Due to resource and time constraints, the study was carried out in a voluntary and part-time capacity. Additional time pressures included conducting the research over a short period of time because it was a pilot study.
3. We were unable to construct our case studies on the basis of first-hand interviews with victims for practical and ethical reasons. Instead we had to base our case study analysis on interviews with key informants who knew the victims or who had helped them.
4. The reach of the investigation was limited to the networks and connections of MWNUK. This meant not having an equal reach into all Asian or Muslim communities, which may have resulted in the under- representation of victims from some ethnic backgrounds.

3. SCALE OF THE EXPLOITATION

SCALE OF THE EXPLOITATION

It is difficult to ascertain the true scale of sexual exploitation within Asian /Muslim communities through this research alone. The findings show that victims from these communities are often reluctant to disclose and report the problem, hence making it difficult to establish potential numbers of girls and young women being groomed, sexually exploited and abused.

However, the number of case studies that the Muslim Women's Network UK has been able to find in such a short time and without dedicated resources is alarming. These 35 cases are only indicative of the scale of the problem and the reality may very well be that sexual exploitation is taking place at significantly high levels.

It is also a challenge to determine the potential numbers of offenders involved. The abuses reported as part of our case studies often took place over a period of a few months to a number of years. And in each case it was not uncommon for several men to be involved in the abuses and rapes. Even the victims were unsure about the extent to which they were abused, who was abusing them and how many were involved as some of them would be heavily numbed by drugs and alcohol. Considering the patterns of abuse that have emerged from the research and the number of case studies we have found, the potential numbers of offenders continuing to operate with impunity is of great concern.

"Considering the patterns of abuse and the number of case studies found, the potential numbers of offenders continuing to operate with impunity is of great concern"

4. PROFILE OF VICTIMS

PROFILE OF VICTIMS

During the investigation we were able to gather information about the characteristics of each victim such as age, ethnicity, faith, when the grooming started and underlying issues that may have increased their vulnerability. The findings are presented below.

4.1 Ethnicity / Faith

A breakdown of the ethnicity and faith of the 35 victims is as follows:

2 victims Asian
(sub ethnic groups unknown)

3 victims Muslim
(ethnicity not disclosed)

1 victim Indian
(Sikh)

1 was mixed heritage
(Asian / White)

1 victim Somalian
(Muslim)

1 victim Afghani
(Muslim)

21 victims Pakistani
(Muslim)

5 victims Bangladeshi
(Muslim)
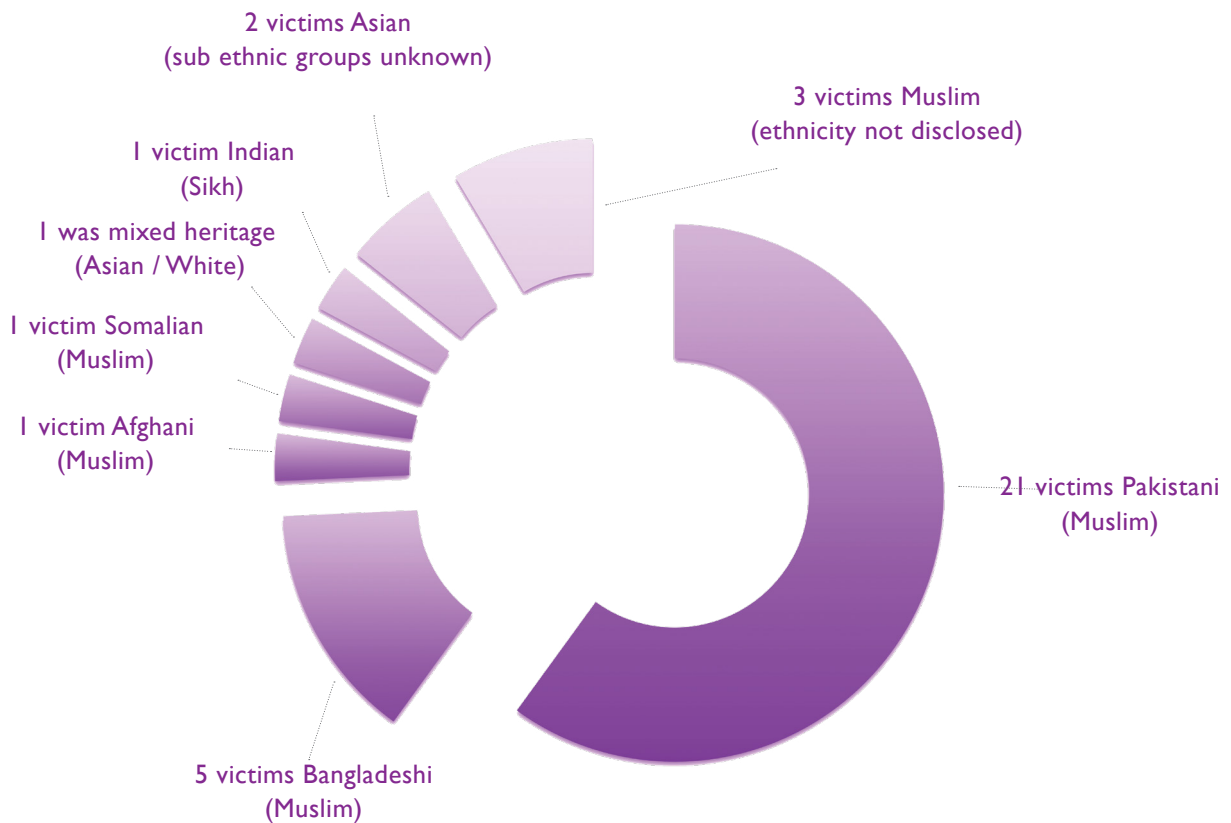
The overwhelming majority of the victims were of Muslim faith. Almost two thirds of the victims were of British Pakistani heritage. The fact that other ethnicities are under-represented may reflect the limited reach of our research and further investigation is recommended. However, the fact that a high proportion of the victims were from a Pakistani background cannot be ignored. Another striking feature was that in the majority of cases, the offenders were from the same ethnic background as the victim. So in the case of the Pakistani victims, the ringleader and abusers were mainly Pakistani; abusers from other ethnic backgrounds tended to be involved at a later stage.

This is interesting because all of the high profile cases of Pakistani abusers have involved White girls. This research demonstrates that offenders from Pakistani communities also target girls and young women who share their heritage. This then challenges the stereotype that has been popularized in the media and amongst the public that grooming is a race issue. One such stereotype is that these abusers find White girls "easy meat" and have less respect for them. The findings reveal that sexual predators from Pakistani communities are like those from any other communities in that they have no respect for girls and women of any faith or culture and will target those who are most accessible to them. In fact, in light of our findings, it could be strongly argued that girls from offenders own communities are perhaps more vulnerable. Their shared background makes them accessible; they are more easily controlled due to their fear of dishonouring their family; and their involvement is less risky because they are unlikely to report their abuse because of the shame and honour factor.

Recent research reports have stated that the majority of the offenders and victims are White, implying that the most common offending model is where the groomers / abusers and the victims are from the same background. Our findings support the predominance of this model. In almost all of the cases we gathered, the victims were from the same ethnic backgrounds as the main offenders. However, the media has given disproportionate attention to the Asian perpetrator – White victim offending model. The consequences of this are already being felt as BME victims are not being identified by front line professionals. The CSEGG report stated:

"Victims of CSE came from a range of ethnic backgrounds but children from ethnic minority backgrounds tended to be identified by BME, faith and statutory and voluntary sector youth justice agencies. BME victims were rarely identified by professionals from police forces or local authority children services, who were more likely to identify children, who were white British." (Children's Commissioner, 2012)

This observation may explain the lack of legal prosecutions involving Asian / Muslim victims. However, as discussed below, victims from these communities are also less likely to report their abusers. Despite the lack of victims coming forward, they are clearly also being failed by front line services that are not meeting their needs to enable more of them to seek help.

4.2   AGE RANGE

A breakdown in the ages of the victims when first targeted is as follows:

4 victims
over 18 years old
(including one in her 30s)

2 victims
17-18 years old

1 victim
16 years old

13 victims 13 or under
(the youngest was 9 years old)

5 victims
15 years old

10 victims
14 years old
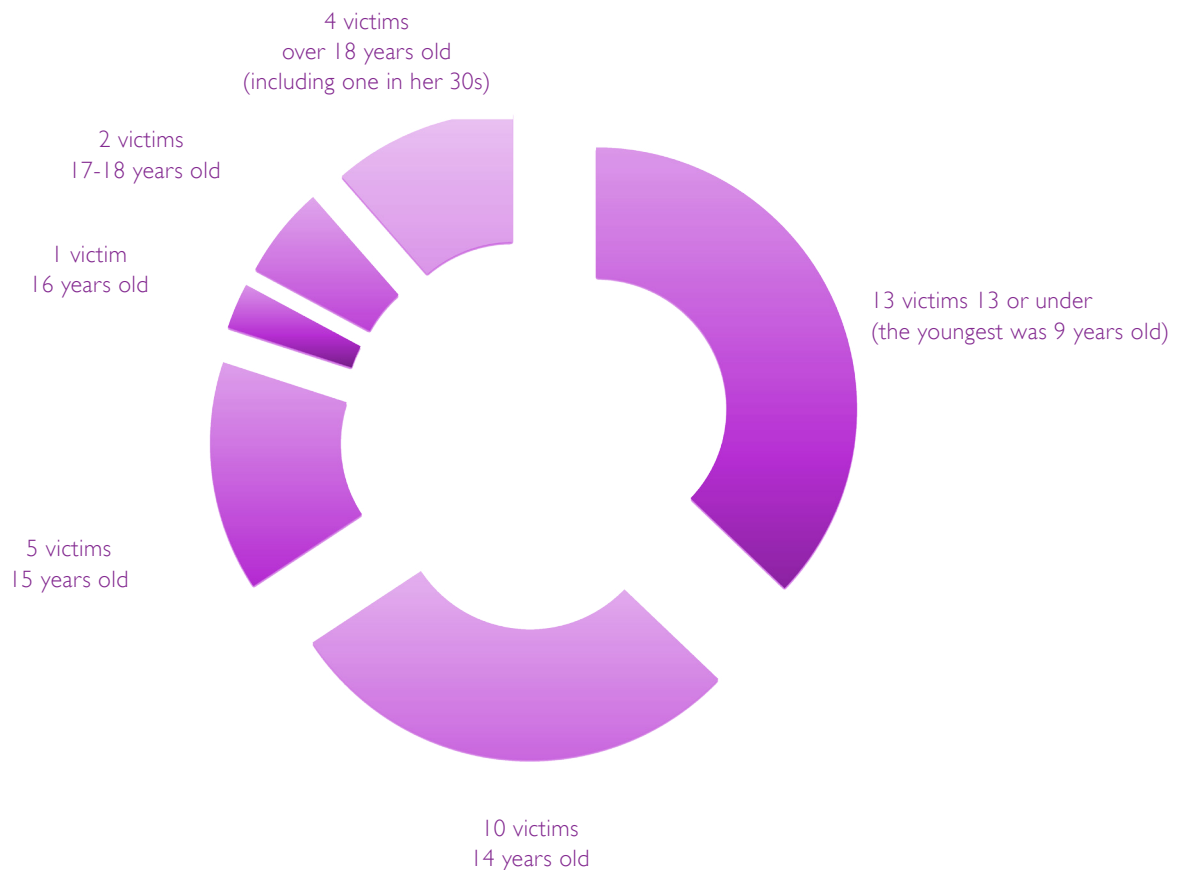
The overwhelming majority of girls being targeted were under 16 years old. Most of the victims tended to 13 to14 years old with a few younger ones, indicating the offenders' preference for younger victims. Interestingly Asian /Muslim girls at this age are not as accessible as those who are over 16 years old. Due to strict cultural norms, Asian girls at that age are less likely to go out in the evenings, attend parties or hang out in parks etc. Despite the fact that this age group is not easy to reach, the case studies show that offenders are finding ways around this and targeting them indirectly via schools. This may explain why schools featured in a number of the cases. The various methods employed to identify, contact and target these girls will be discussed in more detail below. This points to careful planning around gaining access rather than the opportunistic discovery of girls.

Even though some case studies included accounts of young women over 16 (the age of consent to sexual activity), it was clear that they were also victims of sexual exploitation because they were not consenting to sex. Sixteen year old Nabila (case study 24) had a disability, 17 year old Sumaira (case study 9) had learning difficulties, Koser who was in her 30s (case study 16) also had learning disabilities and was given alcohol, and Jamila (case study 10) who was in her mid-20s was being coerced through emotional blackmail. Osma (case study 28) feared her brother-in-law and Ghazala (who was a spouse from abroad) was being repeatedly raped and passed around by her brother-in-law (case study 32). These examples demonstrate that females of any age can be sexually exploited and that the most vulnerable are intentionally selected.

4.3 Underlying Vulnerabilities

In a number of the case studies, information was provided about the victim's background, which provided useful insights into the underlying issues that made them susceptible. In one third of the case studies, this information was not available or not given and in a few of these cases, child sex abuse was strongly suspected. However, for two thirds of the case studies where information was provided, it was apparent that underlying vulnerabilities had previously existed which increased their risk of being exploited. Examples included sexual abuse within the family; mental health problems including self harm; the witnessing or suffering of domestic violence; disability; living in a dysfunctional family; risk of forced marriage; having strict or neglectful parents; or being a spouse from abroad. These underlying factors are likely to have increased the victims' vulnerability to sexual exploitation. One marked feature was that one third of the victims had suffered child sex abuse. The true figure could be higher because full information of all the victims' history was not available. Interestingly when we requested case studies about sexual exploitation, we were inundated with case studies about child sexual abuse that included abuse within families; in mosques / madrassas and during family trips abroad to the Indian sub-continent by members of the extended family. We were deeply disturbed at the ease with which these cases had been uncovered, without even looking for them, as it perhaps indicated the levels of abuse taking place within the family context. Unfortunately, we did not have the resources to log these accounts, but wish to further pursue this line of research in the future.

During the interviews, concerns were raised that limited knowledge of sex was also increasing the vulnerability of Asian / Muslim girls to sexual exploitation. It is common practice for Asian / Muslim parents to withdraw girls from sex education lessons at school. However, it was felt that this impacted on their capacity to understand the significance of consent to sexual activity. Also girls were not being made aware of the predatory nature of some men and boys and the consequences of being lured and enticed by them. Girls wanting to explore their new found freedom upon starting secondary school were not being adequately warned about safeguarding themselves.

Some girls also experienced bullying and sexual harassment at school, which further increased their vulnerability. According to some of the interviewees, bullying was sometimes planned to isolate them so that they could be subsequently befriended by their peers who would then facilitate their introduction to an older male who would go on to sexually abuse and exploit the victim. One young male who contributed to the research provided an example of this type of bullying that he witnessed in school. He said a girl would be selected by some boys and told *"you are ugly"* and that *"no boy would go with you"*. He explained that this often resulted in the girl feeling insecure and wanting to "prove herself", which made her willing then to date one of the boys and engage in sexual activity.

There was evidence that girls and women with disabilities were also being targeted. Their impaired reasoning indicates how much harder it is to reach and help victims with learning difficulties because of their lack of understanding about what is happening to them. More work to identify the extent of exploitation of children and young people with disabilities is therefore required.

VULNERABILITIES:
- sexual abuse within the family
- mental health problems including self harm
- witnessing or suffering domestic violence
- disability
- living in a dysfunctional family
- risk of forced marriage
- having strict or neglectful parents
- limited knowledge of sex

4.4 Impact of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

We were unable to glean sufficiently detailed knowledge to learn about the long term psychological and physical impacts on the health of the victims. It did appear that most victims had not received long term after care. Some of the consequences faced by the victims included the following:

• Mental health problems including feeling suicidal and self-harming;

• Post traumatic stress disorders;

• Living in fear;

• Gynecological problems as a result of sexually transmitted infections and brutal rapes;

• Health problems associated with drug and alcohol addictions;

• Pregnancy;

• Forced marriage;

• Forcible hymen repair surgery;

• Abuse by family;

• Disownment by family;

• Loss of faith;

• Being taken abroad against one's will;

• Isolation from friends;

4.5 Male Victims

Although we were only seeking information specifically about female victims of South Asian / Muslim background, a small number of those interviewed also raised concerns about boys being groomed and exploited.

Some evidence of the exploitation of Asian boys did emerge. However, we were unable to obtain detailed case studies. This is an area that also needs further exploration. One interviewee provided an example of an offender who was in his 20s, who had been gang raped by older men when he was about 14 years old. As he grew older, he became involved in grooming girls and in introducing them to older men to be abused. He also participated in the abuse.

Other examples included boys being filmed engaging in sexual activity and then being blackmailed and coerced into criminal activities that included carrying drugs and abusing girls. One interviewee had a couple of referrals where Muslim boys were displaying "concerning risk indicators" but they remained secretive and did not disclose any information.

It was pointed out that even though male sexual exploitation would be harder to uncover because of the stigma and masculinity issues involved, important risk indicators were being missed. One informant explained:

"When under age teenage boys are hanging around with much older men who are buying them expensive phones and games, it is usually not viewed with suspicion and is ignored."

Another contributor said: *"We need to get better at identifying inappropriate relationships - not just between older men and young girls but also between older men and boys."*

We were also told that boys were not necessarily being groomed to carry out sex offences but to help find vulnerable girls. It was mentioned that some boys were being been given gifts such as mobile phones and money to provide information. One interviewee cited an example that had been provided by one of the victims:

"Some boys at secondary schools are being paid anything from £100-£150 to identify vulnerable girls in their schools. They are expected to befriend them and introduce them to the older men outside school or in a park."

Further research is clearly needed to better understand the sexual exploitation of Asian and Muslim boys and their role in the sexual exploitation of Asian and Muslim girls.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Asian / Muslim female victims are most vulnerable to offenders from their own communities
- Almost two-thirds of victims were from a Pakistani background
- The overwhelming majority of victims were under 16 years old and mostly between 13 and 14 years old
- At least one third of victims had suffered sexual abuse as a child

Table: Summery of Victim Data

No.	NAME (pseudonym)	ETHNICITY	FAITH	AGE GROOMING BEGAN	UNDERLYING ISSUES	USE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL BY OFFENDERS	NATURE OF EXPLOITATION
01.	Farhah	Pakistani	Muslim	12	Violence in family	Yes	Group
02.	Saima	Pakistani	Muslim	15	Violence in family	Yes	Group
03.	Rehana	Pakistani	Muslim	13	Child sexual abuse	Yes	Group
04.	Imaan	Not disclosed	Muslim	Under 13	Child sexual abuse	No	Group
05.	Aisha	Not disclosed	Muslim	14	Child sexual abuse	No	Online
06.	Safa	Not disclosed	Muslim	9	Child sexual abuse	No	Group
07.	Nazia	Bangladeshi	Muslim	14	Bereavement in family	Yes	Group
08.	Fawzia	Pakistani	Muslim	14	Unknown	No	Group
09.	Sumaira	Pakistani	Muslim	17	Child sexual abuse and learning disability	No	Group
10.	Jamila	Pakistani	Muslim	Mid 20s	Unknown	No	Group
11.	Anisa	Pakistani	Muslim	14	Unknown	Yes	Group
12.	Khadija	Somalian	Muslim	12	Unknown	Unknown	Group

No.	NAME (pseudonym)	ETHNICITY	FAITH	AGE GROOMING BEGAN	UNDERLYING ISSUES	USE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL BY OFFENDERS	NATURE OF EXPLOITATION
13.	Abida	Bangladeshi	Muslim	11	Child sexual abuse	Unknown	Online and Group
14.	Hasina	Bangladeshi	Muslim	10	Dysfunctional family	Yes	Group
15.	Rokeya	Bangladeshi	Muslim	14	Child sexual abuse	Yes	Pair
16.	Koser	Pakistani	Muslim	30s	Domestic Violence and Learning disability	Yes	Group
17.	Rani	Asian	Unknown	13	Unknown	No	Online
18.	Amina	Bangladeshi	Muslim	14	Dysfunctional family	No	Group
19.	Tabassam	Pakistani	Muslim	13	Living in foster care	Yes	Group
20.	Maryam	Pakistani	Muslim	14	Child sexual abuse	No	One man / girl pair
21.	Samina	Pakistani	Muslim	15	Unknown	Yes	Group
22.	Parveen	Pakistani	Muslim	9	Child sexual abuse	No	Group
23.	Amana	Pakistani	Muslim	15	Unknown	Unknown	Group
24.	Nabila	Pakistani	Muslim	16	Disability	Unknown	Group
25.	Simi	Indian	Sikh	15	Unknown	Yes	Group

No.	NAME (pseudonym)	ETHNICITY	FAITH	AGE GROOMING BEGAN	UNDERLYING ISSUES	USE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL BY OFFENDERS	NATURE OF EXPLOITATION
26.	Sam	Asian	Muslim	13	Unknown	Unknown	Group
27.	Sajida	Afghani	Muslim	17	Unknown	No	Online
28.	Osma	Pakistani	Muslim	28	Unknown	No	Group
29.	Nosheen	Pakistani	Muslim	14	Unknown	Yes	Group
30.	Karima	Bangladeshi	Muslim	14	Neglected	Yes	Group
31.	Shabana	Mixed heritage (White / Pakistani)	Unknown	13	Bullied due to being mixed race	Yes	Group
32.	Ghazala	Pakistani	Muslim	Over 18	Isolated - Spouse from abroad	No	Group
33.	Asha	Pakistani	Muslim	12	Unknown	Unknown	Group
34.	Halima	Pakistani	Muslim	14	Dysfunctional family	Unknown	One older man
35.	Zara	Pakistani	Muslim	13	Threat of forced marriage at home	Yes	Group

5. PROFILE OF OFFENDERS

5.   PROFILE OF OFFENDERS

5.1   Ethnicity / Faith

Although the principle focus of our investigation was finding out about Asian / Muslim female victims, some information was also provided about the offenders. The offenders that had sexually exploited Asian / Muslim girls in the case studies we gathered came from the following backgrounds: Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Afghani, and White. In some cases only information about their faith and not their ethnic background was available – for example in case studies 4,5 and 6, the offenders were Muslim but no information was provided on ethnicity. In other cases, a detailed breakdown of their ethnicity was not provided – for example in a few cases we were only told that the offenders were Asian.

Our case studies showed that the vast majority of the perpetrators were men from the same ethnicity and faith as the victims as illustrated in the table. This indicates that girls are being targeted for being vulnerable but also because they are more easily accessible. This finding is important, as there is a general perception that when perpetrators are of Pakistani background they target White girls for exploitation. For example, nearly two thirds of victims were of Pakistani background, and in most of these cases, the offenders were also Pakistani even though in some cases, offenders from other ethnic backgrounds were also involved. In cases 7, 13, 14 and 15 the victims were Bangladeshi as were the offenders, whether they initiated the grooming or were introduced to the victims at a later stage. Shabana, of dual White / Asian heritage, was groomed by a man of dual White / Asian heritage before being sexually exploited by Pakistani men (case study 31). Simi who was of Indian Sikh was sexually exploited by Indian men but of Hindu background (case study 25).

However, there were some exceptions:

*   Simi (of Indian Sikh background) was also abused by Afghani and Pakistani men (case study 25);
*   Khadija was of Somalian background was abused by Afghani and Pakistani men (case study 12);
*   Maryam was Pakistani but was raped by an Indian Sikh man (case study 20);
*   Karima was of Bangladeshi background and abused by Pakistani men (case study 30);
*   White offenders were involved in abusing Asian /Muslim victims, for example in case studies 1 and 7.

Even in most of the exceptions, there was a shared background whether this was being Asian or having a shared faith. In our case studies there was a close correlation between the victims' and offenders' backgrounds whether that was ethnicity, faith or both.

Even though Pakistani male offenders featured in almost two thirds of the cases, the research also highlighted offenders from other backgrounds, which should be explored further as this highlights that sexual exploitation is not a "Pakistani only" problem as perceived by the media and others. For example, four case studies involved Bangladeshi offenders (cases 7, 13, 14 and 15). Also, one detailed case study provided by an interviewee involved a White 11 year old girl who was also abused by Bangladeshi men. This was not included in the main set of case studies as it fell outside the scope of this study which focuses on Asian / Muslim girls. However, we feel it is important to mention it here. The victim was emotionally abused by her father and then groomed by his friends who were of Bangladeshi heritage. The men were in their 20s, 30s and some were much older. The victim was pressurised into having sex with one of the men who she believed was her boyfriend. She was then raped in a takeaway by the chef and then sexually exploited and passed around by the other offenders. Her abuse lasted for a few years. The victim is now in her 20s and some of the offenders are respected in their communities, owning businesses and filling respected public roles.

The media's coverage of the sexual exploitation cases involving British Pakistani male offenders and White victims highlights only one perpetrator-victim model, which is that of the Asian / Muslim male and White girl / young woman model. However, when we spoke to some mainstream agencies, we were told that most of the cases they dealt with involved White offenders and White victims. The intra-community model when the perpetrators and offenders are from the same ethnic background appears more common and is substantiated by our research too.

Perhaps girls from their own background were easily accessible because of their shared heritage, culture, faith and ethnicity. Also they were easier to control through blackmail due to the importance given to honour and shame within Asian and Muslim communities. However, child sexual exploitation should not be connected to the religion of the offenders because to our knowledge, no faith has condoned sexual abuse. But some offenders appear to lead double lives – outwardly and visibly appearing religious while conducting deviant practices that set them against the principles of their faith.

5.2 Social Background

Our research shows that the offenders did not have a specific profile and ranged from teenage boys to old men. Schoolboys aged 15 and upwards were involved in sexual bullying at school or acted as facilitators, helping to identify vulnerable girls and then introducing them to older men. Men in their late teens upwards were not only involved in rape but also in arranging payments for sex and introduction to other men. The range of perpetrators described by the victims varied from teenagers to pensioners and from those with little education to well educated professionals. They also included visibly observant men including one faith leader, respected members of the community, men connected to the restaurant and takeaway business, students, British-born men as well as men from abroad, married men and single men, taxi drivers, and drug dealers.

An issue, which came up repeatedly, was that girls were initially targeted by younger men connected to schools and colleges – i.e. either they were pupils or had not long been out of the education system. Some girls said they had been taken to different locations within and outside their towns and cities. This is perhaps an indicator of the size of these networks and groups of pedophiles at work. One very worrying account by a young man illustrated how wide and loose these networks are and also the potential numbers of people involved:

"My mate called me and said 'Bro I have a surprise for you, come over to this house.' When I got there 15 of them were sitting in the living room. My mate told me to go upstairs for my surprise. When I went into the bedroom, another friend was doing this girl (she was a 20 years old of Pakistani background). The lads went up one by one and took turns and while they were waiting they were calling their mates, cousins and uncles to come over and join in and showing off. Others turned up too including two older men who were taxi drivers, who went straight upstairs. One older man said I am going to call my son over so he can practice on her and later his 15-year-old son arrived in his uniform. Everyone took turns and it took 6 hours. I did get concerned and said, 'the girl is going to get broke, who will marry her?' The girl is not paid but she gets looked after, she is given food and the boys make sure she gets home safely if it gets late. There are set days Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays but some of my friends don't like doing stuff like that on a Friday because it is Juma (holy day) and they go mosque."

He then went on to recount another similar story of a group of six boys in their late teens calling their friends to come and have sex with a girl they had in a house. He explained that often the girl went out with one of the boys, who then passed her on to another friend who then passed her on until everyone starts "sharing" her.

5.3 Connection to Victims

In most cases, it appeared that the offenders were unknown to the victims before being targeted. However, some offenders were related to the victim – initially grooming and sexually abusing them before introducing them to friends and other men outside of the family. Examples have been provided in section 6.4

5.4 Female Involvement

There was evidence of female involvement. The participation of girls and women often consisted of assisting the offenders to get to know the victim, witnessing abuse and even encouraging it:

- Saima went to the park with her male and female friends but she was the only one that was raped (case study 2);

- Imaan was being abused by her Quran teacher and his wife even counselled her to continue when she started to object (case study 4);

- Then there was Nazia who introduced all three of her sisters to the web of sexual exploitation (case study 7);

- When Sumaira started refusing to meet her boyfriend, another young woman at the refuge would inform him she had gone out and he would then abduct her from the street and gang rape her with his friends (case study 9);

- Khadija took one of the new girls at school to the flats of offenders so she could be abused (case study 12);

- Two female victims introduced Rokeya to a drug dealer (case study 15);

- Amina was manipulated into introducing two of her friends to her abusers (case study 18);

- An older female groomed Tabassam and then introduced her to her "boyfriend" (case 19);

- Maryam's friend was offered money to take her to a house party where she was raped (case study 20);

- Nabila introduced three of her friends to the group who were also sexually exploited (case study 24).

KEY FINDINGS

The offenders were:
- Almost always from the same ethnic background as the victim.
- Afghani, Bangladeshi, , Indian, Pakistani and White.
- Pakistani male offenders featured in almost two thirds of the cases.
- Varied in age, from 15 year-old school boys to pensioners aged 60

Table: Summery of Offender Data

CASE STUDY	BACKGROUND OF VICTIM	BACKGROUND OF OFFENDER WHO INITIATES GROOMING	BACKGROUND OF OTHER OFFENDERS IN GROUP
1. Farhah	Pakistani	Pakistani	Afghani, Pakistani, and White
2. Saima	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
3. Rehana	Pakistani	Pakistani	Afghani, Bangladeshi and Pakistani
4. Imaan	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)
5. Aisha	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)
6. Safa	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)	Muslim (ethnicity not disclosed)	Unknown
7. Nazia	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi	Asian and White
8. Fawzia	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
9. Sumaira	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
10. Jamila	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
11. Anisa	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
12. Khadija	Somalian	Unknown	Afghani and Pakistani
13. Abida	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi
14. Hasina	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi
15. Rokeya	Bangladeshi	Bangladeshi	Unknown
16. Kosar	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
17. Rani	Asian	Asian Muslim (ethnic sub group not disclosed)	Not applicable

CASE STUDY	BACKGROUND OF VICTIM	BACKGROUND OF OFFENDER WHO INITIATES GROOMING	BACKGROUND OF OTHER OFFENDERS IN GROUP
18. Amina	Pakistani	Unknown	Afghani and Pakistani
19. Tabassam	Pakistani	Pakistani	Unknown
20. Maryam	Pakistani	Indian (Sikh)	Not applicable
21. Samina	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
22. Parveen	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
23. Amana	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
24. Nabila	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
25. Simi	Indian (Sikh)	Unknown	Afghani, Indian and Pakistani
26. Sam	Asian	Asian	Unknown
27. Sajida	Afghani	Afghani	Afghani
28. Osma	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
29. Nosheen	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
30. Karima	Bangladeshi	Pakistani	Pakistani
31. Shabana	Asian / White (dual heritage)	Pakistani	Pakistani
32. Ghazala	Pakistani	Asian / White (dual heritage)	Pakistani
33. Asha	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
34. Halima	Pakistani	Pakistani	Pakistani
35. Zara	Pakistani	Unknown	Pakistani

6. NATURE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Most common grooming models observed were the 'older boyfriend' and 'peer' models with victims initially targeted and groomed by younger men connected to schools and colleges, who were either pupils at the same school or had not long been out of the education system, before being introduced to older men.

NATURE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

6.1 Overview

Our research found that the sexual exploitation was often planned and organised rather than opportunistic. Moreover, the abuse lasted from a few months to a few years and some victims remain trapped and difficult to reach. The sexual exploitation models of grooming that we observed included:

- Online by strangers (4 cases);

- By an older boy friend (12 cases);

- By peers (male or female) at school (6 cases);

- Opportunist i.e. sexual exploitation without grooming (1 case);

- By a family member (5 cases);

- Older female – (1 case);

- By adult peers i.e. adult female groomed and exploited by other adults (2 cases);

- Unknown situations (4 cases in which any of the above models could have been adopted).

The most common grooming models observed were the "older boyfriend" and "peer pressure" models. These two models appeared to be closely connected. For example, the early stages of the grooming may have been started by peers (male or female), similar in age to the victim. In some cases this progressed with the victim being introduced to her "older boyfriend'" who then sexually exploited her. The next two common grooming models were online befriending by strangers and family members sexually abusing the victim before introducing her to other adults outside the family. When developing tailored awareness raising prevention toolkits and training, these grooming models should also be taken into consideration.

86% of the cases involved offenders operating in groups.

From the data gathered a number of grooming strategies adopted by offenders can be identified. These include: lone male grooming; men grooming in pairs; grooming by groups of men. However, a striking feature was that in 86% (30 out of 35) of the case studies, the victim was being passed around and prostituted amongst many other men, whether they were friends or loosely connected associates within a group or network. Some victims disclosed they had witnessed money being exchanged. Other victims did not disclose this but sexual activity in exchange for money was strongly suspected. It was quite possible that some victims were not even aware that their boyfriends were making money from them. One male youth said: "*The girls sometimes don't even know their so called boyfriend is getting paid by others so they can have sex with her.*" The research also revealed that some victims were being trafficked between different towns, cities and regions.

We have summarised a number of the case studies as not all our informants wanted graphic details of the physical assaults to be included in this report. However, the physical abuse included: oral, anal and vaginal rape; role play; insertion of objects into the vagina; severe beatings; burning with cigarettes; tying down; enacting of rape such as ripping clothes off; and sexual activity via webcam. Sometimes the victims were drugged by alcohol and drugs to the extent that they were unaware of the scale of abuse, or the different ways in which they were being violated or by how many men.

Our research also revealed that in some cases, complex grooming "hierarchies" were at play. This kind of analysis and opinion was supplied additionally by our interviewees rather than being included in information supplied on individual case studies.

A typical grooming hierarchy would operate as follows. Grooming of the victim (often paid or coerced) by peers starts at school where she is introduced to an older boyfriend. The older boyfriend then starts a relationship with the victim or rapes and blackmails her and then introduces her to other more powerful men in the hierarchy. These men either pay to have sex with the victim or an exchange of favours may take place between them and the victim's boyfriend. These men also take the victim to sex "parties" organised by them and where the victim is passed on to other men for sex. There is normally an all-powerful man at the top of the grooming / exploitation hierarchy who arranges for other men to be at these "parties" where sex and accommodation is provided in return for payment.

6.2 Older Boyfriend Model

The ages of the boyfriends varied from a few years older to significantly older than the victim. The prevalence of the "older boyfriend" model is not surprising. Although grooming often followed a typical pattern where gifts and lots of attention were offered to the victim, the overwhelming majority of our interviewees, particularly those from Asian and Muslim backgrounds, stated that the biggest pulling factors for the girls was "love" and promise of marriage: *"Marriage is a big thing for young girls."* Another said: *"The prospects of either an arranged or forced marriage means they are rushing to date the first boy that gives them attention."* It was also reported: *"Asian girls thrive for love and affection."* It appears that for some girls finding their own partner is a way of escaping an arranged or forced marriage and because they have little opportunity to meet boys (due to cultural restrictions or strict backgrounds), they readily get into relationships. Some comments were also made about the behaviour of girls: *"Some of the girls purposefully dress up especially to seek attention from the boys"* and *"I saw girls egging the boys on – they wanted to get noticed."*

It seems that some Asian girls' desire for "love and marriage" is specifically being exploiting by the men and the girls are unaware and naïve about the possible dangers and consequences of their choices. Here are a few examples of how young people saw this:

"When I was at secondary school, girls as young as 13 would be getting chatted up by the older boys at school who were about 17 while other girls were talking to boys in their late teens, early 20s outside of school. I used to hear stories of how they would be pressurised into having sex or involved in other sexual activities."

"I heard of horrible stories (at school) of the 'link ups' with the boys – they would aggressively, sexually abuse them and exploit them."

"It is easy to trap girls just have to tell 'em you love 'em and will marry 'em. Some of the lads are doing secret 'nikahs' [marriage ceremonies] to make sure da' link don't get broken – that way you don't lose the link with the girl. Then they offer their wives around. I have heard people I know say, hey bro do you want my wife?"

> Offenders recognised that many of the girls were seeking escape from a harsh, conservative and controlling environment and purposefully exploited these vulnerabilities through promises of love and marriage

6.3 Peer Pressure Model

The dominance of the "peer pressure" model was also not surprising as one's peers, who are similar in age, are most likely to have the opportunity to engage with potential victims, making grooming easier.

One noticeably used tactic was sexual bullying and harassment, which was used to give the girl a "bad reputation" amongst her friends and other peers. This would then result in the victim becoming isolated so that the abusers could fill in this gap and become her only friends. Such scenarios emerged in our research in the following cases:

- Farhah was sexually bullied at school starting with older boys pulling her trousers down (case study 1);
- Saima became known as a "slag" at school for having sex with boys (case study 2);
- Fawzia was befriended by older boys at school who coerced her into performing sex acts and then circulated information about her activities in the school (case study 8);
- Amana was pressurized into having sex with her boyfriend and was made to believe this would increase her popularity (case study 23);
- Shabana who was of mixed heritage was bullied at school for having a White mother (case study 31).

It was noticed that sometimes the victims were initially groomed by females of a similar age, who were perhaps victims themselves. For example, Saima went to the park with her female and male friends where she was the only one that was gang raped (case study 2); Rokeya was befriended by two girls who themselves were being sexually exploited (case study 15); and Maryam was taken by her friend to a party where she was raped by her friend's boyfriend (case study 20).

In a number of the case studies, it was also observed that the victims were coerced into introducing their friends and siblings to the perpetrators:

- The men in Farhah's case encouraged her to bring her younger sister to them and she tried but was unsuccessful (case study 1);
- Despite being sexually exploited, Nazia allowed her boyfriend to introduce his friends to her sisters, who were also sexually exploited (case study 7);
- Khadija took her new school friend to meet at her her older friends' flat where they were abused (case study 12);
- Amina introduced two friends to her abusers (case study 18);
- Nabila introduced three of her friends to her abusers (case study 24).

It would seem that as Asian and Muslim girls are hard to reach, then this may be a commonly employed strategy to find new vulnerable girls. This often proved an easier trap for potential victims to fall into because they were more trusting of female friends and siblings. One police force also provided an example of this:

"An Asian girl was involved in sexual exploitation - intelligence suggested her older sister was arranging it and there were several other high risk female individuals also involved."

It is therefore extremely important to warn girls of this particular grooming technique in any prevention material developed.

6.4 Intra-Familal Model

In some instances the victim was related to the perpetrator. A typical pattern was observed of the perpetrator sexually abusing the victim first and then progressing to introducing the victim to adult males outside the family. Because of the social restriction often placed on young females of Asian or Muslim background, they are hard to reach and it is clear that some men are taking advantage of the access and trust they have within their own families, to target potential victims. Thus:

- Imaan was initially sexually abused by her father and then eventually by the Quran teacher and other men (case study 4);

- Safa's uncle raped her before introducing her to his friends (case study 6);

- Parveen was sexually abused by her step uncle before she was blackmailed into have sex with his friends (case study 22);

- Osma was raped by her brother-in-law before he started to blackmail her (case study 28)

- Ghazala was raped by her brother-in-law, who then passed her around to his friends (case study 32).

6.5 Online Grooming

A few of our cases involved online grooming. Aisha was groomed through an Islamic forum and coerced into performing sexual acts via a web camera (case study 5). Abida was groomed over Facebook and when she met the boy – he went on to rape her (case study 13). Rani was befriended on Facebook and persuaded to meet the offender in a hotel where he had sex with her (case study 17). Sajida was also targeted on Facebook and pressured into sending naked photographs of herself (case study 27). It was noted that in all of these cases the girls were helped before matters escalated further. Had the offenders not been disrupted, the girls may have been eventually passed around to other men.

It seems likely that social media will play an increasing role in the targeting of children and young women, especially those that are harder to reach such as Asian and Muslim girls. Although in most of the case studies, the girls were targeted directly, male and female youths who were interviewed highlighted worrying trends:

"Many girls name the school they attend or their home post code on social media websites. Local men then try to contact them and make friends with them and ask to meet outside school, in parks or the city centre. These men are total strangers and girls are willing to meet them. Then girls influence each other to do the same."

Another young female explained how her friend was groomed online:

"My friend who is Bangladeshi was 15 years old when she met another Bangladeshi older boy on Facebook – he was 21 years old. They chatted for 6 months and got to know each other. When they met he pressurised her into having sex and said 'give me something so I can remember you.' He promised to marry her and then passed her on to his best friend so he could do it with her too. Now they share her."

Other behaviour that raised concerns was that girls were exchanging their blackberry pin numbers too easily with strangers without realising that they were increasing their vulnerability. One male youth said: *"When girls give out their blackberry pins on BBM Facebook groups, the boys will pass them around."*

6.6 Opportunist Model

Sexual exploitation without grooming was only observed in one case study. Nabila (case study 24) was opportunistically targeted as two youths were driving around when they spotted her, chatted her up and then took her to a house later that night to be violently abused by a group of men. In case study 20 (Maryam's story), a group of lads were planning to give her a lift home so they could sexually abuse her. From the ages of the men involved in both incidents, this may be more characteristic of younger perpetrators in their late teens and early 20s.

This type of model requires further research and the likelihood is that such cases are unlikely to be isolated ones. One young man revealed quite disturbing behaviour amongst young men:

"Groups of boys pick up girls in cars they don't even know all the time – it's normal. They will chat them up and offer the girls a lift and try their luck in the car. Some of them are really clever and put private hire stickers on their cars and drive around late at night in the city centre and pretend they are taxi drivers. It is easy – girls just get in. Then they will try it on."

He then went on to provide an example of a specific incident:

"We went out in three cars and the cars split. One of my friends text me and told me to go the location where he was and told me to park my car next to his and get out and look inside his car and check what he was doing. When I got there – two of my friends were at it like animals on to this girl. They didn't know her and only met her a short while earlier and chatted her up and had offered her a lift. They said she wanted it."

6.7 Gooming and Abuse Locations

The grooming and abuse of the girls and young women who feature in our case studies took place in various locations including vehicles, parks, flats, house parties, school, takeaway food outlets / restaurants, alleyways and hotels. However, schools were a recurring location even when they were not mentioned in the case studies. It seemed that the best way to find Asian / Muslim girls was either online or via school as they were unlikely to be out in the evenings. So this meant either male peers at school befriending them and then introducing them to older men outside school or to young men hanging around outside school. Parks were also featured as important locations for grooming where victims were introduced and abused. One young person said: *"I have heard that parks are used to target girls especially if they use it as a route to go home."* Takeaways were often mentioned as well. Concerns were raised by a number of informants that staff in takeaways located near secondary schools or which were popular with pupils, were being paid to identify vulnerable girls and groom them.

> The best way to find Asian / Muslim girls was either online or via school as they were unlikely to be out in the evenings.

The Barnados Report, *"Puppet on a String"* raises concerns about child exploitation increasingly becoming more organised with children being trafficked within Britain often involving a number of perpetrators (Barnados, 2011). Evidence of trafficking also emerged in our research. Movement of victims between localities for the purposes of sexual exploitation was also observed in some of the cases. This included movement within cities or towns, between nearby cities and town and also between regions. A few examples are illustrated below.

Case Study 1 (Farhah)	She was moved within the city to different locations that included hotels, cars, flats and parks and also within a one hour drive from the city
Case Study 3 (Rehana)	She was moved in between two towns that were in the same
Case Study 10 (Jamila)	She was taken to different houses within the same town
Case Study 14 (Hasina)	She was moved within the city
Case Study 16 (Koser)	She is being moved between different towns and regions
Case Study 30 (Karima)	She was sold to a gang in another region

Some victims are being trafficked, with movement of victims between cities and regions.

6.8 Grooming Tactics and Methods of Control

A number of tactics were used to "pull" the girls towards the perpetrators, which included:

- Providing free access to drugs and alcohol;

- Buying takeaway food;

- Giving gifts such as perfumes, mobile phones, clothes and shoes;

- Impressing girls with rides in flashy cars;

- Giving lots of affection and attention including declarations of love and promises of marriage.

As discussed above many girls had underlying issues that increased their vulnerability. Although the offenders may not have been aware of any history of abuse or violence, they recognized that the girls were seeking attention and affection, escape from home life and perhaps not wanting an arranged or forced marriage. These vulnerabilities were exploited. Hence promises of love and marriage were not unusual and mentioned by a number of those interviewed. Drugs and alcohol were used to reduce the ability of victims to make decisions, create a dependency on the offenders and also to lessen the ability of victims to resist the abuse and fully recall the incidents.

It was clear that the strategies used by the offenders to control their victims and to prevent them from escaping contributed to many of the reasons why the girls were not disclosing their experiences and reporting their abusers. These are covered in Section 7. However, the main methods of manipulation and mental control exercised by offender included:

- Building a close attachment which was then used to emotionally blackmail the victim;

- Making promises of marriage including conducting secret Islamic marriages;

- Creating shame and dishonour and fear, which were used to blackmail the victims e.g. threats of circulating images and recordings of the victims;

- Issuing threats of violence towards the victim and family;

- Creating dependency on drugs and alcohol;

- Manipulating a person so that the ability to recognize she is a victim is impaired;

- Encouraging them to run away.

> **Blackmail connected with shame and dishonour is a key and unique method of control for victims of Asian and Muslim backgrounds.**

According to interviewees and evidence from some of the case studies, blackmail connected with shame and dishonour appeared to be a key and unique method of control for victims of Asian and Muslim backgrounds. This was also highlighted in the CSEGG report: *"Children from minority ethnic backgrounds in particular were sometimes controlled by the fear of bringing shame on their families."* (Children's Commissioner, 2012).

One alarming observation was that some offenders are exploiting the help available to girls and young women who may be at risk of honour-based violence or forced marriage. Zara (case 35) reported being at risk of forced marriage and violence at home and was placed in a hostel. Later she revealed to her support worker that her friends (who were exploiting her) had encouraged her to move to the hostel so she could have more freedom. Muslim Women's Network UK received one call from a 17-year-old girl who said she had been persuaded by her boyfriend to tell the police that she was being subjected to violence at home. When she was placed in a hostel, her boyfriend put pressure on her to do sexual favours for his friends. It appears that hostels may not necessarily be safe for vulnerable girls and young women. In case study 9, the offender targeted Sumaira while she was living in a women's refuge. These examples highlight that offenders are targeting accommodation where vulnerable girls and young women may be housed.

Considering the numbers of men involved in the abusive groups and networks, the offenders appeared to be increasing their risk of being exposed and caught. Their apparent confidence arises from the belief they would not be caught because their victims were unlikely to report them.

7. BARRIERS TO DISCLOSING AND REPORTING

BARRIERS TO DISCLOSING AND REPORTING

7.1   Overview

A consistent feature in the case studies was that the victims were not willing to report their abusers even after they had escaped from the groups exploiting and abusing them. The most prevalent reasons included blackmail, fear, emotional attachment and dependency on drugs and alcohol. Others did not recognise themselves as victims or were pressurised into returning to the group because they were isolated or considered the abusers as friends. In some cases the reasons for not disclosing were unclear. However, it was often a combination of these reasons that prevented the victims from disclosing, asking for help or reporting to the police. One police officer made the following comment:

"Officers from the Public Protection Unit have investigated several reports over time whereby Asian girls are groomed, sexually assaulted and at times raped by Asian males. What was most concerning was the fact that the victims would often not report the matter or assist with any police investigation".

Several barriers that prevented victims from seeking help and reporting their abusers were noted. These are explained below.

7.2   Blackmail Involving Shame and Honour

As sex before marriage is regarded as sinful in Asian culture and Muslim faith, girls did not want their families to find out that they were engaging in sexual activity. They feared repercussions linked to honour-based violence and forced marriage. The offenders often exploited this fear. One police force provide the following comment:

"Cases investigated include the offender taking indecent photographs of the victim whilst they were in a relationship. If the victim wanted to end the relationship or refused to give the offender what he wanted, he would threaten the release of those photographs to her family and friends. One case involved the offender sending out over 40 photographs to the victim's friends and family on Facebook."

Blackmail and threats of circulating images and recordings featured in a few cases in our study:

- 12 year old Farhah's boyfriend took her to a flat where he raped her, took photographs and threatened to tell her family unless she did as she was told (case study 1);
- 15 year old Saima was raped in a local park, her ordeal was filmed (case study 2);
- 13 year old Rehana's boyfriend took photographs of her and blackmailed her (case study 3);
- 12 year old Parveen was blackmailed with filmed recordings – she felt that she had no option but to comply (case study 22);
- 17-year-old Sajida was blackmailed by a man who befriended her on Facebook – she had sent him sexually explicit photographs as she considered him as her boyfriend (case study 27);
- 14 year old Karima's boyfriend filmed himself raping her and used this to blackmail her (case study 30);
- Ghazala was blackmailed by her brother-in-law who threatened to show recordings to her family in the UK and in Pakistan (case study 32).

These examples show that this technique has been used to coerce girls into having sex with numerous men. Many girls believed they were having a relationship with their older boyfriends, who would then blackmail them with the images and threaten to expose their relationship unless they agreed to have sex with other friends and associates. In Saima's case she did not want anyone to know she had been gang raped. Although other case study informants do not mention that the girls were being blackmailed, many strongly suspected that blackmail played a role in preventing the girls from reporting their experience to police.

7.3   Threats of violence

Another reason for victims not reporting their abusers was due to the fear of violence against them or their families.

- Farhah was told that if she did not continue turning up to have sex with men, her family would be attacked (case study 1);
- Saima said she was very scared of her abusers (case study 2);
- 17 year old Sumaira feared the men because they kidnapped her from the streets and raped her violently in a van (case study 9);
- 13 year old Sam's boyfriend threatened to get her sister involved – she was also frightened (case study 26);
- The offenders threatened to kill Shabana and attack her with acid (case study 31).

7.4   Fear of Not Being Believed

The girls were also frightened of their families and felt that they would not be believed and that somehow their situation was their own fault.

- 14 year old Safa thought her family would not believe her if she exposed what her uncle and his friends were doing to her. When the abuse was disclosed to them, they did not believe her (case study 6);
- 14 year old Nazia and her sisters felt unable to ask for help because they thought they would be judged and blamed (case study 7);
- Ghazala is too scared to tell anyone because she feels that she will not be believed even though she fears the abuse may happen again (case study 32).

7.5   Guilt

According to some interviewees in some instances the victims felt guilty and were worried about getting into trouble because they felt they had been involved in illegal activity such as handling stolen goods, carrying drugs or even because they had been involved in honey traps to lure men to enable revenge attacks to be carried out on them. The victims feared getting into trouble with the police for breaking the law.

7.6   Drug and Alcohol Dependency

Some of the girls were given drugs and alcohol regularly to create a dependency on the offenders. Their addiction is a further factor why some girls refused to report their abusers or escape from them. Some of those interviewed described scenarios where the girls had been moved away from their abusers and provided with support, but ended up returning to them so they could access drugs and alcohol. The case studies show that 14 of the victims were given drugs and / or alcohol. Drugs and alcohol may have also been given to some of the other victims but we were unable to confirm this. The 14 cases involving alcohol or drug abuse are:

- Farhah (case study 1);
- Saima (case study 2);
- Safa (case study 6);
- Nazia (case study 7);
- Anisa (case study 11);
- Abida (case study 13);
- Hasina (case study 14);
- Kosar (case study 16);
- Tabassam (case study 19);
- Samina (case study 21);
- Simi (case study 25);
- Sam (case study 26);
- Karima (case study 30);
- Zara (case study 35).

7.7   Emotional Attachment

We found that there were victims who had developed an emotional attachment to their abusers and who felt unable to complain about them out of love and / or loyalty.

- Imaan believed her Quran teacher was right because he used verses from the Quran to maintain his power over her (case study 2);
- Safa felt confused; she thought her uncle loved her (case study 6);
- Sumaira believed her boyfriend loved her and had promised to marry her (case study 9);
- Jamila was married to the offender (case study 10);
- Nosheen believes her boyfriend loves her and will marry her (case study 29);
- Karima believed her boyfriend loved her and she wanted to do anything for him (case study 30).

7.8   Not Recognising they are Victims

We came across a couple of situations where the girls had been so manipulated that they did not see themselves as victims.

*   Kosar has learning difficulties and believes the men she is having sex with are all her boyfriends (case study 16);

*   Tabassam has said to her support worker that she does not think she is a victim because "they" look after her (case study 19).

7.9   Disability

There is evidence that girls and women with disabilities were also being exploited. They faced additional barriers to disclosing and reporting their abuse. In one case, the victim continues to be abused and passed around amongst groups of men. However, she is unwilling to seek help or report the men as she has been manipulated to believe that the men are her boyfriends and that they love her. Her impaired reasoning indicates how much harder it is to reach and help victims with learning difficulties because of their lack of understanding about what is happening to them. More work to identify the extent of exploitation of children and young people with disabilities is therefore required.

7.10   How are Victims Breaking Free?

Many of the interviewees mentioned that the victims found it hard to break away from the perpetrators and would get drawn back into the groups. The picture that emerged from the research was quite complex. There were a number of factors (already discussed) that prevented victims from seeking help. The victims uncovered in this investigation came to the attention of those who had provided the case studies for a variety of reasons that included:

- The victim disclosed her situation to a friend or family;

- The family discovered what was taking place;

- The victim disclosed her situation to a teacher voluntarily or the teacher / other staff spotted warning signs, asked questions and then got other professionals and agencies involved;

- The victim came to the attention of the police for other reasons; the police then suspected sexual exploitation and made referrals;

- The victim was referred to the third sector e.g. youth group, women's refuge, alcohol / drugs support group, or group specifically supporting victims of sexual exploitation;

- The victim has moved out of the locality or town (even moving abroad sometimes).

Although it was not clear in every case study as to how the girls managed to escape their situations, it was noted that in some cases, they were able to break the link if they moved away from their town or city. However, even moving areas did not always prove to be a sufficient measure. We heard of situations where the victims had been moved to another part of the UK or even abroad but the fate of some who had been taken abroad was unknown.

We also heard about how some victims had successfully broken away from the men who were sexually exploiting them once they were over the age of 16. They felt they managed to escape because their value to the offenders had dropped and they were being replaced by younger girls. Finally we came across examples of girls who had been successfully supported and were taken far away from the offenders to a safe place but who did not want to report the abuse because their experiences were too traumatic to talk about. They did not want to relive the ordeal or risk their families finding out. Unfortunately, as we write this report, in a few cases, victims continue to be sexually exploited.

8. FACTORS DRIVING THE SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

FACTORS DRIVING THE SEXUALLY ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

8.1   Overview

Nearly all of the offenders in the case studies were of Asian background and mainly of Islamic faith. Although perpetrators of sexual exploitation come from all ethnicities and faiths, it is important to determine whether there are any specific factors that link sexual abuse and exploitation to the offender's background. Such information can be useful in developing tailored intervention strategies. But if there are no great differences between the sexual exploitation carried out by Asian / Muslim offenders and those from other ethnic / faith backgrounds, then this can be used as a myth busting device to show there is nothing different about Asian / Muslim men's behaviour from that of other men.

So what is driving Asian and Muslim men to be involved in sexually abusive behaviour? We attempted to find possible reasons by asking our informants (including those who did not contribute case studies) their views based on their knowledge and experience of sexual exploitation in the communities in question.

Below are some of the explanations that were provided:

8.2   Societal Influence

There was a general consensus amongst those interviewed that a society where women are constantly objectified, negatively influences teenage boys. Violence against women and girls was being seen as the accepted norm so that, *"Boys think there is nothing wrong with slapping a girl and think girls deserve it."* Easy access to porn, particularly violent porn, was also seen as another factor that was shaping male behaviours. We were told: *"Even children in playgrounds are able to watch porn on their mobile phones."* One young man said:

"They wear high heels, wear make up, nice clothes, smell nice, their body language, it's the tone of their voice. We get tempted and then they scream rape. They call it rape afterwards just because they feel dirty."

Another young male had a similar attitude:

"The girls want it – they want to have sex with all the lads, they can't get enough. When their parents find out they don't want them to know they are slags and sluts and pretend they are getting raped because they don't wanna get battered."

8.3   Cultural Influence

Cultural attitudes towards girls and women within Asian and Muslim communities were also seen as an underlying cause. This was not an unexpected discovery. As a national Muslim women's rights organisation, which is also involved in the global Muslim women's movement, Musawah, we know the strong impact of patriarchal structures not only through our own experiences but also the experiences of Muslim and Asian women have shown this. Some examples of such patriarchal practices and beliefs, and their impact, that we have come across through our work include:

- Women suffering in silence even when subjected to abuse for the sake of family honour;

- The woman being blamed in family break ups;

- Divorced women carrying a greater stigma than divorced men;

- Girl's body and sexuality controlled because she is held responsible for a family's honour;

- Boys being valued more than girls from the celebration of their birth to adulthood;

- Girls and women being expected to obey the males in the family usually father, brother or husband;

- Girls and women being subjected to greater social restrictions;

- Girls being subjected to forced and child marriages;

- Girls and women being subjected to honour based crimes;

- Heaping shame on unmarried girls who lose their virginity;

- Religious authorities are predominantly male;

- Marital rape being considered normal (as wives are expected to respond to sexual demands of husbands);

- In some instances, women not being allowed in mosques.

Reflecting on this list, it is not difficult to see that cultural influences result in women having a much lower status than men. Attempts by girls and women to move away from these cultural traditions can result in punishment. It should be noted here that Islam grants women numerous rights but their social status is determined by culture. It is this lower status that is responsible for boys and men having negative attitudes towards girls and women and having less or little respect for them. This was reflected in a comment made by one young man who was interviewed: *"It starts at home. Guys think women have to do what the men want whether right or wrong. Guys always think they have the upper hand."*

Asian and Muslim communities also originate from countries where culturally it has been acceptable to marry girls off once they have reached puberty and child marriage is therefore not uncommon. This cultural influence could also be a factor shaping the mindset of boys and men here in Britain who may link puberty to adulthood.

8.4   Peer Pressure

It was felt that peer pressures among offenders was also reinforcing negative messages, which meant that even those who did not want to be involved in abuse were pressured to do so. One teenager said:

"Lads hang around in big groups. Everyone in the group knows everything about each other. The stronger boys in the group will point fingers at the weaker lads and put them under pressure to join in."

8.5   Monetary Gain and Organised Crime

Connections were made between the increasing number of young Pakistanis with low educational levels being drawn towards organised crime and drug dealing. *"Prostitution becomes another part of their business, an additional way of making profit."* It was unclear how much profit was being made from the girls. However, some suggested the girls were a substantial source of income. As one interviewee put it: *"A main ringleader controlling six or seven girls could be making £3000 to £4000 per week".* Another view was that

"Some of the younger men consider pimping less risky and an easier way to earn money than dealing in drugs - they are less likely to get caught because the girls are unlikely to report abuse"

One male youth said: *"It has been going on for years - I have heard guys are making money by passing girls around. It is a business for them."*

8.6   Boosting Reputation

Others suggested that money may not be a motivating factor and felt that some boys /men liked boasting about being able to provide access to girls: *"It's more about the 'kudos' of being able to supply young girls."* Earlier in this report one young man gave an account of how young men phone friends while they are queuing up and waiting their turn to have sex with a girl and encouraging them to come and join in.

8.7   Lack of Challenge to Familial Child Sexual Abuse

The issue of sexual abuse of children within families was repeatedly mentioned. It was alleged that this had gone on for decades but was not being addressed. Crimes were not being reported and the pedophiles were not confronted because it meant challenging a family member or friend. People did not want to accept what was going on or simply did not want anyone finding out because of the shame involved and would cover it up, consequently allowing the offender to continue abusing other children. Some people strongly felt that because familial child abuse had gone unchallenged, men felt they could operate with impunity and had now progressed to carrying out abuse outside of the family circle. As already mentioned earlier, one marked feature of the case studies was that at least one third of victims had suffered child sex abuse. Some indicated that in recent years these boundaries had been pushed even further and they were increasingly hearing of sexual exploitation of family members. As one person put it:

"Before I would hear of stories involving the victim being abused by a relative usually an uncle but I am now hearing stories of victims being abused by their cousins, brothers and fathers – and in some cases being passed around outside to others abusers."

8.8   Inadequate Sex Education

Inadequate sex education was also blamed for boys not respecting girls. Even some of the youth interviewed for this pilot study mentioned this. One young man said: *"When schools teach sex education– respect for girls is never taught."* Those who had worked with the Asian victims in trying to support them said that all the girls they had worked with and who had been sexually exploited viewed sex as not positive, not fun and not pleasurable – but all for him. Lack of communication with parents, particularly with fathers, about relationships and sex education was also mentioned.

It is clear that one single factor cannot be blamed for causing exploitative and abusive sexual behaviour in Asian and Muslim men. The likelihood is that sexually abusive behaviour is a result of a combination of factors.

8.9   Bollywood films

The portrayal of women in Bollywood films was mentioned during the course of the investigation. It was argued that these films may be partly responsible for conditioning boys and men to believe that is was acceptable to stalk and harass women. An Indian filmmaker, Farhan Akhtar   initially made this connection when debating male attitudes after the "Delhi rape case" of December 2012. He said that harassment of women was a common element in many Indian films (The Economic Times, 2012). A few of our interviewees felt that Bollywood films were also shaping the attitudes of Asian males in Britain. Criticism of these films included that they regularly showed leading heroes publicly harassing women until they "won them over." One interviewee said:

"Although the storylines are changing now, it is still common to have songs in films called 'item numbers' where women are portrayed as a commodity for men. A scantily dressed woman is made to do a sexy dance routine surrounded by a crowd of men all leering at her."

When providing details about their experiences, some of the victims had mentioned that were made to do role-play including Bollywood-type dance routines in front of the men.

> " One single factor cannot be blamed for causing deviant sexual behavior. The likelihood is that sexually abusive behaviour is complex and a result of a combination of factors."

9. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RESPONSES

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RESPONSES

9.1   Lack of Response

During interviews, the extent of denial within families and communities regarding child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation was raised as quite a major concern. The "cover up" culture of "sweeping taboo issues under the carpet," and therefore allowing them to continue was partly blamed for what appeared like an increasing problem. One interviewee said:

"I feel communities neglect these issues and take no action as the 'perpetrators' are usually people who know someone that knows someone in the community, so it's almost looking out for each other."

Another comment included:

"Parents feel embarrassed about the police coming to their address or that the information of their daughter being 'bad' will be leaked into the community. They feel the best solution is marriage or to send their child abroad, which means the issue is never tackled at the root."

It appears that families prefer to hide the abuse because they are more concerned that shame will reduce the future marriage prospects of their daughters.

Many felt these issues were being neglected because there was a tendency to blame the female victims rather than the male offenders. Girls were being regarded as "temptresses" and views in the community (even by mothers), which expressed ideas such as, *"She tempted the boy and he couldn't help it"* were not uncommon. Victim blaming was also evident in the research. When girls did disclose to their families, they were re-victimised by being blamed and punished.   For example:

- Amina was forced into a marriage when her family suspected what was going on (case study 18);

- Maryam's mother blamed her for getting raped and kicked her out of the house (case study 20);

- Parveen's parents blamed her for allowing the abuse to happen. They forced her to undergo hymen repair surgery and into a marriage (case study 22);

- When Osma disclosed she had been sexually abused, her husband wanted to divorce her and other family members did not believe her so she had to run away for fear of the consequences (case study 28).

It is clear from the above responses that even if a victim was to report, the family is unlikely to want her to pursue a legal prosecution.

> There is a tendency to prioritise protecting the 'honour' of the community over the safeguarding of vulnerable girls,

Another issue raised was the possibility of parents not reporting that their daughters had gone missing because they did not want extended family and community members to find out. There seemed to be little or no understanding among such parents about what sexual exploitation involved and there was probably a tendency for them to think the girls were choosing their particular life style rather than being manipulated. Sexual exploitation within Asian and Muslim communities will therefore be particularly challenging

The double standards in attitudes towards boys and girls and their treatment was heavily critcised by our informants and some believed this made some men think they *"can get away with rape"'* Families were making assumptions about the lifestyle of the victims, that they were choosing it and completely failing to recognize they were being manipulated and exploited by predatory boys and men.

It was noticed that since the highly publicized prosecution cases involving Pakistani men in places such as Rochdale and Oxford etc., debate had started amongst some sections of the Pakistani and Muslim communities on sex offending behaviour. There appeared to be more debate amongst activists and community organisations rather than the ordinary members of Asian and Muslim communities. Many of our informants felt that attitudes were mainly dismissive or disbelieving in relation to the issue of child sexual exploitation.

Some within Muslim communities felt this denial was connected with not wanting to damage the reputation of Muslims: *"They feel under attack after being demonized and targeted with the terrorism legislation."* This meant prioritsing the "honour" of the community over the safeguarding of vulnerable girls and women. We were therefore not surprised when some Muslim men and women were against this research being conducted. One criticism included:

"We should be dealing with this internally but if you are doing this then there is no need to mention the ethnic backgrounds of the perpetrators in the case studies – saying the abusers are male should be sufficient."

Others felt the lack of concern over the media reports may be linked to the fact that victims are from a different culture:

"Some people were not interested in the subject and not talking about it especially when they think the victims are 'White girl'" so it's almost the 'it doesn't interest us' attitude."

Making excuses for men's behaviour and blaming girls was a recurring theme. One person who was trying to raise awareness of sexual exploitation and rape within Asian communities was told that the local men who had been arrested on suspicion of being members of a sex abuse gang, were not to blame. She was told: *"They [accused offenders] did not know what they were doing and were probably possessed by jinn [spirits]."* A comment made to another informant of this research was: *"Girls with bad characters are tempting our sons – it's not their fault."* Also in the case of Muslims, those considered "bad" were usually the ones who did not wear the headscarf and therefore were not thought of as victims but as "bringing it on to themselves." Interestingly the victims in the case studies came from a range of backgrounds and included those who wore the headscarf and those who did not. The above comments reflect the usual rape apologist comments made by misogynists generally and follow a pattern that is apparent in all cultures.

Our informants overwhelmingly agreed that child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation could not be tackled unless members of the Asian and Muslim communities accepted that there was a serious problem and talked about these issues publicly. Hence:

"We cannot racialise crime but we cannot be in denial either."

"We cannot make any changes unless the issues are made very public!"

"It is imperative that families believe the experiences of victims and blame the offenders."

"It is about time that communities stand up and condemn these issues openly."

"People in the community need to be the eyes and ears as these men are somebody's fathers, brothers, sons, cousins, friends etc."

According to the findings of this pilot study, therefore, it does appear that silence in the name of avoiding shame and preserving honour, is allowing men to continue operating with impunity, therefore fueling sexual violence against girls and women further.

9.2   Community Action as a Key Solution

Despite community attitudes and responses being criticised, most of those interviewed, particularly those from an Asian and Muslim background, strongly believed that community action was the best solution. A two-pronged approach was suggested. Firstly, it is important to remove self-denial by raising awareness and educating communities about the issue and the consequences of their cultural attitudes. Secondly it is vital to encourage them to tackle the issue head on.

One popular opinion included replicating a strategy employed in Birmingham, in the 1990s, when mainly Asian male residents tackled prostitution in their areas by having a visible presence on the streets and challenging curb crawlers. This tactic particularly scared off Asian men who were trying to pick up prostitutes because they feared being identified. Actions that were suggested included both men and women being more vigilant and visible in areas where male youths are driving around harassing girls: *"We should be outside schools and bus stops near schools and challenge these boys and let them see we are writing down their car registration numbers."*

Another informant said that more needed to be done to challenge the behaviour of men who constantly drove up and down main roads in the heart of Asian areas and harassed and pressured girls to talk to them. Concerns were expressed that this was no longer harmless fun but was becoming more sinister. One interviewee was so concerned that she even monitored the registration numbers of cars driving up and down a particular road well known for this type of behaviour. She explained:

"I had a few volunteers positioned in a number of places on the road on a Saturday afternoon when the weather was good. They logged the car registration numbers all cars with young lads that appeared to be just driving up and down. In just two hours, 120 different cars were identified. I am worried because the time of year I chose for my experiment is not what I would consider peak season for this. The volunteers even witnessed some stopping so the lads could try and chat up the girls."

Another comment was that: *"These boys are driving around trying to pick girls up as if they were 'treats or sweets.'"* It was felt that if families and local residents robustly and openly challenged young men, they would be more likely to think about their behaviour due to the fear of being exposed to their families and bringing shame on them: *"If another family is criticizing their son – his family are more likely to take notice."*

Another participant said:

"Until the South Asian society at large, especially senior community members highly respected within their localities, acknowledge the serious issue of Asian boys and men targeting young girls within their community for the sole purpose of sexual exploitation, then I fear we could be facing an epidemic growth of 'organised networks' promoting sexual slavery of young girls. We [the community] must visibly fight and publicly condemn this criminal activity from within, as it will only be the self-fear of the perpetrators being recognised by their neighbours, friends, relatives and their own families that will combat this evil. This will only come through educating communities of what is happening on their doorsteps and that self-denial is no longer an option; we must unite and tackle the problem head on through public demonstrations on our own streets, identifying and 'naming and shaming' offenders, and finally co-operating with the police to prosecute those who continue to abuse young girls again and again".

There are concerns that some sections of the communities may respond by imposing further social restrictions on Asian / Muslim girls instead of tackling the root cause of the problem, which is the attitude of boys and men towards women and girls. Hence any awareness raising initiatives should warn against the approach of further restrictions on girls.

10. FRONTLINE PROFESSIONAL AND SERVICE PROVIDER RESPONSES

FRONTLINE PROFESSIONAL AND SERVICE PROVIDER RESPONSES

10.1   Overview

When collecting data, a key aim was to ascertain the ethnicity of the victims and offenders whenever possible. In most cases we were able to get detailed information on ethnicity, which was very useful in analysing and mapping patterns. It is only through this detailed knowledge that the most appropriate interventions and prevention mechanisms can be developed that are most likely to be successful. However, according to the CSESGG Report most agencies collect generic data: *"The data provided to the inquiry identified only broad generic headings for ethnicity such as Asian and did not differentiate between different ethnicities"* (Children's Commissioner, 2012). This research highlights the importance of establishing a more rigorous data collection system.

It was also noted that most of the case studies were identified through BME interviewees who were mostly from third sector minority organisation while only two worked in the public sector. Only 19% (7 out of 35) of the cases were collected from White interviewees working in mainstream agencies. Our data collection was mainly restricted to our network of contacts which could explain why most of our cases were obtained from the BME third sector informants.

A more likely explanation is that we managed to identify numerous case studies quickly because we focused on the BME third sector. According to the CSEGG report (Ibid):

"Victims of child sexual exploitation came from a range of ethnic backgrounds but children from ethnic minority backgrounds tended to be identified by BME, faith and statutory and voluntary sector youth justice agencies. They were rarely identified by professionals from police forces or local authority children services, who were more likely to identify children who were white British." (Children's Commissioner, 2012)

Our research also supported this finding.

The CEOP Report also confirms that mainstream agencies are not identifying BME victims:

"Victims from ethnic minorities may be under represented in the data as they are less likely to be identified and engaged by statutory services and voluntary sector organisations." (CEOP, 2011)

Considering the number of victims we uncovered in a short time, it is a matter of concern that BME victims are being missed and not getting the help they need. This point was also reinforced in the CSEGG Report:

"They [offenders] come from all ethnic groups and so do their victims. Failure of agencies to recognize this means that too many child victims are not getting the protection and support they desperately need." (Children's Commissioner, 2012)

There was a general consensus amongst the people we interviewed that front line professionals were failing to identify many cases involving BME victims. They felt more needed to be done to find ways of reaching them and giving them the confidence and channels through which to disclose and report. The University of Bedford in their *What's going on?* report (2011), also raised concerns about local accessibility of services to different BME communities.

It is therefore not unexpected that criticisms have been made about various agencies:

"Responses of agencies is light touch or heavy handed."

"Multiple agency child protection plans are woolly."

"Police, teachers and social workers need better training."

"The legislation we have to protect children is not being utilized, for example, the Abduction Act 1984 Notice is not used often enough."

"BME kids are neglected by statutory services."

"All awareness raising and prevention is focused on girls as victims but boys as offenders is not looked at"

"Frontline professionals are not aware of any additional pressures these girls feel such as cultural, emotional etc. Some females who leave home are too afraid to return home due to the stigma attached to them of already leaving."

"There is a lack of support for Asian families, which they really need as many of them do not know how to cope with this issue."

"Parent workshops are needed – but who is doing them?"

The data clearly highlights the failure of generic and statutory organisations to identify BME victims and intervene in relation to BME perpetrators. The resourcing and funding for culturally appropriate frameworks must be considered a priority at both governmental and local authority levels.

10.2   Police

Although it was generally acknowledged that girls were not reporting their abusers, the police were accused of being reluctant to intervene in suspected cases involving Asian and Muslim victims due to cultural sensitivities:

"The level of service received from police can depend on your ethnicity. There was a tendency not to disrupt and a reluctance to intervene because of the potential resistance from within in the community."

However, if more police forces were to proactively use threat and risk assessments to try and identify those vulnerable to exploitation or those currently being exploited, they could crucially reach out to significant numbers of victims and disrupt offenders also. The West Midlands Police Force has provided an example of this approach:

"An Asian female is currently not disclosing but is a regular missing person. A threat / risk assessment has been used to proactively identify that she is vulnerable to exploitation or currently being exploited. She is therefore strongly suspected of being sexually exploited and therefore being managed by the Public Protection Unit."

The need for police training on this model of offending, for example, is a priority and the inclusion of BME officers with the appropriate cultural competencies is critical in trying to support victims and disrupt offending behaviour.

10.3   Schools and Colleges

While some schools are doing some work to identify offenders and victims the pressures of the school curriculum and the lack of appropriate training means that both victims and offenders are falling though the detection net. During the research, schools and colleges were criticised for the following reasons:

- Not doing enough to combat sexual bullying and harassment (especially via social media) and of trying to deal with matters internally without getting police involved in case the school's reputation was damaged.
- When children were caught being involved in sexual activity within schools, there was a tendency to focus only on the girls because they were often viewed as "naughty girls". Only working with girls meant they were stigmatizing girls further and giving the impression that it was their fault and not the fault of boys, therefore reinforcing sexist stereotypes.
- Not intervening and raising awareness of the dangers of sexual exploitation early enough. By the time this issue was raised among pupils, some girls had already been groomed (some from as early as the age of 9 to 11). Early intervention is therefore key for boys and girls from the age of 9 and 10 years.
- Failure on the part of staff to spot predatory behavior within colleges: *"At one college Afghan and Pakistani men from abroad would attend ESOL classes to learn English. They would target female students studying A-levels who appeared naïve about men, sex and relationships and lacked confidence and shower them with expensive gifts and latest mobile phones. These girls would then be pressurised into having sex through blackmail, threats and bullying."*
- Schools were also not doing enough to establish patterns of girls going missing: *"Some schools are not reporting girls missing early enough and not taking responsibility."*
- Boys were not being educated about healthy relationships.

10.4   Health Practitioners

As reported, in some of the case studies, the victims suffered health problems and had to visited health professionals. There were concerns that risk indicators were not being used to recognize victims of sexual exploitation as perhaps Asian and Muslim girls were not considered vulnerable to sexual abuses:

"When Asian girls are presenting with indicators at their GPs or other health clinics, are these not picked up because of their ethnic background? Are they even being asked if they have underlying issues?"

A couple of interviewees mentioned that in some cases the girls may be visiting the GP with a family member and were therefore unable to disclose even if they wanted to.

10.5   Children's Social Services

Concerns were raised that victims are often not believed about their experiences and even blamed. Also when sexual activity is suspected in under age girls, social workers are assigned to girls not boys. Girls are always held responsible as victims therefore all work focuses on them and little work is carried out with boys. In view of the vulnerability of young boys, highlighted in this report, a clear strategy is needed to respond to both young victims and offenders who fit within this model of exploitation.

10.6   Local Safeguarding Children's Boards

Safeguarding teams differ from local authority to local authority, some have recognised the need to have BME representatives, and welcome the cultural knowledge and experience these individuals bring to their work. Others are reluctant to widen their experiential knowledge base and tend to use the *"if it's not broken, why fix it?"* adage. Many wanted to see Children's Safeguarding Boards coordinating with other key stakeholders and developing additional specific local action plans to safeguard BME children.

11. CONCLUSION

Our project findings lead us to put forward a different picture than the one presented by the media, where Asian men only target and sexually exploit vulnerable White girls because they have less respect for them due to their different ethnicity. It is evident from this research that Asian men also target Asian girls who are not safe from sexual exploitation as presumed. It is clear that sexual predators of Asian background, like those from any other ethnic background, have no respect for women and girls of any race, faith or culture. This shows that child sexual exploitation is not about ethnicity or faith but about male attitudes towards women. This argument is supported by the work of Professor Malcolm Cowburn, a criminologist based at Sheffield Hallam University, who has studied issues related to sexual violence over the last 15 years. He states that he *"had not seen any empirical evidence to say that one group of people has a greater proclivity to sexual violence than any other"* and *"The larger issue is of problematic masculinity and how certain men view women, children and their sexual rights. I don't think it lies within ethnicity but within gender."* (Akwagyiram 2012). His work has been published in the Journal of Sexual Aggression and the British Journal of Community Justice among others.

Although it is difficult to determine the scale of sexual exploitation within Asian and Muslim communities and whether it is at disproportionate levels, it is clear that a significant problem does exist. This very limited pilot study has revealed 35 case studies which indicates that a more extensive piece of research would most likely find many more examples of abuse and exploitation. It is also to be noted that although the offenders and victims came from a range of backgrounds, a substantial number were from a Pakistani background and this cannot be neglected. This may largely reflect the size of the representative population of Pakistanis in Britain and may not mean that they are over-represented among sexual offenders. A further and fuller exploration of sexual exploitation among Asian / Muslim communities could shed more light on this matter.

Upon a detailed analysis of ethnicities, it was noticeable that in the majority of cases the offenders were from the same ethnic / faith background as their victims. This seemed like a calculated choice even though Asian and Muslim girls were harder to reach. A key driver for targeting Asian and Muslim girls could be that they were considered as a *"less risky"* option because they were unlikely to seek help or report their abuse due to *"shame"* and *"dishonour"*. It also appeared that one of the most important factors pulling girls towards the offenders was the promise of love and marriage. The particular vulnerabilities of Asian / Muslim girls and young women were being exploited routinely, making them more likely to be groomed and sexually exploited by offenders from their own backgrounds. This finding could indicate that Asian / Muslim girls are possibly more vulnerable than White girls to exploitation by Asian predators.

The lack of identification of Asian and Muslim female victims and the lack of legal prosecutions involving them confirms that frontline professionals and mainstream agencies are neglecting them. Even though the reluctance of Asian and Muslim victims in coming forward is making it harder to provide them with the necessary support and to investigate their cases, little, if anything is being done to reach out to them and to make it easier for them to seek the much needed help.

Community attitudes towards gender status and role which lead to the unequal treatment of girls compared to boys also played a prominent role in victims not seeking help and perpetrators continuing to operate with impunity. Generally victims do not complain due to the repercussions flowing from dishonouring their family. When they disclose their experiences of sexual exploitation, victims are blamed instead of the perpetrators. If mosques, families, community groups, community leaders, continue turning a blind eye to the situation, then this will amount to silent consent.

When developing awareness-raising tools to combat predatory behaviour, we must resist the blaming of girls' attitudes and consider the fact that some perpetrators are of the same age or only a few years older. While Asian and Muslim communities fail to acknowledge that the problem exists and keep accepting male attitudes, it will be difficult to address the issue.

Current initiatives protecting Asian and Muslim girls from violence focus primarily on issues such as honour crime, forced marriage, female genital mutilation. No work (except for a tiny minority of projects, often delivered voluntarily), tackles grooming and sexual exploitation. It is hoped that this research will result in more resources being dedicated to helping and protecting girls and women from Asian and Muslim communities.

More awareness training needs to be offered to communities to enable them to support victims and to believe that the latter's experiences are true. Frontline professionals and agencies need training to ensure they do not miss victims from BME backgrounds and that they have a better understanding of cultural sensitivities preventing victims from coming forward.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed to reduce the levels of sexual exploitation in the short to medium term and to prevent it in the long term. The recommendations are also made in order to improve means of identifying victims and to provide them the necessary support.

12.1   National Plans to Tackle Sexual Exploitation

•   Relevant government departments (e.g. Department for Education, Home Office, Department of Health and Ministry of Justice) should produce national plans that include measures for prevention, to ensure better identification, intervention and support for BME children and young people suffering from sexual exploitation.

•   Relevant government departments (e.g. Department for Education, Home Office, Department of Health and Ministry of Justice) should provide dedicated funds to tackle sexual exploitation in BME communities, including resources for third sector BME groups to set up specialist sexual violence projects and helplines as they will most likely be a trusted point of contact for victims.

12.2   Local Plans to Tackle Sexual Exploitation

•   The Crown Prosecution Service and police force in each region must work together to ensure they become more effective at bringing forward prosecution cases involving BME victims. This should be done by developing plans to encourage Asian / Muslim victims to come forward despite fears that they /their families may be shamed or dishonoured; and to support and prepare them for the traumatic process of giving evidence.

•   Robust plans must be put into place to ensure that multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approaches also work for BME victims e.g. recognize that after disclosure BME victims may not be safe in the family home and that follow up visits must take place and / or safe accommodation provided.

•   Frontline agencies such as the police must implement processes and practices to ensure they proactively identify and reach out to BME victims.

•   Culturally-specialist provision/services must be provided to support BME victims.

12.3   Awareness Raising and Training

- Child sexual exploitation training provided to frontline professionals such as social workers, youth offending practitioners, youth workers, teachers, police and health workers should include an understanding of sexual exploitation of BME victims and of the different types of offender-victim models which exist.

- Police and local authorities (especially Local Safeguarding Children's Boards) should work in partnership with local community organisations (e.g. religious institutions, women's groups, youth groups and other civil society organisations) to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and to establish prevention / protection strategies amongst BME communities including parents, families and young people.

- Religious institutions and other community organisations should promote women's rights and the importance of respecting the dignity of girls and women.

- Toolkits that can be used by community groups, religious institutions and individuals should be developed to identify and disrupt offenders, challenge misogynistic behaviour and challenge 'head in the sand' attitudes amongst communities.

- Parent workshops should be developed that include an understanding of child sexual exploitation, improving family relationships and engagement with children, cultural and faith-sensitive sex education training, fostering respect for girls and women.

- Awareness raising about child sexual exploitation in schools, involving teaching and support staff and students, should start before or upon starting secondary school.

- Schools and colleges should do more to address sexual harassment and sexual bullying. This should include strengthening procedures to identify victims of sexual exploitation; proactive application of the procedures set up so victims feel more confident to report and offenders are warned of the serious consequences; enforcement of tougher punishments including expulsion of perpetrators; and the involvement of police more readily rather than dealing with matters internally.

- The building of resilience of Asian /Muslim children and youth should be undertaken in order to enable them to resist becoming victims of or offenders in online and street grooming circles. This should be done through awareness raising in schools, by parents and by community organisations.

- Sex education in schools should include relationship education and the fostering of respect for women and girls, aimed to promote healthy relationships and a better understanding of what constitutes consent.

- Racial profiling of sexual exploitation must be challenged and politicians and the media need to take greater responsibility for combating child sexual exploitation otherwise their rhetoric may contribute to victims and offenders being missed.

12.4   Data Gathering and Analysis

- Data collection needs to be improved and be consistent across agencies and across the country; e.g. ensuring the recording of detailed information on ethnicities rather than using generic categories such as "Asian" for both victims and offenders. This is vital to determine the scale and nature of sexual exploitation and to identify any trends that can help with intervention and prevention.

- Police forces should analyse data of missing Asian / Muslim girls and investigate how these cases have been categorized, identify how many are still missing and make contact with them to ensure they are safe and not being exploited.

- Schools must improve their monitoring systems to identify patterns of pupils missing schools at an earlier stage.

12.5   Culturally Sensitive Specialist Helpline

Third sector BME organisations should be supported to set up specialist sexual violence projects and helplines, as they are most likely to be a trusted point of contact for victims. In view of the findings of this report, a national specialist helpline should be set up for Asian / Muslim girls and women. Alternatively a culturally sensitive national helpline that also covers a range of other issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual violence, domestic violence, mental health, discrimination and Islamophobia etc could also be considered. There is a gap in service provision at present, as no such national helpline exists.

12.6   Further Research

- Further research is required on Asian / Muslim communities and other minority communities to establish a fuller national picture of the scale of sexual exploitation and a better understanding of offending behaviours and patterns.

- Further research into child sex abuse in Asian and Muslim communities is also recommended so that this issue can finally start to be challenged. Muslim Women's Network UK plans to undertake further research, resources permitting.

- More research should be carried out on the sexual exploitation of BME victims with disabilities and of young vulnerable adults.

- Research is required on the sexual exploitation of Asian / Muslim male victims.

APPENDIX
CASE STUDIES 1 TO 35

The names of the victims have been changed and these are pseudonyms.

1. Farhah
2. Saima
3. Rehana
4. Imaan
5. Aisha
6. Safa
7. Nazia
8. Fawzia
9. Sumaira
10. Jamila
11. Anisa
12. Khadija
13. Abida
14. Hasina
15. Rokeya
16. Kosar
17. Rani
18. Amina
19. Tabassam
20. Maryam
21. Samina
22. Parveen
23. Amana
24. Nabila
25. Simi
26. Sam
27. Sajida
28. Osma
29. Nosheen
30. Karima
31. Shabana
32. Ghazala
33. Asha
34. Halima
35. Zara

Farhah's (of Pakistani background) witnessed a lot of violence in her family – her father subjected her mother to violent beatings. Eventually her parents separated and she lived with her mother and other siblings. Farhah started being bullied at the age of 12 when a couple of older boys pulled her trousers down and fondled her in school. Little action was taken against the boys. Other boys aged 15 started to show interest in her. She was offered free alcohol, cigarettes and takeaways. She thought it was cool having older friends and felt special. Eventually she started to meet them in a local park because she trusted them. On one occasion she was introduced to a man in his 20s, who drove a nice a "flashy" car. He became her friend and showered her with lots of attention and gifts.

Farhah started to believe this older man was her "boyfriend" because he made her feel special and accepted drugs and alcohol that he gave her. Farhah soon became addicted to drugs and especially alcohol. It did not matter if she could not afford to buy them because her "boyfriend" would provide them free. One day her older boyfriend took her to a flat and made her dress up in new clothes and boots that he had bought for her and then raped her. He took photographs of her and threatened to send them to her family unless she did as she was told.

Farhah became trapped and felt unable to ask for help. She was forced to give oral sex to young men. This then progressed to Farhah being passed around to other much older men. She would be taken to various locations in the city such as flats, hotels and cars where men could have sex with her. Each time it was common for her to have sex with several men. The men would watch each other have sex with her. She would be given lots of alcohol and also injected with drugs. On one occasion Farhah remembers there being up to 15 men in the room. Farhah witnessed men exchanging money for having sex with her.

Farhah was threatened and told that if she did not continue to turn up to have sex with men when she was required, then her family would be attacked. Farhah also started to run away from home as the men wanted her for longer periods of time. This would result in her going missing for days. By the time she was 13, she had run away about ten times. The men also encouraged Farhah to bring her younger sister to them and one day Farhah even attempted to take her younger sister with her but was unsuccessful.

Sometimes the men that were driving Farhah to the various locations would stop the car and also rape her too. Farhah was also beaten and burned with cigarettes and sometimes strapped down and her clothes ripped off. She was also forced to perform sexual acts on the men and do role-play such as dancing for the men including with another young Asian female. She also had to perform sex acts via a webcam for some clients. Farhah was in such severe pain because of the brutal rapes that she also started to take painkillers everyday. Farhah was even passed around for sex during the month of Ramadan – considered a holy month by Muslims. Most of the men who abused Farhah were of Pakistani background and some were of other ethnic backgrounds, including Afghani and white. Many of the men were much older and in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. Through hearing conversations over a period of time she found out that many were married.

At the age of 14, Farhah went missing for a prolonged period and was reported missing to the police. She was eventually found at the family home of a man who had befriended her and was a part of the grooming ring. Other family members also lived in the same house including elders and extended family and were aware that Farhah would be locked up during the day in the bedroom while the offender went to work. The offender would leave a bucket for her so she could use it as a toilet during the day. When Farhah was rescued, the family members defended the offender and made excuses that she was being protected and looked after her because she had run away from home due to family

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When Farhah was rescued she was covered in bruises, blood stains, cigarette burns and intoxicated on drugs, and suffering from severe abdominal pains as a result of brutal multiple rapes. After being rescued Farhah started self-harming as she relived the ordeal of her rapes. For her own safety she had to taken into medical care for psychiatric help to deal with her trauma.

The police were informed but there was no prosecution because Farhah was not willing to give evidence and formally report her abusers.

Case Study 2 : Saima's Story

Saima (of Pakistani heritage) came from a violent family – her brothers and father were very violent. She grew up not liking herself and secretly self harmed. At the age of 15, Saima became sexually active out of choice. She had sexual relationships with boys her own age and a bit older and became known as a "slag" at school by other pupils.

One day Saima went to a local park with some boys and other girls and was raped by 3 men. They also filmed her ordeal. Saima struggled to come to terms with this and began to drink heavily. No one believed anything Saima said, including what had happened to her because she was seen as a "trouble maker" at school. The men that had abused her started to offer her money, drugs and alcohol. Eventually she started to view them as her friends.

However, she was regularly raped and beaten by them and then would also suffer more violence at home. The offenders, who were all of Pakistani background, would encourage each other to rape and abuse her. Saima did not seek help as she felt this was her destiny and was also extremely scared of her abusers. She believed they were so dangerous that they would kill her and her family. Saima struggles now with serious sexually transmitted diseases, health implications and addictions.

Case Study 3 : Rehana's Story

Rehana came from a Pakistani family and while she was growing up, experienced sexual abuse from first cousins, uncles and some extended family members. She never had the confidence to disclose her experience to anyone and always felt unsafe and unsettled even in her own home. At school Rehana became a loner but eventually befriended by people who were bad company.

When Rehana was 13 years old, one of her friends introduced her to a 17-year-old boy outside her school. He would meet her outside her school in his flash car. After a few meetings, she trusted him and started to miss whole days from school and spend time with him because she was looking for escape from the reality of her home situation. He would drive her around to various parks and car parks. He would smoke cannabis and persuade her to try it too. They would have intimate encounters in the car.

One day in an isolated car park, he asked Rehana if he could take photographs of her breasts but she refused. However, he forcefully took pictures of her and filmed himself with his penis on her face. She remembers struggling with him in the car but then remembers nothing. The next thing she remembers is waking up near school with her clothes half on and half off. She remembers feeling very sick when she became conscious.

After this incident Rehana was blackmailed for a whole year and was forced to take part in gruesome sex acts against her will. She was taken to locations within her town and also a town nearby where she would be raped by older men of Afghanistani, Pakistani and Bengali background. The rapes would be filmed. No one knew what she was going through as she felt unable to tell anyone. People around her including her family just thought she was behaving badly. Rehana's health deteriorated over the year and she became withdrawn and isolated. She did not have the confidence to speak with anyone including professionals or family. However, she eventually confided in a friend and with her support managed to escape the vicious cycle she was caught in.

Case Study 4 : Imaan's Story

Imaan who was from a Muslim background (ethnicity not disclosed) was in her late teens when she first reached out to talk about the sexual abuse she had suffered from a young age after years of being groomed by her Quran teacher, her father and the women in their respective families. She had sustained years of not only sexual and physical abuse but also psychological brainwashing.

Imaan had always believed her teacher to be right because he used verses from the Quran, which he claimed justified his abuse of her and the abuse by her father. Her father had stopped sexually abusing when she reached puberty. However her Quran teacher continued the abuse. His wife was aware of the abuse and even counselled Imaan to continue allowing it to happen when she began to object to it.

Imaan came across information online, which made her question what the religious teacher had been telling her. She realised that the abuse could not be justified using the Quran. However she struggled to "let go" of the belief she had been taught because throughout her childhood it was her norm that was even validated by her mother. It has taken a number of years to help Imaan understand what she had suffered. Imaan eventually disclosed that other men and girls were also involved in this circle of abuse.

When Aisha who was from a Muslim background (ethnicity not disclosed) was 6 years old, she was sexually abused by a family member. As Aisha was very young she didn't understand what had happened to her until she became a teenager and became aware of sex. Aisha had not spoken to anyone about what she had suffered and went into deep depression. She took to self-harming as a way to cope and isolated herself from her family.

When Aisha was 14 years old, she became mixed up with the wrong crowd at school. She was frequently in trouble with her teachers for displaying disruptive and aggressive behaviour. Her new friends introduced her to an online "Islamic" forum, where young Muslims could chat regularly, "hang out" and "pick" each other up because their parents did not allow them to "date" or go out after school. After a few months on two Islamic online forums, Aisha found herself regularly chatting into the night with other male forum users. These users were adult men. She felt chatting into the night was a good distraction for her and that she could find solace from the nightmares she often had. What Aisha did not know at the time, was that she was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder as a result of the sexual abuse she suffered when she was a child.

Gradually the men online groomed Aisha, under the guise of friendship. One man used his status of having an established presence on the forum to build trust with Aisha, often using Islam as a pretext for gaining this trust and confidence in him. Before she knew what was happening she was pulled into sexually explicit conversations online and was coerced to perform sexual acts through the web camera on her computer.

Safa who is of Muslim background (ethnicity not disclosed) was just 9 years old when a family friend, whom she called "uncle" started to pay her lots of attention. He told her she was "special" and that they had a "unique friendship". The uncle, who was in his forties, married with two children, began to touch her sexually. Despite this she remembers that she loved him because he always bought her treats or was there to comfort her if she had an argument with her parents.

When Safa was 14 years old, the uncle raped her in her family home while her parents were out. He told her that if she told anyone, she would not be believed and would be called a "slag". He also told her that her parents loved him more than her, and that who would believe a young girl over a married and respected man? Safa felt very confused - on the one hand she thought her uncle loved her and this was his way of showing his love but on the other hand he was mean and cruel when he threatened her to remain silent.

Safa had no one to turn to and her behaviour quickly deteriorated - she began taking drugs, sleeping around with boys at school and doing badly in her schoolwork. She became known as a troublemaker at home, school and in her community. Her uncle took advantage of this and stepped up his advances, began showing her off to his friends so they could approach her for sex too. They were all abusing her and sometimes were violent if she didn't comply with their demands. When Safa was about 16 years old, she disclosed the sexual abuse to a helpline who contacted statutory agencies and the police. However, the case did not progress further because Safa's parents did not believe her and she felt she could not go against her uncle whom she sometimes felt she still loved. At age of 17, Safa was addicted to heroin, lived on the streets and often prostituted herself to earn some money.

Case Study 7 : Nazia's Story

A Bangladeshi family of four sisters lost their father at a very young age. They lived with their mother who was unemployed and could not speak English. Nazia was the eldest and when she was 14 years old, she met a Bangladeshi man outside school and started dating him and became sexually active with him. Within a few months her boyfriend had got her hooked on heroin. To fund the drug habits, he then forced her to start doing street work. He also circulated her amongst his friends who were mostly in their 20s but a few were teenagers. Most of them were of South Asian background with a few being white. The men would use her for sex in exchange for money or drugs.

Nazia felt helpless as she was totally at the mercy of her addiction. The men were aware of this and used it to their advantage. She was made to do everything, including role-play, which she found very disturbing. It wasn't long before Nazia's boyfriend introduced her younger sisters to his friends. They too found themselves in the same situation as their older sister –becoming addicted to drugs and being passed around by their boyfriends to their friends. Due to their Muslim faith, they felt unable to ask for help – they thought that they would be judged and blamed. For this reason they did not seek help for a long time. The sisters managed to conceal their double lives from their mother when questioned on their whereabouts by covering for each other.

Nazia and her sisters' ordeal only emerged when she had a health scare and visited her local GP, who referred her to an agency for her drug addiction. The support worker helped Nazia and the rest of the family and involved other mainstream agencies. Collectively they provided them with the necessary support to deal with the addictions and helped them to relocate to a different city. The girls felt that moving away was the only way to escape their past and move forward with their lives. When they moved, they continued with their rehabilitation. Nazia and her sisters were not willing to report the men that sexually exploited them.

Case Study 8 : Fawzi's Story

Fawzia is a Pakistani girl. When she was 14 years old, she started to receive a lot of attention from the older 17-year-old Pakistani boys in her school. She felt that she was getting attention because she was quite heavy chested compared with the other pupils. They bought her lots of gifts and started to ask her to meet them alone without her friends. They started to meet her alone in a nearby alleyway – eventually they persuaded her to perform sexual acts. The boys then circulated information around the school about what she had done with them, which resulted in her getting a "bad reputation". She became isolated in school and the boys pretended they were her only friends so they could continue exploiting her.

Sumaira's early years were highly traumatizing for her. Her mother died when she was a toddler and was brought up by her Pakistani father and grandmother. She was diagnosed with learning difficulties at a young age and her father began sexually abusing her when she was 13 years old. Her uncle and her older brother also started to abusing her soon after. All of them were very educated working in various professions and were aware of each others abuse of Sumaira.

Her father, uncle and brother continued to abuse her for the next four years. Sumaira did not understand what was happening to her and believed that these men loved her. Her grandmother was aware of the abuse and rape but did not intervene. She had even walked into the room when Sumaira was being raped by her father. She told Sumaira not to tell anyone what was taking place because it would bring shame on the family.

When Sumaira was 17 years old, she started attending college and a key worker was assigned to her because of her learning difficulties. The key worker noticed regular bruising on her wrists and arms as if she had been forcefully held. After conversations with Sumaira the worker suspected abuse and involved social services. After several meetings Sumaira eventually had the confidence to disclose her experiences. However she refused to either report the abuse to the police or leave home because she believed that her father, uncle and brother loved her. However, one day Sumaira decided she could no longer endure the abuse when all three of them raped her together. Although she was still not willing to report them, she asked social services to find her accommodation and was placed in a women's refuge.

Within a few months of moving into the refuge, a young Pakistani man befriended Sumaira. She started dating him because he promised to marry her. As soon as she started a relationship with him, he took her to a house party and introduced her to his friends. During the party he told her that he owed lots of money to his friends and that if she really loved him, she would help him pay off his debts by having sex with the men. She was confused and felt pressurized and reluctantly agreed. She was taken to the bedroom and several friends had sex with her. The boyfriend continued to pass Sumaira around to his friends and other men for the next 6 months.

Sumaira confided in her social worker about what was happening but again refused to report the abuse to the police because she believed her boyfriend loved her. Eventually after support from the social worker, Sumaira started to stand up to her boyfriend and refused to go out with him. However, the boyfriend then befriended another vulnerable young woman at the refuge. So when Sumaira would leave the refuge to go anywhere the other young woman called the boyfriend to inform him. The boyfriend and his friends would drive around looking for her and would pick her up off the street and gang rape her in the back of a van. They would also torture her and insert objects into her vagina such as perfume bottles and leads.

The social services informed the police but Sumaira would still not report the rapes to the police, as she now feared the men. Her social worker then arranged for Sumaira to be moved to another part of the country. It was the only way to end the cycle of abuse.

Case Study 10 : Jamila's Story

Jamila was a graduate in her mid 20s from a Pakistani background. She was living alone away from family because of her job. A local Pakistani man, a few years older than her, befriended her. He told her that he loved her and wanted to marry her but in secret until he could get his parents to formally agree to the marriage. Unknown to Jamila at the time, he was married with children.

They married in secret without involving either family. Jamila would receive visits in the evening from her husband so he could have sex with her and then return back to his family home. He then started demanding expensive gifts from her such as designer watches, clothes and shoes. Jamila loved her husband so she bought him whatever he asked for. She was unable to keep up with his demands and could not afford to buy him the requested items. It was then that her husband suggested that she started earning additional income so she could continue buying him what he wanted and to help pay off his debts. He put a lot of pressure on Jamila and used emotional blackmail to get her to have sex with other men in exchange for money. He then started taking Jamila to various houses so his friends could have sex with her. Some of these men looked religious from their appearance such as having beards and wearing thobes. Jamila was not the only one being exploited in this way – the same network of Pakistani men would exchange information about other young Asian women and converts living by themselves in the same town and target them in the same way. They would then share their so-called "wives" within the network.

Case Study 11 : Anisa's Story

Older Pakistani men befriended Anisa, a 14-year-old Pakistani girl. However, when she started trusting them, the men forced her into prostitution. Anisa would not be able to move due to the amounts of alcohol and drugs they would give. Many of the men that were having sex with Anisa appeared religious because of their "thobes" (Islamic clothing) and beards – they were from a Pakistani background. This made her lose her faith in Islam and she could not even bring herself to enter a mosque or cover her head. She was prostituted for another 2 years.

When Anisa was 16 years old, she gained enough courage to ask for help. She believes that she was only able to escape her situation because she was placed in a women's refuge. Anisa is now trying to take tiny steps and starting a new life with her child. She is also reclaiming her faith in life and Islam – realizing that Islam was not to blame but people were.

Case Study 12 : Khadija's Story

Khadija, who is from a Somalian background, attended an Islamic school. By the time she was 12 years old, older Pakistani and Afghani men had befriended Khadija. When these men gained Khadija's trust, they started inviting her back to their flats so they could all "hang out". However, when she went to their flats, she was abused. Despite her ordeal, she still thought these men were her friends. The men also encouraged her to bring friends with her too. On one occasion, Khadija became friends with a new girl at school and convinced her to go with her to meet her older friends. When they both went to the flat, they were both sexually abused.

Case Study 13 : Abida's Story

Abida who was from a Bangladeshi family and first became known to support services when she was 11 years old because she had made allegations about historical sexual abuse. Abida dressed in a traditional headscarf at school but was being sexually bullied at school and other pupils were spreading rumours about her sexual behaviour. While this was going on a 17- year old Bangladeshi boy groomed Abida over Facebook. He convinced her to meet him and when she did, he raped her. After this incident, she started to go missing regularly and became very dependent on alcohol to cope mentally.

Then a number of older Bangladeshi men took advantage of Abida's vulnerability and began to sexually exploit her. They also used her to hold goods for them for safekeeping. Abida remained trapped in that situation for the next 3-4 years. At one point she did try and escape the situation by reporting the rapes but dropped the case, as she did not have the emotional strength to see it through. She felt trapped and felt she could not get out of the cycle of abuse – every time she tried, the men would drag her back in. The only way she managed to get away from the perpetrators was to get married and move abroad.

Case Study 14 : Hasina's Story

When Hasina, who is of Bangladeshi descent, was 10 years old, she went missing overnight. When she returned to her family home, she was in possession of a large amount of cash and in a distraught condition and very emotionally upset. She smashed up her room and tried to take her own life. Although the police were called, Hasina did not disclose what had happened to her. She did disclose sexual assault to a female Sexual Offences Investigation Trained Officer, naming a 16-year-old Bangladeshi male who lived nearby. Soon after, Hasina started to go missing from home and school on a regular basis and began hanging around with a local gang. Hasina was moved to her grandmother's even though police and social care were aware that the 16-year-old Bangladeshi male who had originally attacked her lived around the corner. Although Hasina reported that he followed her to school every day and was frightened of him, she was not moved to a place of safety.

Over the next three years Hasina was sexually exploited and would go missing and wake up in various places including hotels not knowing how she had got there. She would phone the police and social services and ask to be collected. Eventually Children's services tried to help her by placing her in a secure unit for 6 months where she could be supported with rehabilitation. However, due to poor exit planning by children's services when she was released from the secure unit, Hasina rejoined the network and gang she had been a part of. She even connected with another girl who she had met at the secure unit. Hasina is now 14 years old and continues to be taken to flats and moves around the city but will not report the offenders, who are Bangladeshi young men associated with gangs.

Hasina has recently been moved to a placement outside London - due to pressure from the NSPCC for improved responses. She is starting to regain confidence, her school attendance has improved and she is letting mental services in to deal with her post traumatic stress disorder.

Case Study 14 : Rokeya's Story

Rokeya of Bangladeshi descent became known to Children's Services because she had reported being sexually assaulted by an older male from the Bangladeshi community locally, where he was well known within the neighbourhood. She was 14 years old at the time and soon after started to go missing regularly. She was befriended by two Bangladeshi girls of similar age who themselves were being sexually exploited. After meeting these girls, Rokeya's went missing for escalated periods of time.

Her new friends introduced Rokeya to a Bangladeshi man in his mid 20s, who was a drug dealer. He had sexually assaulted several Bangladeshi girls in their early teens, verified by the fact that he had very distinctive facial features that all girls described in detail. He would invite the girls to stay around his flat truanting from school. She started to hang out and stay at the flat – and was some times locked-in as she was not given keys- and started to think of this older man as her boyfriend. He coerced her into using class A drugs (heroin and crack) and alcohol, and invited other girls to the flat for him and his friends. One day when she stayed at his flat she woke up in a haze from substances and realised that another man was having sex with her while her so-called boyfriend was watching them.

Case Study 16 : Koser's Story

Koser is a Pakistani woman who is in her 30s. She has learning disabilities, which means that her mental age is lower. Koser had an arranged marriage and suffered domestic violence throughout her marriage. Her children were eventually taken into care because she was unable to protect them from their violent father. Once Koser was separated from her husband – a male known to one of her friends starting showing interest in her. After building a friendship with Koser, the man, who was also of Pakistani heritage, introduced her to his friends, and also started to take her to other cities and regions regularly so men could have sex with her. The offenders are from a Pakistani background.

From her trips, Koser remembers waking up but not going to sleep. She also recalls being given alcohol and waking up with her legs hurting and not being able to walk. This has been continuing for the last several years but she will not seek help because she believes these visits make her feel special because she being given lots of attention. She has been made to believe all these men love her and are her boyfriends. Due to Koser's learning disabilities, she does not understand that these men are sexually exploiting her. She has recently had an abortion as she had become pregnant and did not know who the father was. She now worries about the abortion but also what her friends and family would think of her if they knew about her sexual activities.

Case Study 17 : Rani's Story

An 18-year-old Asian Muslim male contacted Rani, a 13-year-old Asian female on Facebook. He got to know her by exchanging messages online, which then extended to texting. After several weeks, he persuaded Rani to meet him at a hotel. When she met him – he had sex with her. Rani confided in her school friend about what had happened. This information was also disclosed to the teacher and the police were contacted.

Case Study 18 : Amina's Story

Amina is of Pakistani heritage and came from a troubled background. Her parents suffered from mental health issues and she felt neglected at home. Her parents were strict and forced her to wear the headscarf. When she was 14 years old, she started to receive attention from foreign students, who were from Pakistan and Afghanistan. She got to know them because they worked at a local takeaway. They started to invite her back to their flat. Other foreign students also lived at or visited the flat. The students passed Amina around between them and sexually exploited her. The students, who were mostly in their 20s, also encouraged Amina to bring her friends along. Amina then introduced two of her friends to them and brought them to the flat. They too were sexually exploited. The abuse continued for the next 3 years until Amina was forced into a marriage after the parents suspected what was going on.

Case Study 19 : Tabassam's Story

Tabassam's ethnic background is Pakistani and she lived in foster care. She was 13years old when a Pakistani woman in her early 20s started to become friendly with her. This older friend would buy her gifts such as clothes. The friend had a boyfriend who was also in his 20s and was a known drug dealer. He too was of Pakistani background. They both introduced Tabassam to drugs and alcohol. They also got her to carry drugs and introduced her to other men in their networks and sexually exploited her. Four years on, Tabassam continues to be exploited and abused because she is unwilling to seek help or report the perpetrators because she does not recognize herself as a victim.

Case Study 20 : Maryam's Story

Maryam's ethnic background is Pakistani. Her father had left her mother who went on to remarry. An uncle also sexually abused her. When Maryam told her mother, she refused to believe it. Maryam felt neglected and became rebellious - she started to dress up so that she looked older than her age and stayed out until late.

When Maryam was 14 years old, she got to know a girl who was couple of years older than her. This friend was dating an Indian man of Sikh background who was in his 20s. The man offered his girlfriend money to get Maryam to a house party. The friend took Maryam to the party and made an excuse to leave and left her alone with the man. He then raped Maryam.

Maryam reported the matter to the police and told her mother what had occurred. Instead of being supportive, her mother blamed Maryam for getting raped and kicked her out of the house. She had to be placed in foster care. While in care, she continued to stay out late. On one occasion, she was saved by a youth worker from being gang raped by a group of Pakistani lads in their late teens. He had overheard the young men saying: *"if we can get her in the car, we can all have a go at her"*. He alerted Maryam consequently she did not accept the lift despite being pressured to do so. Maryam is now living with her mother again and they have rebuilt their relationship.

Case Study 21 : Samina's Story

Little is known about Samina's background except she that she was from a Pakistani family. When she was 15 years old, Samina started dating a man in his 20s. He got Samina hooked on drugs and alcohol by providing them to her for free. Once she was addicted he started to charge her. Samina started stealing from home to feed her drug and alcohol habit. When she was unable to find the money, her boyfriend encouraged her to earn money by having sex with other men. Initially he introduced her to his friends and then got her to work on the streets. Most of Samina's clients were middle-aged Pakistani men and some would even pick her up in their cars on the way back from praying at the mosque. This continued for the next few years until she was provided with help and support to escape her situation.

Case Study 22 : Parveen's Story

Parveen is of Pakistani heritage. She was 9 years old when her step father's brother and his friend started to give her lots of attention, which included offering to take her to the shops to buy her sweets. Eventually the men were so trusted they were allowed to go to into her bedroom and read her stories before she went to sleep. They started to touch her body inappropriately but swore her to secrecy. They used to persuade her not to wear underwear underneath her nightwear. They promised Parveen that if she kept quiet, they would buy her whatever she wanted. They bought Parveen a TV for her bedroom that was fixed with a hidden camera. Her mother and stepfather never questioned the generosity of presents and attention by these men.

By the time Parveen was 12 years old, they had started having sex with her. Unknown to Parveen at the time, they would sometimes lace her Horlicks drink with drugs. They also secretly filmed her and began blackmailing her. They threatened to show her family the films unless Parveen agreed to come outside with them to have sex with their friends. She was so scared and felt she had no option and was made to have sex with them and their friends, who were of Pakistani background, in their 20s and included graduates and university students. The men even fabricated stories to the family so they could take Parveen out with them. The offenders also purchased what they called "special nightwear" that the Parveen had to wear when she was with them. This continued until she was about 14 years old and started suffering from sexual health problems. This led to her parents finding out that she was sexually active. Although she disclosed that she was being forced to have sex, they blamed her for allowing the abuse to happen. Her parents forced her to undergo a hymen repair surgery and also forced her into a marriage abroad. After remaining in the marriage for a few years Parveen ran away and now lives away from her family. She has since sought help from a third sector support group but did not want the police or agencies involved.

Amana is of Pakistani background. She attended a mixed secondary school and got on really well with one particular boy in her class. Doing assignments together in the library and hanging out at school progressed to going to town on Saturdays. The friendship turned into a relationship and Amana, at the age of 15, was convinced that losing her virginity to this boy would increase her popularity. However, this one event led to her being pressurised to also having sex with other boys too. On one evening she was taken to a location and had to sleep with 8 young men. Amana was made to satisfy various fantasies while the men exchanged money between themselves. She would be driven around by the group and viewed as a trophy.

By the time Amana was 16 years old she had transformed from a popular pupil to a girl that was isolated with a stigma attached to her because of her lifestyle. To escape the group, she turned to some friends for help. However, they took advantage of her vulnerability and also sexually exploited her. However, this time the group was far more highly organized and they forced her to now work for them. She had no choice but to leave her family home and the men provided accommodation for her so she was easily accessible.

When Amana was 18 years old she was thrown out on to the streets because her value had dropped and younger girls replaced her. The offenders were mostly of Pakistani heritage – some were born in the UK, while others had come to Britain on spousal visas. Some offenders were working professionals and some held positions of authority within the community.

Case Study 24 : Nabila's Story

Nabila, of Pakistani heritage was 16 years old and also deaf and dumb. A couple of youths were driving around in their flashy looking car when they met Nabila on the street and chatted her up. They convinced her to join them for a takeaway and go clubbing at night. Afterwards they took her to a house where she was violently abused by seven young men. She was thrown out on to the streets during the early hours of the morning. The next day the group drove around to find her again. When they found her, they put Nabila through the same ordeal. However, this time they promised to look after her, provide her with a good life, buy designer clothes, and give money. They eventually convinced her to also bring her friends along too. Nabila went on to introduce three of her friends to the group who were sexually exploited in the same way. In one of the incidents, a father and son raped the same victim. The offenders were of Pakistani heritage.

Case Study 25 : Simi's Story

Simi was 15 years old; her ethnicity was Indian and was of Sikh background. She was befriended and introduced to a wider group of men who were from Afghani, Pakistani and Indian (Hindu) heritage. Simi was introduced to drugs and alcohol and then passed around the group for sex. They also arranged for others to have sex with Simi in exchange for money. She was also taken to various locations including restaurants. The men also took photographs and videos on their phones. Simi felt stuck and unable to tell anyone especially her family. Her abuse only ended when her family found out what was taking place.

Case Study 26 : Sam's Story

Note: This is an amalgamation of case studies. It is therefore not about one individual but the combined experiences of a few Asian girls to protect their identities.

A young Asian man in his 20s targeted a 13-year-old Asian schoolgirl, Sam. He hung around and waited outside her secondary school regularly. She tried to avoid him but eventually succumbed to him. She was unhappy at home and going through some issues. She was drawn to him because he was showing interest in her and was very kind and generous towards her.

He looked after Sam, gave her gifts, would take her out for lunch and meals and told her he loved her. He even promised to marry her. She began to trust him and did not think that she needed to be afraid of him. Eventually he took her to a flat where he left her and made an excuse to go and run an errand. While he was out, another older man came into the flat and said that he had paid her boyfriend so he could have sex with her and then raped her. Sam was in utter devastation and when her boyfriend returned he informed her that this was what she would have to do now - otherwise he would tell her family and friends. She was then forced into prostitution.

She was so frightened that she didn't know what to do and kept quiet. Her boyfriend also threatened to get her younger sister involved if she did not cooperate. She was so worried about the consequences she did as she was told and became involved in drink and drugs to numb out the pain of being abused. She also continued to face problems at home where she was beaten and locked in a room and even her hair was shaved off so that she would not leave the house. Sam had nowhere to turn because she couldn't tell anyone - she felt she was to blame for her situation.

Case Study 27 : Sajida's Story

17-year-old Sajida, who was of Afghani heritage was befriended over Facebook by two men who were both friends. Both men were also of Afghani background. One of the men wanted to date Sajida and convinced her into meeting him. When she met him he appeared to be in his early 30s rather than 18 years old which he claimed to be. He continued to contact her online and coerced her into sending naked photographs of herself online. Sajida was made to believe she was in a relationship with this man. However, he then started to blackmail her and threatened to post her photographs online and send them to her family unless she agreed to have sex with him and his friend. Sajida confided in one of her friends and the police were contacted.

Case Study 28 : Osma's Story

Osma, who was in her 20s and of Pakistani heritage, had entered into an arranged marriage. She lived with her extended family. Her brother-in-law raped her and started to threaten and blackmail her. He continued to rape her and wanted her to have sex with his friends. She was frightened and felt unable to tell anyone – she thought no one would believe her and that she would be blamed. The brother in law was also raping another female member in the same household. One day when Osma was out alone during the day, her brother in law tracked her down with his friends and dragged her into a park and raped her. Osma could no longer cope and disclosed her experiences to her family. Most of the family, including her mother, did not accept what had happened and her husband wanted to divorce her. As her brother-in-law was not reported and his behaviour not challenged she became very frightened about what he would do to her next and ran away from the family home.

Case Study 29 : Nosheen's Story

Nosheen of Pakistani background was 14 years old when she started her relationship with her boyfriend. He was from the same ethnic background and a few years older than her. He was known locally for dealing in drugs. He bought her lots of gifts and told her that he really loved her and wanted to marry her. He even told her that he was prepared to run away with her just so he could marry her. He eventually started taking her to his flat and ordered her to provide sexual favours for his friends. Nosheen is nearly 16 years old now and drinks and smokes heavily to try and block out what she has to endure regularly at her boyfriend's flat. She says she cannot refuse because she will get "slapped around". Nosheen has also started to self-harm and has been diagnosed with depression by her GP who is unaware about what she is going through. She will not leave her boyfriend because she says she really loves him and believes that he adores her and will marry her.

Karima is of Bangladeshi background and the eldest of seven children - she was 14 when her grooming took effect. Her emotional and pastoral needs were neglected by her parents, who were busy taking care of her younger siblings, In fact Karima was expected to help them take care of her brothers and sisters. Karima began to display attention-seeking behaviour at school and some of her actions, especially truanting and non-attendance raised concerns with her teachers. Whilst truanting Karima was drawn into a relationship with an older Asian man of Pakistani heritage, who gave her the time and attention she was craving. He began to ply her with alcohol and asked her to hide drugs for him at her home, and from this it progressed to using the drugs and developing an addiction. The first time Karima was raped by her boyfriend was when he arranged a special day out, and took her to a bedroom in a house where he forced himself onto her recorded the act on his phone. This was then used to blackmail Karima into carrying out requests to carry the drugs from one place to another, and to collect and deliver drug parcels. She was rewarded with jewelry of little or no value, and also alcohol. Within a very short period of time Karima became a drugs mule and addicted to alcohol and drugs. Although Children's Services became subsequently involved, their intervention was inappropriate on many levels. Karima went into emergency foster care, and this too was inappropriate because the placement was in the same town as her boyfriend.

Things progressed to Karima's boyfriend asking her to sleep with his friends (who were also of Pakistani background), saying if she loved him she wouldn't turn down his request. However, if she was to do so, then he would have no alternative but to share the video footage of her having sex with him, and dishonour both her and her family. Karima still believed he loved her and she wanted to do anything to hold on to him.

Karima doesn't know how many men have had sex with her, but she does believe that her boyfriend was making money from her. Things came to a head when her boyfriend "sold" her to another gang of Asian men from another region, leading to her family and foster carers reporting her missing to the police. Karima was found a few days later far from her home and the police brought her back. She has managed to turn her life around with the support of specialist agencies and is now safe.

Case Study 31 : Shabana's Story

Shabana is of dual Pakistani and White heritage. She went to a predominantly Asian school where she was bullied for having a White mum because she looked so very Asian. Shabana met John who was in his 50s when she was 13. John was also of mixed Pakistani and White heritage. John made her feel good when she was feeling low by buying her gifts and telling her that he would look after her and sort out anyone that bullied her at school. Shabana started seeing John after school and they would get food and alcohol. John then went on to introduce Shabana to a Pakistani man who was also very nice to her. She would return their kindness with sexual acts as doing so made her feel accepted for once. These men appeared to want to see her and spend time with her and in her mind they were looking after her at a time when she had no friends.

Shabana's family were not aware of what was going on, and gradually the Pakistani man started to introduce her to other Pakistani men. She would sit in a room and the men would take turns raping her while she was in a drunken state. Shabana knew this was not right but allowed the exploitation to continue as she believed they cared for her and looked after her needs i.e. they bought her food and gave her money and gifts.

As the years went on the abuse got worse and the sexual acts turned into torture as she would be gang raped. Her offenders would insert broken glass into her and objects such as lighters. The more she resisted the more violent the men became. By the time Shabana got to college, John moved abroad. The Asian men that she had been passed to would follow her and bombard her with phone calls and text messages. On one occasion she was bundled into a van, gang raped and then thrown out of the van with no clothes on.

Following police involvement, the case went to court and subsequently one of the men was deported. When the other men threatened to take revenge, she moved to a university in another area where she felt ostracized because she was Asian. When she returned home after university, she was spotted by one of the men and they chased her and threatened to kill her. She was placed in a refuge and although she changed her mobile phone number, they still managed to find her new number. One of the men sent messages detailing his plan to get her with acid, while another man said he wanted to meet to "say sorry in person" for what they had done.

Despite the threats of violence, it is believed Shabana met with the men again When she went out for a few hours, she came back bruised and with a swollen face and had been assaulted. It is thought that she is currently prostituting herself.

Ghazala is originally from Pakistan, and had an arranged marriage to her first cousin, Khaled, who was from England. What the two families failed to disclose to Ghazala is that Khaled suffered from depression and had learning difficulties. Ghazala came to the UK and joined her husband's family, who on the whole treated her well, particularly her husband's brother. He insisted she tell him if she needed anything, and often brought small gifts such as ice cream, or mithai (Asian sweets). He often hinted that her husband was not worthy of her.

About eight months after arriving in the UK Ghazala and Khaled moved into their own home. Her brother in law began to visit in the evenings, saying he was keeping them company and passing time. After a short period, he began to bring a couple of friends with him too. This led to them playing cards, and then to gambling. Ghazala's brother-in-law always praised her in front of his friends, saying how patient and kind she was; what a good cook she was and how she was an asset to the family. This helped Ghazala's self confidence immensely, as her husband hardly ever spoke to her due to his mental health, never mind praise her.

One evening, Ghazala's brother-in-law was losing heavily at cards and had nothing left to gamble. He then offered Ghazala to the winner and this was accepted. On this occasion Ghazala was raped in her own home, by one of the men whilst the others watched and offered advice and tips. The several men, who were present, recorded this on mobile phones. Ghazala's husband was upstairs and oblivious to the ordeal of his wife. A few days later the same situation developed and three different men raped Ghazala's during the same evening. A pattern began to develop, and this became a regular occurrence. Her brother in law would instruct her to "pretty herself" and wear nice underwear, and be ready. All the offenders were Pakistani.

This abuse continued for over a year, and Ghazala was helpless and trapped. She was threatened and blackmailed and her brother-in-law vowed to show the recordings to the family in the UK and the family in Pakistan. This meant complete and total dishonour for Ghazala, to the point where her life would be at risk. The abuse finally ended when Ghazala's husband took his own life, and she moved back into the main family home. She has not disclosed the abuse to anyone, nor has she sought any medical aid or attention. Her brother-in-law is in the same house as her, and he behaves as if nothing untoward has ever happened. He constantly tells Ghazala that good times will return and he will be rich again before too long. Ghazala believes that the gambling was a cover, and that her brother-in-law was prostituting her for money and favours. She is sure it will happen again, but cannot access help due to cultural factors and a deep-seated fear that she will be blamed for her ordeal.

Case Study 33 : Asha's Story

Asha (Pakistani ethnicity) was 12 years old when she was first sexually assaulted. She was playing in the street when a man approached her, began talking to her and invited her back to his flat. He then touched her indecently before leaving. Within a year she had started self-harming; had become disengaged from her family; was associating with another girl who was regularly missing from home; and had started to go missing from home herself on a regular basis.

Serious concerns grew that she was being sexually groomed and whilst still 13 she disclosed to the police how two older men had taken her to a hotel, where they had sex with her. A few months later she reported how she had been picked up in a car by a man, taken to a remote spot and sexually assaulted. She continued to go missing from home and shortly after her 14th birthday described how she was being taken to houses and raped by different men. Asha then received help from a number of agencies. She was suffering from depression and anxiety and rarely went out. However, after a year and a half she again began to go missing from home and upon returning one day while 15 disclosed that she had engaged in sexual intercourse with much older men in their cars.

Asha continued in a chaotic life style and was the victim of further sexual offending including kidnap and rape but as a result of multi-agency interventions has now been relocated to another area where she is safe and is being protected. The offenders in this case were of Pakistani background.

Case Study 34 : Halima's Story

Halima's ethnic background is Pakistani and she is 15 years of age. Her father left her mother shortly after her birth because he stated he wanted only sons. As Halima grew up she had a poor relationship with her mother and at 12 years began truanting from school. Rumours were circulated amongst her friends that she was engaging in sexual activity with older boys and this led to friction in the family with her mother being visited by her uncle and threats being made. As a result of the disruption social services became involved and after an initial assessment a social worker was allocated. When she was 14 Halima disclosed to her social worker that several months earlier she had attended a teenage disco with an older friend where they had met two older boys. They had returned to the friends address with the boys where vodka was drunk. When she went to lie down upstairs one of the boys followed her and he tried to rape her. However, when this allegation was investigated it was soon found to be false. She then disclosed how in fact she had spent several months with a much older Pakistani man who she met in a takeaway and who had pestered her for sex - she believed she was in a relationship with him. They had intercourse a number of times over a period of months. During this time she lived for several months with an older friend with her mother's knowledge and would spend large amounts of time at the man's address. Eventually he said he no longer wished to have anything to do with her and ignored her attempts to contact him. This man was arrested but denied any sexual activity had taken place. He was subsequently arrested and denied that any sexual activity had taken place. Unknown to Halima he had a history of violent offending, domestic violence with a partner, drug use and frequenting a red light area. She has now been placed in foster care.

Zara, of Pakistani ethnic background, was referred to a specialist organisation that supports young people who have been sexually exploited via school. She was 15 years old at the time. She was missing from home regularly and using substances. Zara was reluctant to receive support at first but over the summer built up a working relationship with the staff member. She disclosed that she was smoking cannabis daily and drinking, she would be given the alcohol and drugs for free from "mates". When questioned about these mates, she said they were people she knew from her area, and she trusted them - they were male and all aged over 20 years old. Zara was quite secretive and never gave any names or places she visited. During the summer she disclosed sexual abuse from her father - a Social Care referral was made and consequently she and her brother were placed on the Child Protection Register under categories of sexual abuse, and neglect.

A forced marriage court order was also applied for Zara because she was scared and told professionals that her parents were going to take her to Pakistan to get her married. Zara continued to receive support from the specialist organisation on a weekly basis, which also made a referral to a local young person's substance misuse agency to help support her. Zara also started truanting from school, or when she was in school she was often in isolation due to misbehaving in lessons. She did not sit most of her GCSE exams.

When Zara turned 16, she presented at the local housing office and said that she was unable to stay at home due to violence from family. She was placed in a hostel in the centre of town. At this point she disengaged from support from the specialist agency saying that she did not want a worker any more.

Within a few months, Zara then made a self-referral to specialist agency and the same worker was able to pick her up straight away and start supporting her. Zara was still living in the hostel, and was surrounded with other extremely vulnerable young persons and young adults. She disclosed to the worker that the people she thought were her "mates" had sexually exploited her and had encouraged her to move into a hostel so she could have more freedom.

Her support worker took her for a sexually transmitted infection test and she found out that she was pregnant. Zara decided she wanted to keep the baby. There were concerns that this information would get out in her local area and that honour-based violence might occur. Zara did not believe that this would happen, which increased the risks as she was telling a lot of people she was pregnant. Social Care were still involved at this point. During the next month contact with Zara was limited. She would often miss appointments, and was difficult to contact, staying at many different people's houses.

At one appointment Zara told the worker that she had had a termination. Her support worker was very concerned about this as Zara was previously very sure she wanted to continue with the pregnancy. Zara disclosed at a later date that the group of "mates" had encouraged her to have the termination. At this point Zara was starting to realise that she was being controlled and exploited by this group of men, and that her only close girl friend was not a positive influence in her life either.

Zara was encouraged to get support from Connexions and reintegrate in college, or look at other education options, and was helped to find a flat as living in the hostel was not a positive place for her to be. Zara was not all ways engaging with the support, and last year disengaged from the service, saying that she did not want any further support. There has been no further contact from Zara it is hoped she will present herself once return for further support.

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