



Learning from Operation Meteor

Operation Meteor – setting the scene



Salisbury man who abused 22 children has been given six life sentences

A predatory sex offender who abused 22 young children over nine years has been given six life sentences.

Operation Meteor – setting the scene

- ▶ Uncle Peter
- ▶ Grooming - families, communities and children
- ▶ Ten years of abuse - Why did none of the 26 victims disclose ?

Child Sexual Abuse – before and after Cleveland ...

- ▶ ‘Discovery’ of CSA in 1970s and after
- ▶ Led by feminism and movements against ‘violence against women’
- ▶ CSA was a daily/weekly feature of safeguarding work in the 1980s- 90s

'Historical' prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse

National Data

- ▶ 1994 – 26% of all Registrations for CSA
- ▶ 1995 – 24%
- ▶ 1996 – 22%
- ▶ 1997 – 21%
- ▶ 1998 – 20%

NB TOTAL number of ALL Regs in Wiltshire = 106

Why has CSA 'disappeared'?

- ▶ Cleveland 1987
 - ▶ led by 2 pediatricians
 - ▶ 121 children removed from parents based on what later was discredited as a diagnostic tool
- ▶ 94 children returned home
- ▶ 70% of initial diagnoses later proved to be right and a number of children re-removed
- ▶ Led to a hesitancy and cautiousness

Why has CSA 'disappeared'?

Hypotheses

- ▶ Growth of CSE meant that harmful sexual behavior was reinterpreted and re-imagined
- ▶ Of all the harmful things that happen to children, this is the worst to contemplate and the hardest to be sure about – abusers can be harder to identify, signs and symptoms can often be attributed to something else
- ▶ The system drives for certainty and has a lower tolerance of uncertainty

Why has CSA 'disappeared'?

Hypotheses

- ▶ In built tensions between Children's Services (allow the child to tell what has happened) and Police (obtain witness statements in drive for prosecutions and criminal burden of proof)
- ▶ ABE interviews were sometimes social care led sometimes joint now nearly always Police led – much CSA is unprovable and un-evidencable in the absence of any medical evidence and/or a confession
- ▶ Has this lead to a position where in the absence of hard evidence, abuse is either unrecognised or mis-identified

Child Sexual Abuse – off the radar

National and Local Data

- ▶ 2009-10
 - ▶ England – 5.9% of all CPPs for CSA
 - ▶ Wiltshire – 8.6% (TOTAL = 138)
- ▶ 2012-13
 - ▶ England – 4.8%
 - ▶ Wiltshire – 11% (TOTAL = 388)
- ▶ 2017-18
 - ▶ England – 4.3%
 - ▶ Wiltshire – 8% (TOTAL = 430)

Child Sexual Abuse – off the radar

Triennial Review of SCRs

- ▶ 2009-11
 - ▶ 20% CSA intra and extra-familial
 - ▶ 0 CSE
- ▶ 2011-14
 - ▶ 19% CSA intra and extra-familial
 - ▶ 5% CSE
- ▶ 2014-17
 - ▶ 13% CSA intra and extra-familial
 - ▶ 6% CSE

A refocus on Child Sexual Abuse

- ▶ Office of Children's Commissioner – “Protecting Children from Harm” 2015
- ▶ Key Findings
 - ▶ 11% of ALL children experience some form of contact sexual abuse = 1.3m
 - ▶ Currently 50,000 known to statutory agencies
 - ▶ Modelling suggests about 1/8 of all victims known about
 - ▶ Data are estimates and projections but core message is that CSA considerably more prevalent than appears

A refocus on Child Sexual Abuse

- ▶ 2/3 of abuse occurs in family
- ▶ 75% female but male abuse underreported
- ▶ 13-16yrs typical ages of **disclosure** but abuse might have been a lot earlier
....50% disclose 1-5+yrs after abuse
- ▶ Additional barriers to disclosure for BAME children or those with disabilities
- ▶ CP Plans for victims of CSA
 - ▶ 29% neglect
 - ▶ 26% CSA
 - ▶ 5% physical abuse
 - ▶ 27% emotional abuse
 - ▶ 13% multiple

A refocus on Child Sexual Abuse

- ▶ 42% multiple abusers and 74% said abusers knew each other
- ▶ 25% of family abuse perpetrated by those under 18yrs
- ▶ 26% said they hadn't realised they'd been abused until later in life

A refocus on Child Sexual Abuse

- ▶ CSA **IS** a real and prevalent risk to children and young people
- ▶ As practitioners you need an alertness and a willingness to wonder
- ▶ Supervisors need to check for it and be ready to explore the risk factors
- ▶ Its impact is severe and long lasting, probably more than other forms of child abuse – long term mental health problems are common and sometimes suicide

Grooming

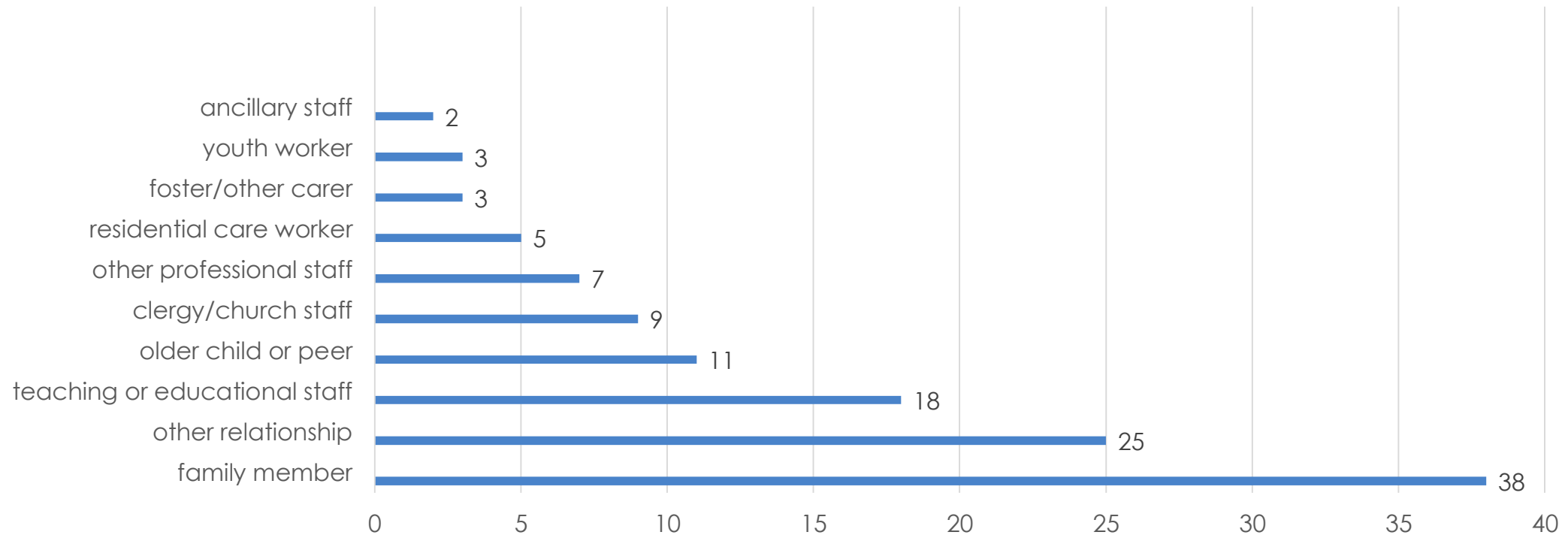
- ▶ “Not on our doorstep”
- ▶ TRUST
- ▶ Community grooming - grooming of a child includes the adults/community around them

Grooming

- ▶ Grooming and silencing behaviour
 - ▶ By 'ordinariness' – being socially invisible/acceptable
 - ▶ By threats – either to the victim (“this is what I’ll do to you”) or against the perpetrator (“this is what they will do to me”)
 - ▶ By bribery – it’s a special thing between us
 - ▶ By normalisation – its how daddies and daughters show they love each other
 - ▶ By reversal – you’re driving me to it/you want me to do it
- ▶ It’s not just children who are groomed and silenced – safe carers and professionals are too

Grooming – findings from Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

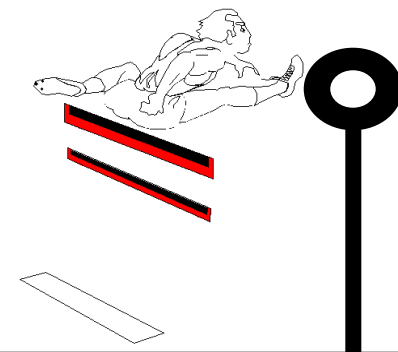
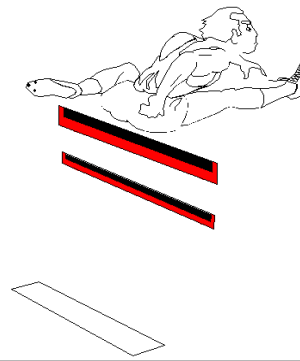
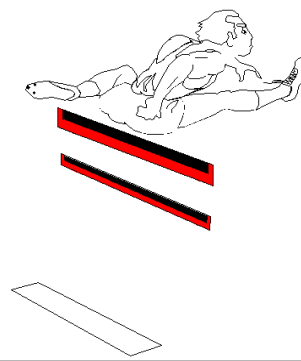
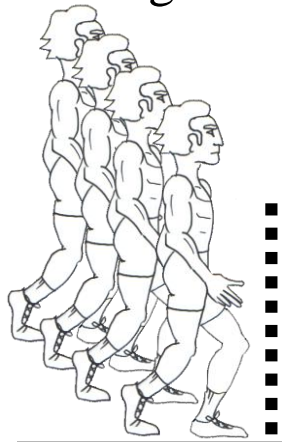
Relationship of perpetrator(s) to victims and survivors (IICSA)



Finkelhor – four preconditions

Sex with a child

Thoughts



Motivation

'wanting to'

Internal inhibitors

'conscience'

External inhibitors

'creating opportunity'

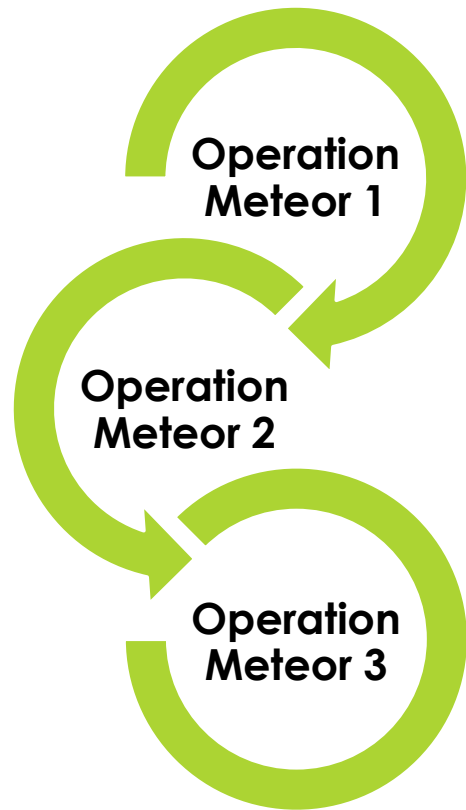
*Overcome victim
resistance*

*'doing it and getting away
with it'*

Grooming

- ▶ How can we better equip communities to understand, notice, and report?
- ▶ We need to talk about it

Learning lessons - a multi-agency investigation



Some statistics

- ▶ 101 multi-agency discussions
- ▶ 34 ABE interviews
- ▶ 100 hours of footage viewed
- ▶ 4,000 videos
- ▶ 500 contacts on computer
- ▶ 261,486 images downloaded

Learning lessons - supporting schools and the local communities

- ▶ What went well?
- ▶ What have we learnt?

Learning lessons - supporting schools and the local communities

- ▶ What support did the children and families require after the investigation? How does this compare to what is available?

Supporting practice - tools to help us

Intra- Familial child sexual abuse: risk factors, indicators and protective factors ([Research in Practice](#))

- ▶ Risk factors and vulnerabilities
- ▶ Indicators
- ▶ Protective factors
- ▶ Mapping tool

[RiP Practice Tool IFCSA](#)



Supporting
practice -
tools to
help us

Let children know you're listening

A **safeguarding resource** to help you show children and young people that, whatever they want to share, you're ready to listen.
There are three simple directions to remember...

Show you care, help them **OPEN UP**

Give them your full attention and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important. Phrases like "you've shown such courage today" help.



Take your time, **SLOW DOWN**

Respect pauses and don't interrupt them – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.



Show you understand, **REFLECT BACK**

Make it clear you're interested in what they're telling you. Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding – and use their language to show it's their experience.



NSPCC Learning

For more training and resources to help protect children visit learning.nspcc.org.uk

Supporting Practice

- ▶ Make sure that children understand what abuse is (including the language to talk about it)
- ▶ Equipping everyone to recognise non-verbal signs and know how to respond
- ▶ Countering the stigma and shame associated with all forms of CSA
- ▶ improving professional curiosity and skills to effectively respond to signs of CSA
- ▶ Supporting schools to become spaces of safeguarding and emotional support

Plenary and next steps

- ▶ Key learning from today
- ▶ Emerging themes
- ▶ Next Steps