'Grooming' and the Sexual Abuse of Children: Implications for Sex Offender Assessment, Treatment and Management

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Abstract

'Grooming' has been termed 'a ubiquitous feature of the sexual abuse of children' (Thornton, 2003: 144). Despite the prominence of the term in contemporary discourses on sexual offending against children, it is a term that is insufficiently understood in the psychological, sociological, criminological or legal literature. Most recently, the term has been used in two primary offending contexts - on-line grooming and abuse by strangers, and institutional grooming and abuse by those in positions of trust. This article argues, however, that grooming and its role in child sexual abuse is a multi-faceted phenomenon and much more complex than has been highlighted previously. While there are a number of typologies of grooming, this article concentrates on those which may be most relevant for treatment and management contexts - 'peer-to-peer grooming' and 'institutional grooming.' Drawing on extensive fieldwork with professionals who work in the fields of child protection or victim support, and sex offender assessment, treatment or management across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, the aim of this article is two-fold: (i) to deconstruct the term grooming and examine its actual role in the onset of sexual offending against children; and (ii) to draw out the implications of these complexities for policy and practice, chiefly in terms of treatment and prevention.[1]

Key words: grooming; typologies; pathways; institutional grooming; risk; public health approaches

Introduction

One of the most recent and contentious debates on discourses concerning child sexual abuse has centred on behaviour known as 'grooming.' The term is generally used to describe the preparatory stages of abuse where abusers gain the trust of the child or significant others to both facilitate abuse and subsequently avoid discovery or disclosure. The literature to date has tended to concentrate on the grooming of children and, to a lesser extent, that of families, or communities (Salter, 1995, 2003; van Damn, 2001). Media and public discourses, in common with policy and legislative discourses, have been dominated by two primary paradigms of grooming. The first is 'on-line grooming' and abuse committed by predatory strangers (Gillespie, 2001; Gallagher et al, 2003).[2] The second is 'institutional grooming' and abuse committed by those in positions of trust (McAlinden, 2006).[3] These social and political constructions of potential risks to children, tend to exclude consideration of other sources of harm, particularly those which arise from within intra-familial settings.

The central argument of this article is that 'grooming' and its role in sexually harmful behaviour involving children is a highly nuanced process and much more complex than highlighted previously. Earlier research has been carried out from the perspective of victims (Berliner and Conte, 1990; Watkins and Bentovim, 1992), from offenders (Conte et al, 1989; Elliott et al, 1995) and from both

taken together (Phelan, 1995). These discourses, however, neglect the fact that sex offenders may groom not just the child but also significant others in terms of their family, the wider community or the surrounding environment as a necessary prerequisite to gaining access to the child (Salter, 2003; Craven et al, 2006). They also omit consideration of new and emerging forms of grooming including 'street' or 'localised grooming' as typified by recent cases in England and Wales, 'self-grooming' by offenders, 'peer-to-peer grooming' among children and young people, and what I have termed 'institutional grooming' (McAlinden, 2006) where sex offenders may seek to exploit organisational features or relationships in order to minimise the perceptions of others about potential risk.

The article draws on extensive comparative primary research conducted by the author in the form of over 50 in-depth semi-structured interviews with professionals in the fields of child protection, sex offender assessment, treatment and management, and victim support in the four jurisdictions of England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.[4] The overall aim of this research was to deconstruct the term 'grooming', to challenge and confront common misconceptions of the term within academic, official and public discourses, and to examine its actual role within the highly complex process of sexual offending against children. In tandem with this, the focus of this article is on examining some of the complexities concerning grooming and its' role within child sexual abuse, including that which occurs within intra-familial as well as extra-familial contexts, and to draw out the implications of these findings for policy and practice.

It is acknowledged from the outset that the term 'grooming' is a highly pejorative one. Such labels have the potential to pathologise harmless or benign behaviours towards children and to obscure the realities of risk and the nuances of sexual offending behaviour concerning children (McAlinden, 2012: 4). Furthermore, as Fernandez (2006) has contended, the use of the word 'grooming' is also problematic because it fails to acknowledge that much of the behaviours covered by the term would be deemed appropriate if they were used outside the context of abuse. Such labels may also tend to convey to the offender that 'the problem is the behaviour rather than the inappropriateness of the target person' (Fernandez, 2006: 191). Having acknowledged these caveats, however, the term 'grooming' is used throughout as a useful shorthand reference and in keeping with the literature.

Defining 'Grooming'

Despite the recent public prominence of the term, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to its' precise meaning and scope. 'Grooming' has been the subject of multiple definitions and there is no universally accepted understanding which fully captures all aspects of the process. Several writers have sought unhelpfully to frame their definition around 'paedophilia' (e.g. Howitt, 1995: 176; O'Connell, 2003: 6). Such definitions, however, do not accurately capture the nature of sexual grooming which can also occur with older children and young adults. Moreover, the stereotypical association with 'predatory paedophiles' can leave children more vulnerable to abuse since people known to the offender may be slow to recognise the signs of potentially harmful behaviour (Sutton and Jones, 2004: 21). Such characterisations can also prevent some sex offenders from identifying and acknowledging their own inappropriate or harmful behaviours (Craven et al, 2006: 288).

The current lack of consensus and clarity concerning the parameters of the expression are also reflected in the wide range of evolving terminology which is often used interchangeably within the literature. Various euphemisms have also been put forward including 'emotional seduction' (Salter, 1995: 274), 'enticement' (Kierkegaard, 2008: 42) or 'entrapment' (Howitt, 1995: 176; see also Gallagher, 1998). I would endorse the construction put forward by Craven and colleagues (2006: 297) who argue that grooming involves three core elements: gaining access to the child; ensuring the child's *compliance*; and maintaining secrecy to avoid disclosure. Within this tripartite process,

the creation and subsequent betrayal of trust, often over a period of time, is the mainstay of the grooming process (McAlinden, 2012: 26-28).

The lack of settled meaning of the term is due in particular to the fact that it is difficult to separate out harmful motivations towards children from more innocuous ones prior to the onset of actual harm (Ost, 2004). This is also because much of the early 'befriending' stages of the process, before sexualised contact with the child begins, may constitute routine or 'normal' interaction with children. If fact, due to these intrinsic difficulties, I would contend that grooming is a term most applicable with the benefit of contextual hindsight (McAlinden, 2012: 97). That is, once the child discloses or the abuse is discovered, it is then possible to apply the term retrospectively in pinpointing previously overlooked behaviours. Based on extensive reading of the literature, as well as original primary research, I espouse a new definition of grooming which better captures the complexity of the process and the multiple manifestations of grooming: *(1) the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques (2) with a vulnerable subject (3) in a range of inter-personal and social settings (4) in order to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour (5) with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and/or prohibiting exposure.* This is the broad working definition of grooming adopted throughout the article (McAlinden, 2012: 11).

Typologies of Grooming

Some studies have suggested typologies of 'on-line grooming' (e.g. O'Connell, 2003). There is, however, a dearth of research on modes of grooming which take place off-line or on types of grooming as a whole. In order to counter this specific gap within the literature, I have developed a typology comprised of three principal inter-related modes of grooming (McAlinden, 2012: 28-32). These include differences in the *context* - where it may occur (intra-familial and extra-familial grooming); the *subject* - who may be targeted (children, families, communities and institutions); and the *mode* of grooming - the means of approach (face-to-face contexts, on-line, 'street' or 'localised grooming' and 'peer-to-peer grooming.' There is also 'self-grooming' by the offender which does not fit neatly into any of the categories outlined above. This term has been used to describe the neutralising or avoidance techniques used by offenders to prevent them from negative self-evaluation prior to, during, or after offending (Craven et al, 2006). Self-grooming may also overlap with other forms of grooming in that 'success' in grooming the child or their family, may further entrench sexually harmful behaviours and motivations, while 'failure' may lead offenders to either desist from sexual offending or further hone their grooming skills (Craven et al, 2006).

In relation to the context, the grooming of a child within an extra-familial situation may take place either on-line or in face-to-face contexts, within organisations, or on the street by those previously unknown to them. Intra-familial grooming occurs within the context of intra-familial abuse - that is where children are abused by those known to them, which accounts for the overwhelming majority of abuse (Grubin, 1998). In relation to the subject, children may be groomed in an often gradual process which begins with befriending the child, establishing an exclusive relationship, increasing physical contact and intimacy with the children, and culminates in sexual contact (Salter, 2003). Other protective adults within the child's family, the wider community, or those within child care organisations may also be manipulated as the gatekeepers of access. Finally, regarding the mode of grooming, 'face-to-face grooming' is commonly used within the context of intra-familial or quasi-intra-familial abuse where the offender seeks to establish a relationship with the child, their family or the wider community. Both 'on-line grooming'[5] and 'street grooming' are targeted directly at children or young people themselves either via the internet (including social networking sites, chatrooms or instant messaging) or mobile phones (Gallagher et al, 2003; Davison and Gottschalk, 2011; Martellozzo, 2012), or via approaches to young people on the street as a prelude to sexual offending or exploitation. 'Street grooming' in its most serious and organised form can relate to

'domestic' or 'internal trafficking' (Pearce, 2009; CEOP, 2011).[6] These latter forms of grooming represent the most publicly prolific but least statistically significant form of grooming behaviour (McAlinden, 2012: 32-49).[7]

In the remainder of this article, the discussion will examine the overall role of grooming within child sexual abuse. It will then concentrate predominantly on two aspects of grooming which may have particular resonance for professionals working within assessment, treatment or management settings - 'peer-to-peer grooming' and 'institutional grooming.'

The Role of Grooming in Child Sexual Abuse

While 'grooming' emerges as a useful shorthand reference to describe the onset and/or continuation of sexually harmful behaviour towards children, it does not accurately describe the complexities of abuse in the range of cases experienced by professionals. In this respect, a number of important sub-themes emerged from the research regarding the role of grooming in child sexual abuse which are largely absent from the existing literature (McAlinden, 2012: Chs 4, 5 & 8). First, there are marked differences between first time and subsequent offending, particularly in relation to intra-familial relationships (McAlinden, 2012). One interviewee involved in victim support who had previously worked with offenders commented:

> A lot of them had relationships that turned sexual with children... and once that happened, I think grooming was crucial ... I think the initial crossing of the line wasn't necessarily a deliberate act for the majority of people that I met ... but once they did it, and they wanted to do it again, then we're into grooming mode ... they were setting up situations.[8]

This important finding demonstrates, in the words of one treatment professional, that grooming becomes a much more 'conscious' process at the 'point where it switches from that sort of opportunistic discovery, to actually becoming something that he wants to perpetuate and see through.'[9] The absence of a strong harmful motivation from the outset in all cases also emerged from an analysis of professional experience of cases of institutional abuse. That is, for some offenders child abuse is 'very situation specific'[10] and it is more about 'just taking advantage of opportunities that are there anyway.'[11] In other cases, however, offenders will 'get themselves into situations that definitely are a back door ... into having access to children'[12] (see also Erooga et al, 2012).

Second, and following on from this, there is also an apparent difference between the role of grooming within intra-familial and extra-familial contexts. In relation to intra-familial settings, the conceptual and clinical usefulness of the term 'grooming' may be more limited prior to the onset of first offending, as discussed above. This is in essence because the offender will already be known and physically proximate to the child and, therefore, does not have to groom the child directly or other protective adults in order to gain access (see also Craven et al, 2006: 293-4). In such cases, rather than getting the child to acquiesce to abuse, grooming may take the form of normalising sexually inappropriate or harmful behaviour to the extent that the victim does not even perceive themselves as having been abused. As one interviewee commented acknowledging the fact that grooming can stem from ordinary and routine patterns of behaviour within the family (see also Phelan, 1995): 'a lot of the abuse if the children are young can take place around the normal routines of a household... the bathing, the bedtime, and children, if they're very young will... normalise it to a degree because they won't have known anything different.'[13] As regards

extra-familial contexts, however, there was broad acknowledgment amongst professionals, in the words of one treatment professional that the 'internet may well be very different ... where men deliberately falsify their identity to make contact with children.'[14] Opportunity or accessibility, however, also play a pivotal role in on-line forms of offending for those who have a propensity to offend (Quayle and Taylor, 2001; O'Connell, 2003).

Third, there is some evidence to suggest that 'grooming' patterns or pre-abuse behaviours may differ with the age or gender of the perpetrator, particularly within face-to-face contexts. In relation to young people who display sexually harmful behaviour, while several practitioners recalled examples of cases involving the internet which was identified as an area of growing concern among young people (see also Finkelhor et al, 2000), there were mixed findings in relation to grooming and its role within face-to-face contexts. The literature suggests that intra-familial adolescent sex offenders are more prone to using less coercive strategies to obtain the victim's trusts such as the giving of gifts (Kaufman et al, 1996). In tandem with this, preparatory strategies among young abusers emerged as being more experimental and less well developed and sophisticated than their adult counterparts although many of the dynamics were considered similar, in the words of one assessment professional, in terms of 'the relationship [and] the secrecy.'[15] For other interviewees, however, 'adolescent cases ... were less subtle in a away and very often more coercive'[16] as often there is 'a power differentiation, [where] there's an older sibling with a younger child'[17] and the process can be more about 'intimidation and threatening behaviour, basically bullying somebody who was a bit more inadequate into doing what they didn't want to do.'[18]

In relation to grooming and abuse by female sex offenders, this was commonly regarded in the words of one interviewee involved in sex offender assessment, as being 'more subtle ... more relational, and ... less overt.'[19] While the highest risk female offenders may share many of the offence patterns of their male counterparts in terms of increased use of violence or force, this same respondent acknowledged that 'a lot of it was more about emotional affirmation than it was about sexual need.'[20] With both of these categories of offender, however, socially and culturally conditioned perceptions of young people and women may negate concerns about risk. This discrepancy may stem in part from the unsettling thought that either women or children, who are traditionally thought to be vulnerable to abuse, are capable of grooming or abuse (Hetherton, 1999; Kemshall, 2004). Such perceptions of the potential risk posed by sexual offenders, however, can be highly problematic both in terms of offender access to victims and victim disclosure. As this same professional explained in relation to perceptions of female sexual offenders:

> It is impossible to think about any notion of grooming without looking at the cultural niche in which women tend to live and demonstrate their behaviours.... as far as women are concerned, there don't appear to be any external inhibitors.... it is very easy for women to have unlimited access to children per se, simply because people don't question their motivations.... [and] we can find different motivations attached to individual children....we also know ... from what victims tell us, [that] it is so much more difficult to disclose abuse by a female and the likelihood of you being believed is much less.[21]

Such tentative findings concerning the differential offending patterns of young sexual abusers and female abusers which precede actual abuse are noteworthy issues which merit further detailed research.

These findings lend support to the 'pathways model' which contends that there may be multiple

pathways to offending including both 'approach' and 'avoidant' goals (Ward and Hudson, 1998). While the term 'grooming' tends to denote a conscious, calculated and systematic course of conduct on the part of the offender, this study has found that it is more apt to apply this terminology to extra-familial settings where the offender was previously unknown to the victim or their family and has to deliberately go about 'setting up' an opportunity to abuse (McAlinden, 2006). This would also map on to Wortley and Smallbone's (2006) typology of 'preferential' offenders - who seek out and manipulate positions or relationships involving access to children - and 'opportunist' or 'situational' offenders - who seek to exploit the child, significant others or the surrounding environment to facilitate offending; or those who may react to circumstances comprised of emotionally close, personal interaction with the child, the opportunity to offend and an underlying proclivity towards children. In short, sexual offending against children emerges as 'the intersection of three factors - a motivated offender, a suitable victim, and the lack of an appropriate and capable guardian' (McAlinden, 2012: 195).[22] As discussed in the final section of this article, the complexity of the onset of offending against children necessitates a multi-layered approach to prevention, intervention and protection.

'Peer-to-Peer Grooming'

This form of grooming does not feature strongly in the literature but can take place with an older child grooming a young sibling as a prelude to abuse as well as within extra-familial contexts (Kaufman et al, 1996; Leclerc, et al, 2008). More recently, it has occurred within the context of 'street grooming' where young people may be 'groomed' into recruiting others into sexually exploitative networks (Pearce, 2009). It can also occur within the context of institutional abuse where abusive practices have become embedded within the organisational culture (McAlinden, 2012: 182-83).

This study also highlighted a further form of 'peer-to-peer grooming' which relates to interactions between older adult offenders and young offenders in group treatment settings. Several interviewees made reference to this issue as typically occurring where there is an age differential between offenders. One treatment professional recounted a case example:

> There was an older guy in the group and his orientation was young males ... I was really taken aback. This [young] guy, he suffers from Asperger's ... and the other man was a teacher. And one day the young guy had a book and I said, that's a very interesting book and he said, yeah, the other guy gave it to me.... he asked me for my number a couple of weeks ago and phoned me, and said he had it, so once I had read it we'd meet for coffee and chat about it. So I could see it, you know, in exactly the same format he used to get young guys into his house... So it was like it was happening actually in front of us.[23]

As discussed below, this novel extension of the grooming concept has potential implications for treatment settings, in terms of the dynamics of group work, individual offender progress, as well as the outcomes and effectiveness of treatment programmes.

'Institutional Grooming'

This concept has emerged from my own previous work (McAlinden, 2006) and from anecdotal conversations with professionals in the field. The notion can be used to convey the grooming of

children within an institutional context, where sex offenders make use of the unique features of the organisational environment- such as power, anonymity, secrecy, opportunity and trust - to facilitate abuse and avoid exposure. Evidence from various public inquiries and official reviews into high profile cases of institutional child abuse have generally established key themes which are indicative of the existence of institutional grooming. These include delays in disclosure, initial disbelief of victims, 'the conspiracy of silence' and denial and minimisation of allegations (McAlinden, 2012: 157-59). The notion, however, can also be extended to the grooming or manipulation of professionals who work with sex offenders into viewing them as posing no risk to potential victims.

Several interviewees in the study conceded that what many termed 'professional grooming' was 'an occupational hazard of working in the field'[24] or at the very least that 'it's something you always have to be aware of.'[25] This was explained further by one assessment and treatment professional as a sense of 'being tested ... [or] being pulled into some sort of relationship dynamic that really shouldn't be going on.'[26] While the study documented evidence of these processes within the context of relationships between prisoners and prison staff, and between 'suspect' offenders and the police and other professionals (McAlinden, 2012: 184-95), this analysis will concentrate on interactions between sex offenders and professionals within treatment or assessment contexts. The literature emphasises the importance of establishing and maintaining a 'therapeutic alliance' (Ross et al, 2008; Tamatea et al, 2011: 317) between professionals and offenders in order to maximise the quality of interaction and the effectiveness of interventions. While there are 'checks and balances' in place in the form of supervisory systems to maintain clinical objectivity and to guard against the risks of institutional grooming, several treatment professionals, acknowledged that 'sometimes ... there was another flavour to it' in terms of 'the subtle building of alliances' and that there could be 'other conversations ... that fudged the boundaries.'[27] Others pinpointed the difficulty in assessment work in 'trying to stay in the middle all the time ... not over identifying with victims; not over identifying with offenders.'[28]

A particularly noteworthy finding is that several interviewees reported a greater occurrence of such behaviour on the part of offenders who had gone through treatment because 'they have learnt the language of change'[29] or 'know how to tick the box.'[30] These narratives demonstrate the largely unarticulated tension for assessment and treatment professionals between the human/emotional side of working with sex offenders and the professional/detached side. They also speak to the difficulties which professionals may face in ascertaining whether any perceived change on the part of the offender is 'genuine rather than false or manipulative' (McAlinden, 2012:189). Moreover, it also demonstrates the very real difficulties for offenders who understandably may want to engage in what a number of professionals termed 'impression management' or 'transference.' By presenting a very positive image of themselves offenders may hope to escape the label of being a high risk sex offender because of the personal consequences in terms of management and control of their day-to-day lives.

Concluding Remarks: Implications for 'Risk-based' Approaches and Treatment Interventions

'Grooming' has become synonymous with child sexual abuse within popular as well as official discourses. This research, however, has highlighted the multi-faceted nature of sexual offending against children. As such, I would argue that while 'grooming deserves its place in the lexicon of sexual offending against children', it is a term that should 'be used with a note of caution so that it does not become a "catch-all" term which masks the complexity of the onset of sex offending against children and in particular the multifarious relationships between victims and offenders' (McAlinden, 2012: 284-85). This complexity predicates a multi-layered approach to protection and

prevention which has resonance for future treatment and management approaches along two key lines:

First, legal and policy frameworks on sex offender management and child protection are by their very nature limited to cases of known risk - that is where the offender has been adjudicated or at the very least where significant concerns exist about risk of future harm. The fact that this tertiary approach to offending captures only a small number of sex offenders means that it is necessary to move 'beyond public protection' and away from child disclosure as the trigger for intervention (Kemshall and Wood, 2007). Reactive legal and policy frameworks need to be supplemented with a broader proactive public health approaches aimed at primary and secondary levels of prevention (Laws, 2000). At the primary level of prevention, a range of government sponsored public education and awareness campaigns need to be developed aimed at parents and carers, wider society and children and young people themselves. These would help facilitate public discourses around sexually harmful behaviour involving children, foster a climate in which child protection which becomes everyone's responsibility, and give children and young people the language and tools to name inappropriate behaviour.

At the secondary level of prevention, there is a need to move away from 'risk-based' approaches which have dominated interventions for the last number of years to encompass 'strengths' and 'needs-based' approaches (Burnett and Maruna, 2006) which address both victim vulnerability and offender opportunity. This would be comprised of a tapestry of services for victims, offenders and their families tailored to early identification and prevention. It could include, for example, supportive programmes with the offender's family or partner as a standard part of release and reintegration both in terms of providing an additional layer of management of the offender, as well as support for the non-abusing family members; more dedicated programmes for first-time and young offenders to address early offending behaviour; and the training of professionals around the dynamics of new and emerging forms of grooming and its impact on victims (McAlinden, 2012: 266-78).

Second, enhanced knowledge of how sex offenders operate are also of practical and policy relevance in terms of enhancing the efficacy of targeted interventions and the skills of those professionals who work within them. At the time of conducting the fieldwork (Spring-Summer 2011), each of the jurisdictions within the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland were reformulating their treatment programmes away from a backward looking 'confessional approach' towards a future-focused approach. The new ethos of what has been termed 'a bio-psycho social approach' was explained by a treatment professional:

> [It's] about recognising that there are not just psychological elements to a person's offending, but also things to do with a person's biology ... which we probably can't address in a treatment programme. The new programme is more about developing strengths and putting in place things that people need to become part of society and live decent lives, rather than constantly being on the lookout for risky situations.[31]

In my view, however, there is a need to ensure that policy developments in this area do not become too future focused to the neglect of pre-offence behaviour and the triggers that led to offending in the first place. Research has also shown, for example, that there is a correlation between grooming and re-offending (Scalora and Garbin, 2003). Treatment interventions, therefore, need to take account of not only the dynamics of victim-offender relationships, but also self-grooming strategies employed by offenders and the interactions between offenders within treatment settings, and between offenders and professionals tasked with their assessment, treatment and management.

Offenders also need to be equipped to recognise these risks and self-manage or prevent them (McAlinden, 2012: 289-90). In the words of one assessment professional in this study, 'we need to have a very sensitised and nuanced view of grooming and we need to spend our time looking at the seemingly insignificant decisions made by offenders.'[32]

Notes

[1] The arguments put forward in this article are drawn from a recent monograph by the author (McAlinden, 2012).

[2] Several jurisdictions have recognised the specific dangers of on-line grooming including England and Wales, the United States, Canada, Australia, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands (see generally Choo, 2009).

[3] For example, a series of public inquiries across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland into institutional child abuse and serious failures in pre-employment vetting have precipitated legislative and policy change (see Corby et al, 2001; McAlinden, 2012: 148-59).

[4] Interviews were conducted over a five month period - May-September 2011. As all interviews were conducted on an anonymous basis, excerpts from interviews are given a number and a two letter abbreviation for each jurisdiction, along with the date of the interview.

[5] There are a variety of umbrella terms which are often used interchangeably within the literature. These include 'entrapment' (Gallagher, 1998), 'cybersexploitation' (O'Connell, 2003), 'online child sexual abuse' (Martellozzo, 2012), 'internet child abuse' (Davidson and Gottschalk, 2011), 'internet exploitation' (Gallagher et al, 2003), 'internet grooming' (Craven et al, 2007), or 'electronic grooming' (Davidson and Martellozzo, 2008).

[6] A number of high profile cases made news headlines in England and Wales in 2011. In 'Operation Retriever' in Derby, two men were jailed indefinitely for abusing up to 100 young girls aged mostly between 12 and 18. In Rochdale in Greater Manchester, nine men aged between 20 and 40 from were sentenced on a number of charges relating to exploitation and abuse of teenage girls.

[7] For example, the Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey (2010) conducted with 16-year olds found that of those who had experienced sexual exploitation or abuse, a total of 47% were approached in an intimate setting - 17% through a friend or sibling, 7% at a house party, 6% through a hobby or organisation and a further 17% at a pub or club. In contrast, 27% of approaches were made via on-line methods and 18% occurred on the street.

[8] Interview RI 1, 11th May 2011.

[9] Interview EW 8, 14th September 2011.

[10] Interview EW 13, 22nd September 2011.

[11] Interview NI 4, 1st June 2011.

[12] Interview RI 3, 16th May 2011.

[13] See note 11 above.

[14] Interview RI 7, 20th June 2011.

[15] Interview SC 9, 24th August 2011.

[16] Interview EW 1, 1st September 2011.

[17] See note 8 above.

[18] Interview SC 8, 23rd August 2011.

[19] Interview RI 11, 5th July 2011.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Interview EW 14, 30th September 2011.

[22] See also routine activities theory: Cohen and Felson (1979).

[23] See note 12 above.

[24] See note 11 above.

[25] Interview NI 2, 23rd May 2011.

[26] Interview SC 11, 7th September 2011.

[27] Interview RI 10, 5th July 2011.

[28] See note 15 above.

[29] Interview NI 8, 6th July 2011.

[30] Interview NI 5, 22nd June 2011.

[31] Interview EW 3, 12th September 2011.

[32] See note 19 above.

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