

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of Margaret Oliver

I, Margaret Oliver, will say as follows:-

INTRODUCTION

Personal details and background

1. My full name is Margaret Oliver, and reside at [xxx]. I was born on [xxx] in [xxx].

Background

2. I was the daughter of an electrician and a stay-at-home mother. After school I attended Salford College of Technology (now Salford University) where I studied French, German and Spanish. I worked various jobs before joining the police, including working as a multi-lingual secretary (French, German and Spanish), in hotels, as a nanny, and in a residential home for severely disabled children.

3. I later enrolled at South Trafford College, in my thirties, and took A-levels, and then a BA in Humanities at Manchester Metropolitan University. I applied for, and was accepted onto, a Postgraduate Certificate in Education to become a teacher, but instead applied to become a police officer with the Greater Manchester Police.

Professional background

4. In a career spanning 16 years I worked in a range of roles within the Greater Manchester Police (hereafter “the Greater Manchester Police”). I have provided a brief summary of my career by way of background information:

4.1. I joined the Greater Manchester Police in October 1997. After passing out of the policing college, I was initially posted to Moss Side, an inner city area notorious for drugs and gang violence. As soon as I finished my probation, I applied for and was granted a position in the Child Protection Unit (hereafter “CPU”).

4.2. I became a Detective Constable in 2002 and joined the Major Incident Unit of the Serious Crime Team of the Great Manchester Police in 2004.

4.3. During my time as a Detective Constable, I was tasked to work first on Operation Augusta (2004-5) and later Operation Span (2010-12), during which I interviewed large numbers of children who had been the subject of sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation. Operation Augusta was tasked with investigating the sexual exploitation, throughout a wide area, of a significant number of children in the care system by predominantly PAKISTANI men. Operation Span was a similarly major investigation into child sexual abuse in Rochdale.

4.4. During these operations I witnessed the repeated failure of Senior Officers to record these allegations, to prosecute the serial offenders or to protect the young victims. I communicated the neglect I was witnessing to the Head of Serious Crime at the Greater Manchester Police, the Chief Constable of the Greater Manchester Police, the IPCC and the Home Office.

4.5. In order to publicly speak out about the police neglect of child sexual abuse victims, I was forced to make the difficult decision to resign from the Greater Manchester Police so that I would be free to do so.

4.6. In May 2017, the BBC televised the series *Three Girls*, dramatising the cases in which I was involved, which put child sexual abuse at the forefront of the national debate. On 13 May 2018 the series was awarded 5 BAFTAs. I had worked on this programme for 4 years as the programme consultant, and was instrumental in bringing on board all of the main characters, including the three girls who the programme was named after.

Inquiry Questions

5. I have been asked to provide an overview of my experience as a Detective Constable in the Major Incident Unit of Serious Crime Division of the Greater Manchester Police. In particular, to provide evidence of my experiences of investigating child sexual abuse by organised networks.

Child Protection Unit

6. It will be understood that the following statement is merely a summary of a significant period of complex policing work, which seeks to give the Inquiry a flavour of my experiences and examples of some of the key issues and failings. The below account is not intended to be a full, detailed and complete account of the work and operations I was involved in.
7. This statement seeks to give an overview, as requested by the Inquiry, of my central evidence, which is that the Greater Manchester Police repeatedly failed to investigate and actively hindered investigations into widespread and known child sexual exploitation.
8. As detailed earlier, at the start of my career as a police officer I joined the CPU in the Greater Manchester Police.
9. Very early in this role I conducted an interview with a five-year old girl, who I will refer to as 'Chloe'. Chloe disclosed that she was a victim of sexual abuse and that a relative, 'Joshua', had sexually assaulted her. When I visited the boy's school to arrange to see his head teacher, she informed me that there had been similar complaints from five other girls, and that she had been attempting to force an intervention by social services in respect of the boy for the past two years. This was a very early example of the poor practice, across policing and social work, that I later became accustomed to uncovering.
10. I realised early on there was a serious problem with gaps between the different agencies and police departments. The CPU was set up to deal with abuse, neglect or sexual abuse by parents, carers, professionals or family members, who had 'care, custody or control' of their victim, and the investigation would be dealt with jointly by social services and the police.

11. 'Stranger' rapes or assaults would then be sent to the Criminal Investigations Department (hereafter "CID"), but these detectives did not liaise with the CPU, which limited the effectiveness of both agencies to tackle sexual abuse.
12. Even worse, the CPU databases were isolated from the CID, meaning there was no sharing of key information.
13. As well as being a Detective I also trained to become a Family Liaison Officer. This meant that I was an investigator but would also sometimes be working closely with the families of victims of serious crime, including sexual abuse, murder and kidnapping. I also passed my CID exams and became a Detective Constable.

Independent Assurance Review of Operation Augusta – 14 January 2020

14. I would ask the Chair and Panel of the IICSA to carefully read the Independent Assurance Review of Operation Augusta published 14 January 2020, which details how widespread the issue of child sexual exploitation was and the deliberate failures of the authorities to investigate that abuse and to protect the child victims. That report referred in its introduction to the case of 15 year old Victoria Agoglia, at paragraph 1.7 – 1.8 it found:

Operation Augusta was initiated following the death of Victoria Agoglia when she was 15 years old. We detail the severe abuse and exploitation suffered by Victoria in Chapter Two. In summary, in the two years before her death, while in the care of Manchester City Council, Victoria Agoglia was repeatedly threatened, assaulted, returned to her residential unit intoxicated and in distress, gave information that she was involved in sexual exploitation, alleged rape and sexual assault requiring medical attention, and had several pregnancy scares. While we found evidence of multi-agency meetings, not one of these occasions resulted in a Section 473 child protection investigation to protect Victoria from significant harm. Although Victoria was cared for by Manchester City Council, a man who had been previously identified as her so-called "pimp" was given permission to visit her in her accommodation three times a week. Two months prior to her death, Victoria had disclosed to both her social worker and a substance misuse worker that an older man was injecting her with heroin. She died in hospital on 29 September 2003, five days after a 50- year-old man injected her with heroin. In 2004, this man was cleared of manslaughter at

Manchester Crown Court. He admitted two offences of injecting Victoria with heroin and was jailed for three and a half years.

In Chapter Three we will outline the content of our interview with Margaret Oliver, a retired detective who worked on Operation Augusta. In respect of the inquest into the death of Victoria, she expressed the view that she believed that social services knew they had failed Victoria as she was in their care. Although she had no evidence, Mrs Oliver suggested that social services tried to exclude the family from the inquest into the death of Victoria to “protect their own backs”.

15. And, at paragraphs 1.18 and 1.19 the Report found:

Fundamentally, we believe, from the evidence that we have seen, that the decision to close down Operation Augusta was driven by the decision by senior officers to remove the resources from the investigation rather than a sound understanding that all lines of enquiry had been successfully completed or exhausted. In April 2005, the SIO attended a meeting with the responsible senior officers, the detective chief superintendent and chief superintendent. According to the SIO policy log, the chief superintendent stated he was unable to put permanent staff into Operation Augusta and that the operation would finish on 1 July 2005. The review team requested a copy of the notes of this meeting but was advised by the Greater Manchester Police that they could not be found. A gold group meeting was held at Manchester Town Hall on the same day. The review team has requested a copy of the minutes for that meeting but neither the Greater Manchester Police nor Manchester City Council was able to provide a copy. However, the SIO policy book states that it was attended by senior officers from the Greater Manchester Police and Manchester City Council with their respective communications officers. It is recorded: “Update of operation given. Press strategies discussed, and group informed of finishing date of operation namely 1/7/05.” The SIO lists who was present but does not record that either the detective chief superintendent or the chief superintendent attended.

Finally, the investigation strategy placed too heavy a reliance on victims’ willingness to make complaints. As resources and time ran out, activity became reduced to closing down the majority of the cases because the child declined to make a formal complaint. Critically, the problem that Operation Augusta had

been set up to tackle, namely the sexual exploitation throughout a wide area of a significant number of children in the care system by predominantly Asian men, had not been addressed.

16. Victoria Agoglia was just one of the many children that the Independent Review found that the Greater Manchester Police and Manchester City Council failed.

Operation Augusta

17. I was tasked to work on Operation Augusta in 2004. This operation was convened after a fifteen-year-old girl, Victoria Agoglia, had died in September 2003 from a drugs overdose, while in the care of Manchester social services. It was known that she had been groomed and sexually exploited over an extended period of time.

18. The brief for Augusta was for myself and other Detective Constables (“DCs”) to talk to social workers, identify vulnerable children, and speak to them directly about any abuse they were aware of. We quickly received very extensive lists of names of children, from social workers, who they suspected to be victims of abuse. The social workers repeatedly insisted that the children had previously been referred to the police, but that the police officers had failed to investigate the allegations or take them seriously.

19. The issue that soon became apparent was that the CPU did not have responsibility for investigating these allegations of rape, as the abusers did not have ‘custody, care or control’ of the children they were abusing. The CID did not believe that protecting these children was their responsibility. Therefore, the children fell between the cracks and their allegations were neither taken seriously nor were they investigated. These children were viewed as ‘bottom of the pile’ and not worth protecting.

20. A further issue which hampered investigations was that of ‘Performance Indicators’, and other statistics-based management tools that were being applied to police forces across the UK. The Greater Manchester Police was being judged and, as a result, funded based on these so-called Performance Indicators (“PIs”), which were in reality a measure of how well we dealt with so-called ‘Acquisitive Crime’, such as burglaries, robberies and theft. I believe that these ‘PIs’ downgraded and de-prioritised the investigation of child sexual abuse.

21. I described the attitudes of some of the officers in my book *Survivors*, at page 93, which I reproduce here as an example of how I believed other officers perceived these victims:

Attitudes towards these kids seemed to be ingrained and widespread. They were widely viewed by fellow officers, senior officers and politicians as 'white trash' or the 'underclass'. In this new millennium, they were seen as 'losers'. As a result, they were left to fend for themselves, which they clearly couldn't do.

22. I believe that kind of uncaring and disregarding attitude was widespread across the Greater Manchester Police and led to the deliberate and wilful neglect of many of these children.

23. Operation Augusta's initial scoping phase was designed to last only a few weeks, but instead it lasted months as more and more victims were found and the team grew from three to ten officers, plus a dedicated social worker. We compiled lists of: victims; suspected abusers; dates; care registration numbers; locations and times; and a wealth of other data.

24. I was then allowed to take statements from one of the victims, who by now was an adult. I began to do so and a pattern emerged. These were all young white girls, in care homes, who were being approached by Pakistani males in their teens and twenties, who befriended them and became like 'boyfriends' to them, plied them with gifts, drugs and alcohol, and coerced them into sex with them and then older men for cash, or under the threat of violence. It was evident that this was widespread, systematic child sexual exploitation and rape.

25. Many of the abusers were employed along the Curry Mile, and it was taking place in flats and houses in that area too. Regarding the emerging pattern that the men were overwhelmingly from the Pakistani community, I addressed the issue of the race of the abusers, the fact that they were largely British Pakistani men, in my book *Survivors*. I wrote, on page 92:

The fact that her abusers, and those of the other vulnerable children, were predominantly Pakistani men didn't matter to me: their origin was of no personal interest. I wasn't racist then, nor am I now. My attitude was that, as a police officer, my job was to uphold the law and prosecute offenders. To my mind, a group of men – no matter their background or origins – who sexually abused vulnerable children should be

arrested, charged and locked up, and in my opinion the key thrown away too. It was as simple as that.

26. I stand by those views now.

27. Operation Augusta engaged with other British police forces and we soon realised there was a nationwide problem, where in other cities and areas, including Liverpool, West Yorkshire, Bradford, Keighley, Birmingham and Bristol, young girls were being groomed and then raped by predominantly Pakistani men. Some examples of this were broadcast in the documentary by *Dispatches*, titled 'Edge of the City', in August 2004. Subsequent revelations about grooming gangs in other towns and cities such as Rotherham, Telford, Rochdale and Oxford all demonstrated a similar pattern.

28. By the spring of 2004, I had a detailed list of 207 men who we believed had abused at least 26 young girls. I recall that these men were all Asian. I am certain that these numbers are a massive underestimation of the true scale of child abuse. I know this because the numbers were strictly ring-fenced by the Greater Manchester Police as they did not wish for the investigation to escalate further.

29. I made the case to Detective Chief Superintendent [xxx] that the entire investigation needed to be upgraded to 'HOLMES' (the Home Office Large Major Enquiry System) as a major crime, and properly staffed and investigated.

30. Our report and request to upgrade the investigation to HOLMES was referred to the Gold Command, the senior decision-making body in the Greater Manchester Police. Gold Command finally, after a very long period, confirmed that they would create and staff a full 'Major Incident Team' ("MIT") to address the issue.

31. By late 2004 a senior investigating officer was appointed ([xxx]). Operation Augusta was allocated to the Wythenshawe MIT, with which I worked. There were about 30 persons now working on Operation Augusta / the MIT, including a full HOLMES team, Detectives, indexers and analysts. All the evidence we had gathered on the paper system over the last year then had to be 'back record converted'. This took several months, in which time the operation stalled.

32. From late March 2005 I was off work nursing my husband who was at that time terminally ill. My husband Norman passed away in July 2005. In September 2005 I was told by the Greater Manchester Police that I had to return to work immediately or I would be going down to half-pay. I had a staggered return to work.
33. When I returned in September 2005 I found that the investigations had been closed down. I found that rather than investigating, arresting and prosecuting the serial sexual offenders for the multiple rapes that had been perpetrated against dozens of young girls in Manchester, elements of the Greater Manchester Police were instead just warning the abusers under the Child Abduction Act and allowing them to evade justice. The HOLMES database had been shut down, and the investigation and Operation Augusta were not proceeding.
34. I believe that a link to this might have been the July 2005 ('7/7') bombings in London, in which 52 people were killed by home-grown terrorists using explosive devices on public transport in the capital. Race relations were very fractious as a result, and there was hesitancy, I felt, from the police to take any steps that might inflame racial tensions – including investigating widespread abuse by predominantly Pakistani men.
35. My gut feeling at the time was that the young victims of sexual abuse in Manchester were overlooked, partly because of their class background, and dismissed as 'slags' or 'slappers' and 'child prostitutes' (a term I utterly reject – no child can consent to be a 'prostitute'). There were also no parents to fight for these children, as they were all already in the care system. They did not have a voice and the government and senior authorities within the Greater Manchester Police were not listening. The term often used was that the child victims were making "a lifestyle choice."
36. I feel that the closing down of Operation Augusta in 2005 was a travesty and a missed opportunity for the Greater Manchester Police to prevent so much abuse that would later take place. I believe that had they pressed ahead and prosecuted more people implicated in Augusta we would have caught the abusers at the centre of the Operation Span inquiry. I believe that the senior officers who made the decision to close Operation Augusta are guilty of gross criminal neglect and misfeasance in public office.
37. As a direct result of my public comments in the documentary "The Betrayed Girls' and in many media interviews, the Mayor of Manchester instigated the Independent Review.

During the course of that independent Review I was interviewed many times over the course of two years as to my knowledge of events in relation to Operation Augusta, Operation Span and the failures of the Greater Manchester Police in investigating Child abuse and knowingly failing to protect the victims.

38. On 14 January 2020, the Independent Review was published at the request of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester. It stated that Operation Augusta was "*prematurely closed down*" after officers decided to "*remove resources*". The recent Independent Assurance Review into Operation Augusta confirms that the decision to close Operation Augusta was taken at a Gold Command meeting in April 2005. The reason given was because of a supposed lack of resources.
39. My main reaction to this report was not one of feeling vindicated, but one of profound sadness and anger that senior police officers and others had so seriously failed children and failed in their duty to the public. I also felt a deep sense of anger that so many serial child abusers had been allowed to walk free and potentially abuse many more children for in excess of 15 years.

Incident involving allegation against a serving police officer

40. On one occasion, during Operation Augusta, I was made aware of a 'sex party' where up to twenty men raped a single girl, who was then given a few pounds for the entire, horrific experience. I took the girl on a 'drive round' of the Curry Mile, and she identified one of her abusers visually. I ran the registration number of his car through the Police National Computer, and then received a call from an internal affairs officer telling me that the suspect was a serving police officer and that he would be dealt with by them. I was not made aware of what happened to him. The Independent Assurance Review has now confirmed the truth of my disclosures on this issue.
41. I felt this incident stood as an example of the way in which allegations of abuse were able to fall between the cracks at the Greater Manchester Police, and I believe this allegation was not ethically or thoroughly investigated and followed up on.
42. I therefore ask the Inquiry to issue the Greater Manchester Police with a Rule 9 statement request on this specific issue, and the outcome of the purported investigation into the officer and his alleged involvement in the organised abuse of a child.

43. As a result of the Independent Review the Greater Manchester Police has now been forced to re open Operation Augusta under the new name of Operation Green Jacket. The starting point for Operation Green Jacket is the original victims and 97 suspects who were identified as long ago as 2004.

44. It is ironic that after Operation Augusta had been closed down, all of the officers who worked on it, including myself, received commendations.

Operation Span

45. I was head-hunted to join Operation Span in 2010. The plan was to investigate the serious sexual abuse and exploitation of vulnerable white children by Asian men over a long period of time. The inquiry had begun after the Greater Manchester Police discovered a foetus in the police property system, which had been unlawfully seized. It was the terminated foetus of a 13-year-old child, who had a statement of special educational needs.

46. Investigations had led to a series of interviews in 2008 and 2009 in Rochdale, Greater Manchester that demonstrated that a number of girls including 'Ruby' (the mother of the foetus) and 'Amber' had been abused. The CID had taken the foetus as evidence without the consent or knowledge of Ruby or her mother and had never returned it. Another girl, 'Holly' was also said to be involved. These girls were featured at the centre of the BBC drama *Three Girls* and their cases, and the police failures in investigating them, are at the heart of the issue in Operation Span.

47. Before Operation Span was launched, as a child herself Amber had actually been arrested for the offence of Procuring a Child into Prostitution, because it was falsely alleged that she had taken other similarly-aged girls (including Ruby and Holly) into the kebab shops and introduced them to abusers. As part of that investigation, Rochdale Police had made contact with Ruby and seized her foetus as evidence, hence why it was still in the property system.

48. I was asked to first inform Ruby and her mother that the Greater Manchester Police had seized the foetus and then gain consent from them both for the foetus to be used for DNA sampling to try to identify the father.

49. As a result of what had come to my attention about the conduct of the Greater Manchester Police, for example towards this child and the previous behaviour of senior Officers in closing down Operation Augusta, I seriously considered refusing to join Operation Span. The reason was that I was not prepared to encourage more young girls to come forward only to have their stories dismissed or the investigation concluded early.
50. I was categorically assured there would be no repeats of Operation Augusta and so decided to work on Operation Span, and to try to gain the trust of these girls and conduct the interviews. In addition, I was shown police policy documents as to the planned way ahead and was given cast iron guarantees that there would be no repeat of the failures of Operation Augusta in abandoning vulnerable children.
51. It was clear that Ruby, Holly and Amber had been groomed by a gang of Pakistani men operating out of kebab shops, restaurants and taxi drivers in Heywood, Rochdale. They were being coerced to have sex with up to twenty men at once, plied with alcohol and drugs and then given very small sums of money afterwards.
52. In the earlier investigation by Rochdale police, Ruby, Holly and Amber had given evidence which led to the arrest of takeaway worker Shabhir Ahmed, on suspicion of rape. However, crucial forensic evidence was lost, and the investigation had run cold. No action was taken against Ahmed, at the time, as the CPS had said that Holly “would not make a credible witness.”
53. Rochdale CID had evidently made serious mistakes in their initial investigations. However they had retained this evidence, in the form of the foetus. I wondered at the time if there might be any connections between this gang of abusers and those around the Curry Mile from Operation Augusta; the ones who were never arrested.
54. A major problem with gaining Amber’s trust was that she had previously been arrested (while she was a vulnerable child) on suspicion of actually having facilitated the abuse, as a sort of ‘Madam’ who introduced the other girls to the men. There was a belief amongst us on Operation Span, however, that she had been a victim of child abuse and as such should not have been arrested at the age of fifteen and treated as a criminal.
55. Both Amber and Ruby were on the Child Protection Register. The authorities (multi agency meetings) knew both were being abused by local Pakistani men and although she had told

police, it was still Amber who had been arrested. Lorna, her mother, attended case conferences involving social services and police but was told repeatedly that 'they couldn't do anything'. If she protested loudly, which she regularly did, she was told to either stay quiet or be thrown out of the meeting.

56. The CPS cleared the way for me to interview Amber, after having decided that she was never at any point a 'suspect' or criminal and instead, just a victim. However, this go ahead only occurred after John Lord (the most senior lawyer in the CPS complex case unit) had spent two months scrutinizing all of the evidence that had led to Amber's arrest two years previously. It was only at this point, after that decision had been ratified, that I was permitted to interview Amber. She had finally been recognised, officially, as a victim, and I was permitted to proceed with months of interviews.

57. My role was to guide her towards a taped interview at a victim's suite.

58. Aside from the abuse and subsequent abortion, Ruby had other challenges. She had a Statement of Educational Needs, attended a special school and had been diagnosed as having a younger age than her chronological age. She already had a minor criminal record. Initially she did not want to speak to me so I did not interview her at the beginning. Ruby did not want to speak or co-operate with police because she did not view herself as a victim at that time, nor did she trust the police having been previously failed in 2009. She was still only 14 when I met her. She still did not see these men as her abusers, but as her friends. One in particular – the father of her aborted baby (Adil Khan, aged 42 and a married father of three children) – she actually considered to be her boyfriend.

59. I first went to interview Amber. She had recently, at the age of 18, given birth to a baby, and I initially tried to use this to connect with her. I visited her repeatedly over several weeks, while waiting for the CPS to officially designate her status. In that time I was able to build and gain her trust, to show compassion and understanding, and make her know that she was going to be treated as a victim and not as a criminal, as she had been before.

60. Because Amber had been arrested in connection to an alleged sexual offence, she was prevented from doing a number of things in connection to her new baby. She was forbidden to attend a new mother and toddlers group, she was banned from attending drop-in centres, and not allowed to live in a young mother's hostel, and instead forced to live in the

unsuitable environment of a homeless hostel alone with her baby. Further she was also prevented from going to college.

61. During my conversations with Amber I discovered something called the Crisis Intervention Team ("CIT"), a sexual health service that provided condoms and confidential contraception advice to the children who dropped in there. AS a mother, I find it disturbing that a child of 12 or 14 is being given contraceptives, and on at least one occasion being accompanied to a termination without the knowledge or consent of its parent or guardian.

62. The CIT had collected a lot of evidence. Amber and Ruby's files were full with information on men the girls had told them they'd had sex with. It was not only important evidence collected by two professionals who would add a level of credibility to the investigation, but it also backed up everything the girls had already told us.

63. When I interviewed Ruby, a major difficulty was that she still perceived the sexual exploitation to have occurred 'willingly', and I believe she may have processed it this way as a means of avoiding the more disturbing truth about the way she had been treated; she felt unable to admit this to herself.

64. During Amber's second interview, she began to reveal the most gruesome details of the events that had destroyed her life, telling me of the first man who had raped her at the age of fifteen at the Balti House in [xxx] while another fifteen-year-old child was being raped by another man in an upstairs room. She was then threatened at knife-point, and her abuser fled to Pakistan, and I believe has never been arrested.

Modus operandi of networks

65. Amber explained about the whole network of abuse, and that there were men who picked up young girls in their cars and raped them up on the moors, far from view, and how vodka, beer, cigarettes and cannabis were all offered as incentives for sex.

66. Ruby, her sister, was much more reluctant to talk, and I needed to obtain her consent to take DNA samples from her aborted foetus, UNLAWFULLY SEIZED. Rochdale CID had never informed her they had even retained it. This posed major problems as naturally, Ruby, and Ruby's mother, were horrified to find this out.

67. When I met with Ruby to speak to her, she insisted that the men were her friends and refused to speak with me. She later agreed to be interviewed, and she went straight into a detailed account and named and described multiple offenders, including the identity of the father of her aborted child, along with five men who had raped her between the ages of twelve and fourteen.
68. It is important to stress that these three girls truly believed, at least on some level, that they had consented to the sexual activity. They were of course being coerced, and unable to consent in law, but they believed that they were willing co-participants in these 'relationships' with much older men, who were raping them and paying them for it. The creation of an appearance of consent, and a veil of legitimacy through a relationship, is a central element of the 'modus operandi' – the way in which these networks operate.
69. Ruby had said that once her phone number was known, she was preyed upon by many offenders. *'Your number gets passed on,'* she explained. *'One passes it to a friend and they pass it on to another, and before you know it there's a massive circle and everyone's got your number.'* She recounted being taken to a house with ten men sat in a circle, and that she was passed around each of them and raped.
70. Ruby had named five of her abusers (men also named on the handwritten list of more than a dozen men known as 'Document 29'), provided by her sister Amber as also having abused her.
71. Ruby explained the system the men used. They would take one 'white girl' back to the house, where they would pass her around and all the men would have sex with her. Then they would put a tick against their name and at the end of every week or month they would be 'charged' money for the use of house.
72. It became clear that by only taking one girl back, there would be no others to corroborate the rapes, should the police become involved. Also, a lone child would be more vulnerable, unlikely to cause a fuss and easier to control. Ruby named five men during her first interview and her sister, Amber, had already named a total of thirty-three suspects in her first two interviews.

73. Despite the girls' mother reporting them to social services and the police, none of these allegations had ever been logged onto the police computer, or given a crime number. There was no written record of any of the offenders' details or what they were alleged to have done to both girls. There were no reports of the multiple rapes that these men had committed against these children, and this is still the case today..

Withdrawal of resources

74. Not long into the operation, the Greater Manchester Police pulled the only analyst off the team. The analyst had been producing important work, linking victims, perpetrators, dates, times, places and locations into important 'spider charts' that required constant updating. An analysis in any major investigation is absolutely critical. This was an early indication of the Greater Manchester Police's lack of intention to conduct a proper investigation. An investigation involving two dozen victims and dozens of offenders is impossible to conduct without several analysts and we now had none, and no replacement was ever brought in.

75. This meant that one of the Greater Manchester Police's biggest operations, with dozens of victims and perpetrators, had no analyst working on it. Then, two senior detectives, including [xxx], the Senior Investigating Officer, were pulled off the operation also. This sent out clear signals to everyone working on the operation that it was being downgraded.

76. My belief was that the Greater Manchester Police wanted to quickly prosecute the offenders already identified and score a quick 'win', rather than to engage in a much longer and exhaustive investigation which would have identified many more victims and suspects. I am certain that Operation Span had, in the case of these three girls, only found the tip of the iceberg. I was beginning to see a repeat of the pattern that I had seen in Operation Augusta.

Failure to record, retain and preserve evidence

77. I then found that despite conducting five separate video interviews with Amber, all following procedure and over a period of many weeks, nobody had bothered to listen to, type up or upload these interviews from our key witness on to the HOLMES system. It made no sense to me, but I began to believe that there was a hidden agenda at play.

78. At one point, while I was away on a murder trial, a senior officer called me up and demanded I complete new interviews with Amber and Ruby by the end of the week. I explained this was impossible and that we could not do so. The officer also insisted that she be interviewed at a different police station [to] which was where the suspects were being interviewed. I spoke to the SIO, [xxx], and expressed my concerns and on this occasion she supported me and overruled this decision.

79. Against my wishes, and against any proper notion of best practice, the DI was insistent that Amber was then re-interviewed at her own home, rather than, as should have been, in a victim suite. Her baby was there during the interview, and so when she was trying to recall her abuse her own tiny child was crawling over her, over the floor, and thereby seriously hindering the interview. I now knew for certain that this investigation was not being run in a professional manner.

80. In fact during this time Amber took part in what was supposed to be the first of a number of ID Parades. She was asked to identify the men who had raped her and she correctly identified 8 of a possible 10 offenders. It will be understood how difficult this was for her.

81. Then, I was informed the CPS would not “use” Amber’s evidence in the charging decisions, and that she was going to be excluded from the investigation. This was owing to misconceptions about her evidence being unreliable, owing to minor inconsistencies, which as anyone would know are bound to occur in a number of statements given on a number of occasions. Furthermore, no crime reports were being inputted onto the police system.

82. It was at this point that I decided to leave Operation Span. I was ashamed and outraged at the way in which Amber had been treated by the Greater Manchester Police, and the emerging familiar pattern that I had witnessed five years previously on Operation Augusta.

Post-Operation Span

83. Not long after I had left Operation Span, I was contacted by Amber who had information that one of the dangerous offenders, who had raped another child at knife point, and who was circulated on PNC for that offence, was living at an address that Amber knew in Rochdale. Amber called me to ask me to have this information acted on. I was no longer on Operation Span, but passed this information immediately to my supervisors.

84. Almost two weeks later Amber contacted me again and told me that the police had not been to see her about this information she had reported. Amber also informed me that she believed one of the abusers, [xxx], was living above the taxi rank and that he was about to flee the country. I passed the message on to the Operation Span team, but they did nothing. The suspect was not arrested, despite being officially wanted for child abuse. Worse still, Operation Span did not even visit Amber to speak to her regarding this.
85. A few days later, my DI and my detective sergeant (DS) from my own Major Incident Team (MIT) got in touch, telling me he had been contacted by a senior officer on Operation Span, demanding that I hand over my work mobile phone. I immediately became upset because the implication was clearly that I had done something wrong when I knew categorically I had not. I refused to hand over the phone, my detective inspector intervened on my behalf and I was able to keep it. I felt that I was being intimidated, isolated and threatened. This had a serious affect upon me and my health.
86. Not surprisingly I then received a message from Lorna, Ruby and Amber's mother, who told me that they no longer trusted the police; only me. They said that they would no longer be cooperating with the Operation.

Grievance against the Greater Manchester Police

87. As a serving officer, I struggled with how to raise my concerns. There is a deeply-rooted culture within the police of not speaking out, not exposing wrongdoings and failings, and remaining silent even in the face of wrongful practices. However, I could not be silent on these issues.
88. I finally took my concerns to [xxx], who was the head of the public protection unit at the Greater Manchester Police. I also wrote to the Chief Constable, Mr Peter Fahy, who dismissed my concerns in a four line email without any conversation or opportunity to discuss matter at all.
89. Detective Chief Superintendent [xxx], Head of Serious Crime, was eventually nominated to look at the issues and discuss my concerns. The DCS followed up our brief meeting with an even briefer email in which he acknowledged the Crown Prosecution Service had confirmed Amber was not a suspect over anything. Unbelievably, he went on to say Amber had never even seen herself as a victim – a clear contradiction of everything she'd said in

her months of recorded interviews and 'Vipers' (which is a FORM of identity parade using photographs).

90. I was then in contact with the Police Federation in late 2011. The Police Federation referred me to an independent, external (external to the police) firm of solicitors in order to seek advice on how to address my concerns about how the Greater Manchester Police were failing to deal with wide spread and known child abuse.

91. I was advised by solicitors to raise an official grievance with the Greater Manchester Police and I was also asked to return with my file of evidence in order to discuss how to make a protected disclosure in the public interest.

92. I had a meeting with my Police Federation representative in January 2012. I informed them of the advice I had received from the solicitors the Police Federation had directed me to. The Police Federation then told me that I should only work through the internal Police Force Solicitors. I refused, as I did not trust their independence. It was at this point that the Police Federation advised that it was withdrawing its support. I was therefore left totally on my own.

93. I did raise a grievance, which I was forced to prepare without the assistance of my Federation. That grievance asserted, inter alia:

"I have tried vigorously to defend the principles that I vowed to uphold in my Oath, but in doing so I have personally been subjected to such horrendous treatment that it is no exaggeration to say that it has cost me my career and caused me many months of stress. My trust in the Greater Manchester Police has been totally destroyed by both individuals and the organization.

I honestly believe that the Greater Manchester Police are knowingly failing in their duty to properly investigate the horrendous crimes of Child Sexual Exploitation, and as a result we are allowing offenders to escape justice and failing to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Ultimately, I would like to see working practices and attitudes in relation to the investigation of Child Sexual Exploitation completely overhauled so that we have more success in bringing offenders to justice. On Op Span we had a very real opportunity to

send out a powerful message that this kind of crime would not be tolerated, but sadly, I believe that opportunity has been wasted.

The personal consequences for me in choosing this course of action have been immense. In doing my duty to highlight what I initially believed was individual neglect, but now appears to be organisational neglect, I realise that I have committed what is in effect professional suicide as the organisation does not appear to want to address these issues, and I will be labelled as a “troublemaker”, although that could not be further from the truth.

I believe I had no choice but to pursue this course of action, as I have witnessed behaviour which is not befitting a police service, and which fails to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. To try and conceal wrong and ultimately I have to answer to my own conscience. I know that despite the difficulties I have faced, all I have tried to do is the right thing for present and future victims of these crimes at the hands of a very organised crime group. I firmly believe that should this get into the public domain, the public would agree with the course of action I have taken, as do many of my colleagues on Op Span, but who are too frightened to speak out the way I have.”

94. I was signed off from work. The stress from Operation Span had ground me down to the point where I was unable to function or do the most basic things, such as stand up, eat or sleep. I had been shut down, frozen out, gagged, threatened with the removal of my phone, ignored, fobbed off and bullied. In fact at one point I simply collapsed at work as a result of all of the stress. This was in fact my last day of work with the Greater Manchester Police .

95. I was taken by colleagues for medical assistance and I was signed off work with severe work related stress. For the first, and only, time in my life I was prescribed antidepressants.

96. The results of my grievance came back in March 2012.

97. According to the Greater Manchester Police, Operation Span had not knowingly failed in its duty to properly investigate child sexual exploitation, no promises had been made to use Amber as a witness and I had not been bullied or intimidated in any way. I had, according to the Greater Manchester Police, been slow to get results from the child victims and that I was more concerned about the welfare of the family than I was about the investigation at large.

98. I was not surprised that the outcome of my grievance was unsuccessful, but I was very disappointed by it nonetheless. I completely disagreed with their findings.

Untrue statements of Chief Constable Fahy

99. Indeed the Chief Constable of the Greater Manchester Police, Peter Fahy, has described me in the national media as having become too emotionally involved in the investigation, and made other such misogynistic comments in order to portray my concerns as being the result of my gender and to discredit me. Indeed, he has repeatedly said in national radio interviews, such as Women's Hour and File on Four and News at Ten, that he had spent a considerable amount of time 'listening to the concerns of this officer' (myself). In fact he has never spoken to me in his life.

100. As detailed earlier, the Independent Assurance Review into Operation Augusta has fully vindicated my concerns and the appalling manner in which this vitally important operation was mishandled and then closed down prematurely.

101. I have never received an apology from the Chief Constable for the manner in which he and his force sought repeatedly to discredit me, in circumstances where, in reality, it was the Chief Constable and his senior officer who had so profoundly let down so many vulnerable child abuse victims.

102. I continue to be astonished that a Chief Constable would go on national radio and lie about having discussed these issues with me, when he has never met me.

103. On this issue, I can provide the Inquiry with links to many nationally broadcast interviews in which Chief Constable Fahy has made such untrue statements.

104. I invite the Inquiry to issue Chief Constable Fahy with a rule 9 request and ask him to explain why he misled the public at large regarding concerns over child sexual abuse.

105. It is a matter of central importance to this investigation if the Chief Constable of a major police force has made untrue public statements regarding CSE and CSA and the police's response to these issues.

Trial of Rochdale suspects

106. From a starting point of 27 identified victims at the very outset of Operation Span, we were now left with accompanying just 3 victims to court, two of whom were from the original 2009 Rochdale inquiry, plus Ruby. Every other one had been cast aside, for one reason or another.
107. Amber was no longer to be included as a victim, but instead was to be indicted as a suspect under her real name. This was a decision by the CPS, who had decided to put her on the indictment – in other words, to overturn the previous decision of John Lord (head of the Complex Cases Unit), list her as an offender under her real name – so that what she had said could be used in court.
108. The Greater Manchester Police and the CPS also had not informed Amber of this, which particularly shocked me. Amber was to be charged and treated as a criminal. In the official response to my grievance the Greater Manchester Police asserted that at a late stage the CPS saw the ‘usefulness’ of including Amber’s evidence in court, and as it was by then too late to bring her back on board as a victim, as a purely ‘tactical move’ it was decided to add Amber to the indictment.
109. Their rationale was that, at this late stage, it was the only way to ensure her evidence could be entered into the court. Essentially, the prosecution’s case rested largely on Amber’s evidence, but she had been so alienated by the police investigation that they were unable to use her as a witness, and so they tried to use her as a defendant as a way of including her evidence in the trial.
110. I had never seen or witnessed anything so outrageous in my entire life. To me, it felt like appalling malpractice to acknowledge at the highest level that Amber was purely a victim, then encourage her over a period of months to relive her terrible experiences on the record, only then to discard her and place her alongside her abusers as an offender, in order to use her evidence in court and not tell her this was happening.
111. Amber had never been arrested, never cautioned, never given legal advice and not even informed that she was to be portrayed in court as one of the abusers. In my firm opinion the way Amber was treated is contrary to everything our criminal justice system

relies on. That everyone is innocent until proven guilty, to be cautioned, to know the case against them and to be entitled to a defence and a fair trial.

112. I believe that the treatment of Amber was unlawful.
113. Amber's case appears to demonstrate an extraordinary issue. That is that the Greater Manchester Police would go to almost any length to prosecute an abused child rape victim if it suited their purpose to do so; however, and at the same time, the Greater Manchester Police would knowingly allow scores of child abusers to walk free in circumstances where these men were known to have abused and raped many children and to be a continuing risk to other children.
114. At the trial, Ruby gave evidence only against her abuser who had impregnated her (with the CPS using the DNA from the foetus as evidence), and no charges were made against her other abusers. To make matters worse, the abuser who was charged ([xxx]), was not charged with rape, only with trafficking a child for sexual exploitation.
115. [xxx] was eventually released just three years after being convicted at trial, after having spent a year on remand.
116. Just a few weeks ago, in December 2019, Ruby called me in a total panic to say that [xxx] (her rapist who had got her pregnant as a 13 year old girl) confronted her in a supermarket in Rochdale. He had recognized her, and followed her around the supermarket. He was also in unsupervised contact with a young child. Ruby was terrified at meeting her abuser in this way and she fled the supermarket.
117. [xxx] is free, but Ruby remains imprisoned by her abuse.
118. On 8 May 2012, as a result of the evidence given by Ruby and Holly, nine men were convicted and jailed. All those convicted were found guilty of conspiracy to engage in sexual activity with girls under the age of eighteen.
119. The convictions were as follows:
 - 119.1. Sentencing him to 19 years, Judge Clifton called Shabir Ahmed (Daddy) an 'unpleasant and hypocritical bully', who had ordered a fifteen-year-old girl to have sex

with takeaway worker Kabeer Hassan (his nephew) as a birthday treat. Hassan was sentenced to nine years for the rape of Holly and three years, concurrently, for a conspiracy conviction.

119.2. Mohammed Sajid ('Sajje'), thirty-five, was handed a 12-year sentence after being convicted of one count of rape, sexual activity with a girl under sixteen, and trafficking for exploitation. He was also told he would be deported to Pakistan at the end of his prison sentence.

119.3. Taxi driver Abdul Aziz, the man known as 'Car 40' or 'Tariq', was given nine years after being convicted of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Aziz was said in court to have taken over as the main trafficker of the girls.

119.4. Adil Khan ('Billy'), 42, who was married with children, was the father of Ruby's baby – terminated when she was just 13 thirteen years old. Khan was convicted of trafficking a child within the UK for sexual exploitation and was given just an eight-year sentence.

119.5. Abdul Rauf, known as 'Cassie', was sentenced to six years after being convicted of trafficking a child within the UK for sexual exploitation. Rauf, 43, a married father-of-five and a religious studies teacher at a local mosque, asked a fifteen-year-old victim if she had any younger friends. He also drove some of the girls to other men, who would use them for sex.

119.6. Mohammed Ami, ('Car Zero'), 45, received five years for the conspiracy charge and for sexual assault.

119.7. Hamid Safi, 22, of no fixed address, but originally from Afghanistan, was convicted of trafficking girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation and given a four-year jail sentence. Safi had sneaked into the country on a lorry in 2008, and had claimed asylum. He was also told he would be deported back to Afghanistan at the end of his sentence.

119.8. Finally, Abdul Qayyum ('Tiger'), forty-four, of Ramsay Street, Rochdale, was given a five-year jail term for conspiracy to engage in sexual activity with a child.

119.9. Another man, [xxx], was cleared, the jury being unable to reach a verdict on the conspiracy charge.

119.10. [xxx], thirty, was found not guilty of conspiracy and acquitted.

119.11. 'Daddy' had not been named at the time of the first trial as he had a second trial following on from the first about an unrelated matter, but in June 2012, a month after the initial Rochdale grooming trial, Ahmed was also convicted of 30 counts of rape against another young girl in that case.

120. I was aghast after the trial, as not all of the abusers had been convicted. I remained, and continue to remain, in regular contact with the girls to this day. The girls felt they had been used and let down by the Greater Manchester Police and Criminal Justice System, and that the sentences imposed on the abusers were so lenient that a number of the abusers were out on the streets again shortly after. Indeed by early 2017 all but Mohammed Sajid and Shabir Ahmed were free.

121. In my view the charges preferred against these men did not reflect the seriousness of their offending. Further the convictions represented only a fraction of the men suspected of exploiting and abusing children.

Aftermath of the Rochdale trial

122. The Home Affairs Select Committee later investigated what had occurred in Rochdale.

123. I requested the opportunity to provide oral evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, however my request was refused and I was asked to provide written evidence, but only allowed three days notice to do so. This meant that I was unable to provide the committee with a full account.

124. However, a witness who was nominated to appear before the Home Affairs Select Committee was Sara Rowbotham in her role as manager of the Crisis Intervention Team. Sara told the Committee that she had made 103 referrals to police and social services between 2005 and 2011, and that despite the convictions; sexual abuse was still going on in Rochdale. There had only been nine convictions as a result.

125. Ms Rowbotham's evidence on the extent of and failure to respond to the CSE and CSA was also relied upon by the Independent Assurance Review.

126. As can be seen from the evidence of Ms Rowbotham, the issue of child sexual abuse and exploitation was widely known in the Greater Manchester Area, not just by police but by other professionals working in this field. Also, that the abuse of children was continuing and not being acted on.

127. I invite the Inquiry to issue a Rule 9 statement request to Sara Rowbotham and ask her to give evidence on this issue, as this would assist the Inquiry in getting a more reliable data on the extent of the CSE and CSA and the responses of the police and local authorities to these matters.

Extent and knowledge of child sexual exploitation

128. Widespread child abuse and exploitation in the Greater Manchester area, and nationally, is not occurring in secret. It is happening in plain sight and in the full knowledge of police, local authorities and other professionals.

129. In November 2012, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council apologised for failing to address child sexual abuse properly and for not protecting the girls. Further the astonishing extent of CSE has been highlighted by a series of other investigations and reports across many other cities and towns.

130. In the context of the investigations in Greater Manchester, I had a number of concerns, even after the nine convictions. These were that:

- Men who had abused these girls were still freely walking the streets of Rochdale.
- I felt that prosecutors had failed to use evidence to convict other obvious suspects.
- Evidence of far wider abuse had been ignored or not fully investigated by the Greater Manchester Police.

- Dozens of other victims had effectively been silenced by not having their accounts logged or 'crimed' (the phrase for record a crime incident) on the police systems, thereby deliberately suppressing the official records of the extent of the child sexual exploitation and institutional knowledge of child sexual abuse.

129. By way of example, of the dozens of allegations of rape (by in excess of at least two dozen men that had been disclosed by just Amber and Ruby) only a single rape allegation was recorded or prosecuted (the one which resulted in the pregnancy and for which the police had the foetus as evidence). However even the abuser who made 13 year old Ruby pregnant was not charged with rape, only with sexual activity with a child which carries a much lesser sentence.

130. It is astonishing to me that so many crimes against children went unrecorded. I am deeply concerned that it continues to be the case that crimes against children are being concealed by not being recorded.

131. As a result the true extent of child abuse and child sexual exploitation cannot be known or addressed. Those whose duty it is to record such crimes, the police, are concealing the true extent.

Referral to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)

132. I referred my concerns to the IPCC (now 'IOPC'); however, they said they couldn't help me because I was still a serving officer.

133. I did not understand the rationale for this, and believe it should be possible for serving officers to 'blow the whistle' on senior officers and for the IOPC to investigate, make findings and initiate disciplinary action where necessary.

Resignation from the Greater Manchester Police

134. I was so disgusted with how the victims of Operation Span had been treated by the police that I decided to resign as a police officer and a detective constable, and left the force altogether.
135. After I had resigned, I visited Amber and told her about the indictment, that she had effectively been named on the charge sheet as one of the gang of abusers. Six months after the conclusion of the trial she still had no idea that she had been named on the indictment, effectively as an abuser herself. She was sickened to learn of this.
136. Amber also told me that she was in front of the family court trying to keep custody of her children, which social services were trying to take from her. In fact, they had unlawfully tagged her new baby immediately after birth, and prevented her from taking the baby home; despite the fact there was no court order in place to authorise this action. Amber did not understand why social services were attempting to take her children. However, she now understood that this action was being taken as a result of the Police and CPS secret decision to name her as an abuser in the trial rather than as a victim. Amber had not known this until I told her.
137. I assisted Amber in the family court, and as a result of my intervention the application to remove her children from her was dismissed by the Court. Without my intervention this young victim would have lost her children.
138. The abuse of Amber was still continuing not just against her, but also against her two children.

BBC Panorama and File on Four

139. I decided to approach the BBC's *Panorama* documentary program. I told them my story, but they felt that at the time, because the BBC was getting heavily criticised for its involvement in the Jimmy Saville scandal, it could not produce a program about sexual abuse scandals.
140. I was greatly concerned that my disclosures might land me in serious legal trouble, however I decided to persist.

141. I eventually pressed ahead and told my story to the BBC's Radio 4 programme *File on Four*.

142. Chief Constable Sir Peter Fahy was interviewed and claimed on the programme that he had spoken to me many times about my concerns. In fact, he had never met me and still has not. He had also said that victims such as Amber had 'consented' to sex with their abusers, which I felt was outrageous as they were below the age at which they could, in law, consent to sex.

143. The interview with Sir Peter Fahy on *File on Four*, for me, compounded the problems with the Greater Manchester Police and underlined why it had to make serious changes.

View on the Greater Manchester Police and their handling of Operation Span and Operation Augusta

144. I remain outraged that the Greater Manchester Police and its most senior officers have not been held to account for their deliberate failure to investigate widespread child abuse and to protect the many child victims.

145. To this day, not a single person from the Greater Manchester Police or the Crown Prosecution Service has been called to account for these failures, or for what I see as their gross neglect of the plight of abused girls.

146. There was some acknowledgement of policing failure in Rochdale following an IPCC report in December 2013. However, this report only dealt with Rochdale CID in the original investigation of 2008/09, and not with the failings within Operation Span nor the failings of senior officers.

147. Regarding Operation Span, I would very much like to hear Nazir Afzal, who was the CPS's chief prosecutor for the North West at the time, explain clearly why the decision was made to overturn the original ruling of [xxx], the Head of the CPS's Complex Case Unit, that Amber was purely a victim, particularly as he has been very vocal in claiming full credit for overturning the original CPS decision that Holly was an 'unreliable witness who had made a lifestyle choice'.

148. I would also like to know who made the decision to put an innocent young girl (Amber) on a charge sheet and not tell her about it. This is simply unacceptable, and needs to be investigated and explained. Amber continues to suffer the consequences of this astonishing decision including having to fight to keep her children.

149. I would urge the IICSA to issue a Rule 9 statement request to the CPS and to Nazir Afzal (former chief prosecutor of the North West) to explain their approach to prosecutions in CSE cases, including the decision to treat Amber as a suspect and not a victim, and not to inform her of her change in status, nor to arrest, caution or offer her legal advice which must surely be unlawful.

Conclusions on my experiences as a Detective Constable

150. In conclusion on the above summary of my experiences I wish to emphasise a few matters.

151. **First**, and as has been confirmed by the Independent Assurance Review, a large number of children were being abused in Greater Manchester, the police knew of it at the highest levels, but chose to fail to investigate that abuse or to protect those children.

152. **Second**, a very large number of men who abused children were allowed to go free and were not prosecuted. They have continued, for the last 15 years, to walk freely in the streets of Greater Manchester where they presented a real and continuing risk to other children.

153. **Thirdly**, there is now overwhelming evidence that the Greater Manchester Police deliberately and knowingly curtailed and shut down investigations into child sexual exploitation and child sexual abuse in circumstances where they knew there was a far larger number of victims and perpetrators.

154. That action put the public at risk, and that action must be explained and investigated. I ask that the inquiry recommend the matter be referred for further investigation, including the investigation as to whether criminal charges should be brought against most senior of officers.

155. In normal circumstances such matters would be referred to the IOPC. However, as a result of evidence that has come to my attention from several ex colleagues, some of whom were senior officers in Greater Manchester Police, I have grave concerns about the conduct and reliability of the IOPC in relation to concealing/destroying evidence relating to multiple complaints surrounding CSE. In this regard I exhibit a letter of 3 February 2020, addressed to the IICSA Chair, from a former Detective Sergeant of the GMP, [xxx] - **(EXHIBIT MO/1)**

156. **Fourth**, I have no doubt that child sexual exploitation of numerous children is continuing at the same level as that I examined as a serving officer. It is for the Greater Manchester Police to persuade the Inquiry that this practice is no longer the case, and that standards have dramatically improved since Operation Augusta and Operation Span.

157. **Fifth**, the Manchester Police have now reopened Operation Augusta (now Operation Green Jacket), but have only done so as a result of having been exposed by the Independent Assurance Review.

158. If this review had not occurred the Greater Manchester Police would have taken no action and would have been allowed to have swept the abuse of children and their failure to address it under the carpet.

Theme 1:

159. I have been asked for my views on data recording and analysis, and profiling of potential/suspected CSE offenders by the local authority/police; and (ii) disruption of potential/suspected CSE offenders.

160. As detailed in my narrative statement above, the data recording, analysis and profiling of potential and suspected CSE offenders by the Greater Manchester Police could not have been worse. These problems persist to the current day.

161. I have given details in my above statement setting out examples of where the Greater Manchester Police:

- a) Withdrew analyst support from an important CSE investigation therefore fundamentally undermining that investigation.
- b) Repeatedly failed to record allegations of CSE, child abuse and child rape on the police system, thereby suppressing any official record of the true extent of CSE and child abuse.
- c) Wound down and then closed important CSE and child abuse investigations (Operation Augusta and Span) in circumstances where the Operation was demonstrably not complete and in full knowledge that a large number of allegations relating to CSE and child abuse relating to large numbers of children had not been properly investigated or investigated at all and in circumstances where it was known that a large number of suspected CSE offenders had not been properly investigated, or investigated at all, and remained a continuing and real risk to children in the Greater Manchester area. Again these issues persist. In fact a further Greater Manchester Police investigation in Oldham has now been also been added to the Independent Review Team's investigations.

161. Furthermore, it is now clear and demonstrated that the Greater Manchester Police failed to disrupt the activities of large numbers of known or suspected CSE offenders; again leading to a continuing high level of risk to the public from persons known or suspected to be heavily involved in child sexual exploitation and child abuse.

162. Whereas the Inquiry has my own evidence in relation to these issues, the Inquiry is also able to rely upon the findings of the Independent Assurance Review of 14 January 2020, which significantly, if not completely, supports the assertions made by me in this section.

163. Further, the Greater Manchester Police has now closed its Serious Sexual Offences Unit, thus demonstrating the Greater Manchester Police's continuing lack of commitment to sexual offences including CSE.

164. In terms of proposal for improvement and reform; this is a difficult issue.

165. As has been demonstrated by my experiences and the findings of the Independent Assurance Review, the Greater Manchester Police has been demonstrated to have deliberately refused to properly investigate, or investigate at all, large numbers of

allegations of CSE and child abuse and have also failed to disrupt the activities of large numbers of known or suspected CSE and child abuse offenders.

166. Furthermore, the evidence, including the Independent Assurance Review, will demonstrate the deep rooted institutional resistance of the Greater Manchester Police to taking adequate, or indeed any action, in relation to CSE and child abuse in relation to vulnerable children.

167. There are no simple recommendations that can be advanced to improve a situation in circumstances where the primary policing and public protection body (the police) are institutionally resistant to taking action to investigate, detect and disrupt CSE and child abuse across the North of England.

168. In my view this is a profoundly serious issue and it is only when senior figures within the Greater Manchester Police and elsewhere are properly held to account (including by way of criminal prosecution) that the Greater Manchester Police and other police forces will be forced to act on this issue.

169. Given the findings of the Independent Assurance Review (and the Reviews confirmation that the Greater Manchester Police sought to resist and water down the findings of the report), and the continuing defensive attitude and response of the Greater Manchester Police, it is for the Greater Manchester Police to persuade the IICSA that it is capable and willing to reform itself on these issues.

170. Elsewhere in this statement, I suggest that, based upon the evidence, the Inquiry cannot rely upon the evidence of the Greater Manchester Police; this includes on issues relating to data recording and analysis, and profiling of potential/suspected CSE offenders by the local authority/police; and (ii) disruption of potential/suspected CSE offenders.

171. Further, on the evidence, the Inquiry can have no confidence that the Greater Manchester Police will improve its institutional responses on these issues.

172. As such, I recommend, that oversight of these issues should be put into the hands of an independent body, which has the power to compel action and recommend disciplinary measures and prosecution of officers where appropriate.

Theme 2:

173. I have been asked to comment on whether child victims are treated with empathy, concern and respect, and on victim-blaming language and provision for BME and/or LGBTQ complainants or victims of child sexual exploitation.
174. In my narrative statement above, I have detailed examples where child victims of CSE, abuse and rape were treated not only with disdain but were (for example in the case of Amber) treated as child abusers themselves rather than child victims.
175. A further example of a child being treated with disdain or disregard is a child I refer as Daisy. I met Daisy after I had resigned from the Police; however, she had been one of the child victims we identified during Operation Span. Over a period of about 6 years she had been raped repeatedly as a child by numerous men. When I met her she informed me that she had been desperate to have her abusers brought to trial. However, the Officers dealing with her had only used her as a witness for another child. It had been more convenient for the police to use her as a witness to a case they already had in train, rather than to investigate her allegations of multiple child rape. She spent many months assisting the police giving multiple video interviews, but none of her many allegations of child rape were recorded as crimes.
176. Furthermore Daisy was repeatedly treated as a criminal rather than as a victim. On one occasion, Daisy managed to call the police from the house in which she was being abused. Those abusing her had burnt her with cigarettes (she still bears the scars to this day). The police arrived and Daisy, a child, was in a house with a number of adult men (her abusers). The abusers informed the police that Daisy had burnt herself. The police simply accepted this and did not query why this child was in a house with a number of adult men who were not related to her. On another occasion, when Daisy was 15, she was found by police driving a car whilst drunk. In the car with her were four adult men. Daisy was arrested for drunk driving and the adult men were simply allowed to go on their way. Daisy was disqualified from driving for several years, even though at that time she was far too young to even have a license.
177. This is another example of a child victim being treated almost as a commodity rather than as a victim of multiple child rapes. No empathy, concern or respect was shown to this child and she continues to live with the damage not only of the abuse, but also of the failure of the police to investigate those who abused her.

178. In many respects the damage caused by the police and local authorities in not acknowledging or acting on the disclosures of abuse by children is a continuing form of abuse that it is as severe as the abuse itself. In my experience after speaking to many survivors, this can be far worse than the abuse itself.
179. The decision to close down Operation Augusta was taken in circumstances where the Greater Manchester Police fully understood that there were very large numbers of children who had been the subject of CSE, child abuse and rape. The Greater Manchester Police therefore implicitly decided that vulnerable victims of CSE were simply not worth protecting.
180. It has been my experience that there is a very deeply rooted sense within the police, local authorities and other agencies that looked after children and children from difficult backgrounds are less deserving of care and protection. Indeed it has been my experience that looked after children and children from difficult backgrounds are often seen as choosing to willingly engage in child abuse.
181. Exhibited to this statement is a letter from the Greater Manchester Police to a person who was raped as a 15-year-old child. That letter is dated 11 January 2020. That letter states, inter alia:

On 7 January 2020 the branch received your complaint against Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

The circumstances surrounding your complaint are as follows;

You state you made a report of rape on 16th October 1998 when you were 15 years of age. The offender was not charged despite there being DNA and you feel the offender should have been alternatively charged with under age sex.

You further query way any evidence has since been destroyed.

Following my assessment of your complaint, I am considering that it does not need any investigation because it is out of time. The police reform act 2002 allows that a complaint can be displayed if more than 12 months has elapsed between the incident giving rise to the complaint and either no good reasons for the delay has been shown or that injustice would be likely to be caused by such delay

My reason for finding this is that the report of crime was made on 16th October 1998 and I acknowledge you were only 16 years of age at that time, you are now 37 years of age and since becoming an adult in April 2000 there has been many occasions when you have had contact with members of the Greater Manchester place and could have made this complaint.

Before I make a final decision I need you to explain why you have delayed making your complaint. You need to do this within 28 days from the day after the date of this letter....

182. Any reading of the letter would demonstrate the continuing and astonishing resistance by the Greater Manchester Police to persons who attempt to report child abuse. In particular it will be noted that the Greater Manchester Police seek to compel a victim of child rape to explain why they did not raise the allegation (for a second time) at an earlier stage. The letter is plainly intended to intimidate the victim into accepting the dropping of the case and makes clear the continuing institutional resistance by the Greater Manchester Police to tackle child abuse, or even accept responsibility for investigating child abuse. **(See Exhibit MO/2)**
183. In terms of recommendations for reform; I consider that there has to be the most profound shift in attitudes towards looked after and vulnerable children right across policing and local authorities and other agencies involved with such children, so that they are perceived, correctly, as being highly vulnerable individuals who are in need of protection rather than willing participants in child abuse who are not deserving of care and protection.
184. My concern is that any recommendations made by the IICSA may have no impact in circumstances where the most senior officers of the Greater Manchester Police are so institutionally resistant to investigating child sexual abuse. Until or unless senior officers (not rank file) are held to account on an on-going basis, there will be no change.
185. I therefore recommend that there should be a standing and continuing monitoring body to oversee the conduct and work of the Greater Manchester Police, and other police forces, on issues relating to CSE and child abuse, and that such a body should have the ability to compel action and to recommended criminal proceedings against officers (particularly senior officers) for knowingly or recklessly failing in their duty to protect children (including by undermining and under resourcing investigations into CSE and child abuse.
186. This independent body should not be the IOPC, as the IOPC cannot be trusted to be independent or robust in dealing, particularly with senior police officers.
187. As can be seen from my experiences, I reported my concerns and complaints to the IOPC and the IOPC rejected my complaints and concerns. It took an independent body (the Independent Assurance Review) to reinvestigate my complaints in order for the appalling failures of the Greater Manchester Police to be demonstrated.
188. The IOPC cannot be entrusted with monitoring the police on such important issues.

Theme 3:

189. I have been asked to comment on risk assessment, protection from harm and the outcomes experienced by children who have been sexually exploited.
190. As I have detailed in my witness statement and as is exemplified by the Independent Assurance Review, the Greater Manchester Police and relevant local authorities fundamentally failed to undertake any, or any meaningful, risk assessment or risk management in relation to very large numbers of looked after children and vulnerable children. This failure was repeated right across the North of England in a series of towns and cities where widespread child sexual exploitation was found to be occurring,
191. My views on this issue must now, in the light of the Independent Assurance Review, be recognised as correct and mainstream.
192. In circumstances where the Greater Manchester Police has been found to have deliberately closed down investigations of widespread child sexual exploitation and abuse the Inquiry can only conclude that the Greater Manchester Police does not take risk assessment or the protection of vulnerable children seriously. The same is true of Manchester City Council.
193. Indeed the evidence demonstrates that the Greater Manchester Police, as an institution and within its senior ranks, do not consider the protection of looked after children or vulnerable children from CSE as being important at all. This institutional resistance can be seen to the present day by reference to the exhibited letter of the 11 January 2020 to a victim of child abuse.
194. Furthermore in terms of the outcomes experienced by children who have been sexually exploited, I have detailed above the experiences of a number of the children I encountered. All of the children I worked with in Operation Augusta and Operation Span experienced exceptionally poor outcomes.
195. The most obvious examples will include Victoria Agoglia and the 26 children referred to in the Independent Assurance Review.
196. Not only were these children given little or no support following revelations that they had been sexually exploited abused and raped, in the case of Amber that child was in fact depicted as being a child abuser herself and steps were later taken to seek to remove her children from her as a result of that wholly wrong decision. In the case of Victoria Agoglia she was neglected to the extent that she died in horrible circumstances.

197. Again given the demonstrated failures of the Greater Manchester Police in these areas, I recommend that there should be a standing and continuing monitoring body to oversee the conduct and work of the Greater Manchester Police and other police forces on issues relating to Risk assessment, protection from harm and the outcomes experienced by children who have been sexually exploited.
198. Again, such a body should have the ability to compel action and to recommended criminal proceedings against officers (particularly senior officers) for knowingly or recklessly failing in their duty to protect children (including by undermining and under resourcing investigations into CSE and child abuse).

Theme 4:

199. I have been asked to comment on issues relating to missing children, Return Home Interviews and looked after children.
200. When I was a serving police officer I was often sent to take 'missing from home' reports in regard of children who had gone missing from children's homes. This was a very regular task that I undertook.
201. When I would interview the care home staff, they would be very blasé about the missing child. They would routinely say that the child had gone missing again and they expected that the child was in Piccadilly Gardens (this was a well known area for homeless people and street prostitutes).
202. In my conversations with the care home staff and social workers about these missing from home children it was very clear that there was widespread understanding that these children were being exposed to abuse while they were missing from the home. However, the perception was that the children were making a choice to leave the home and expose themselves to abuse by adults.
203. A part of the difficulty was that the care home staff had no power to prevent the children from leaving the homes. Also, social workers were unable to place the children in secure accommodation due to the costs associated with this.
204. As a result, everyone involved with the children in care knew that the children were leaving the homes regularly and were, or were very likely to be, the subject of abuse.

205. I found this reality to be astonishing. It was clear to me that there were two things preventing children from being kept safe:

- a. The first was a perception that these children were choosing to put themselves in abusive situations.
- b. The second was that resources (including money) was not available to protect children who were known to be being abused or at severe risk of abuse.

206. As set out in this section, I found that very large numbers of looked-after children were going missing from care homes and that the care home staff and social workers were fully aware of this and that they knew that they were either engaged in dangerous and damaging exploitative sexual relations or were at risk of such exploitation.

207. It was my experience from engagement with other police officers in other forces that this issue, of large numbers of looked-after children going missing regularly in circumstances where they were known to be at risk, was a nationwide problem.

208. It was also my experience, and the experience of other officers that I have spoken to in other forces, that there was widespread knowledge of the risk to looked-after children in these circumstances and that there was a general acceptance of this and its consequences.

209. In my view there are two crucial elements that need to be considered:

- a. First, the pervasive culture of the acceptance of this issue (i.e. the acceptance that large numbers of looked-after children will go missing and be at risk) must be challenged. There must be a root and branch reform of the culture of those working with looked-after children so that the risks to children who abscond from children's homes are fully appreciated and that it becomes culturally unacceptable to tolerate this.
- b. Secondly, there has to be a change in practice, and possibly also the law, that would empower care home staff and social workers to prevent children from absconding from children's homes, particularly in circumstances where they are known to be at substantial risk of exploitation.

210. The second issue is a challenging one. It is my personal view that it is not right to effectively imprison children. However, the same children, particularly deeply disadvantaged children, must be protected, including being protected from themselves.

211. By way of example, an eleven year old girl who was suffering from severe anorexia nervosa and refusing treatment, could be and would be ordered to receive treatment even against her will.
212. It is simply not acceptable that so much public money is spent on the accommodation for looked-after children in circumstances where those children are not kept safe in that accommodation.
213. However, if steps were introduced to allow social workers and care home staff to stop children from absconding, this could put children at risk of assault, by persons using the excuse of protecting a child from absconding to assault a child. This is a difficult potential conflict to resolve.
214. The Inquiry must consider a range of practical and radical solutions.
215. For example, in terms of practical steps; it is often the case that very young children are placed in homes with much older children, who then socialise the younger child and expose that child to risk. Young children should not be placed in homes with older children.
216. Care home staff perform very difficult tasks that requires expertise, skill and dedication. However, they are often very low paid, part time or agency workers. There is therefore a lack of continuity of care, a lack of expertise and a lack of commitment to the task of supporting challenging children.
217. In order to address this fundamental issue, a radical approach would be required to significantly increase funding for care homes, to include retaining properly trained and motivated staff to provide the continuity of care and support that disadvantaged children need.
218. In my view such investment would lead to medium and long term savings when viewed in the wider context.

Theme 5 : Male Victims:

219. My experiences in relation to child sexual exploitation, child abuse and child rape have been focused very largely on female victims.

220. However, I did encounter male child victims of CSE and abuse. In my experience they were failed by the police and local authority in the same way as female victims. I am not aware of differences in treatment. Both boys and girls were profoundly failed

Theme 6: Children with a disability:

221. I have been asked to comment upon the position and practice in relation to children with a disability.

222. A number of the children I worked with, for example Ruby in Operation Span, had statements of special educational needs. Another example of a child with disabilities was the boy who sexually abused 5 year old 'chloe', as well as other girls in his school.

223. However, my experience of CSE, child abuse and child rape in relation to looked after and vulnerable children leads me to conclude that such children are at such a heightened level of risk to child sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse that they should be considered as constituting a special category or class of child who are in need of significant and intensive support and protection.

224. The children I worked with as part of Operation Augusta, Operation Span and other investigations were often children in care or on the child protection register. I found that all of those children came from deeply disadvantaged and broken family backgrounds. They had complex needs, including very low levels of educational attainment and social development.

225. These children were also highly vulnerable to exploitation as a result of a profound lack of family and other community support networks. They were children who had often been denied love, affection and stability and who, like all children, craved love, affection, stability and attention. This leads them to be exceptionally vulnerable to exploitation.

226. Whereas many of the children I worked with would not be identified as experiencing a recognisable disability (albeit children with statements of special educational needs should have been), in my view and in the view of others I have worked with in this area, these children should be treated as a special category of child akin to a child experiencing severe disabilities.

227. A concrete example of this would again be Ruby in Operation Span, Ruby was 13 and had been raped by many men. She had a statement of educational needs and was also on the child protection register as being at risk of sexual abuse; and although she was 13, she

was assessed as having a far lower developmental age. As such, she was due to be interviewed as part of the Operation. It was recognised that she needed special assistance by a trained psychologist to provide best evidence. This was over ruled on cost grounds and as there was a desire to supposedly speed up the process, leading to an inability to obtain her full and best evidence, which very probably meant that we did not obtain evidence in relation to all of those who had raped her.

228. As a result of my experiences, I would strongly urge the Inquiry to recommend that looked-after children are categorised as a specific class of vulnerable individuals similar to, or perhaps on equal terms, with the classes of individuals who are protected by the Equality Act 2010.

229. The Equality Act 2010 currently provides protections in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. I would suggest a recommendation updating or amending this piece of legislation to encompass looked-after children, so as to enhance their ability to access adequate provision of services including care and protection.

Theme 7 : Partnership working on child sexual exploitation;

230. As detailed in my narrative statement above, my experience of the overall effectiveness of the steps taken by local authorities and police in relation to CSE and child abuse has been exceptionally poor.

231. It is not only my own experience as a police officer involved in CSE investigations that leads me to this conclusion, it is also the evidence of other individuals, such as Sarah Rowbotham, and her evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in which she gave evidence relating to 103 referrals she had made to police and social services between 2005 to 2011 regarding CSE and child abuse. Ms Rowbotham's evidence is referred to in the Independent Assurance Review.

232. In my experience, and based upon the evidence, it is my view that CSE and child abuse of looked after children is widespread. It is also widely known of and there is no effective partnership between police and local authorities that is directed at protecting children disrupting child sexual exploitation and improving the outcomes for children who have experienced such abuse.

233. There is a wealth of evidence in relation to the lack of partnership and joined up working between police (including between different police areas) and local authorities.
234. A major factor continues to be that there is little if any 'ownership' or responsibility for protecting vulnerable children.
235. Some of this is to do with negative perceptions of children in care, who are seen as an inconvenience and as being responsible for the abuse they are exposed to.
236. In many of the cases I have dealt with, the child victim was criminalised, for example in the cases of Daisy and amber, as I have detailed above.
237. Another significant part was a funding issue. Many of these children would abscond from children's homes very regularly. The care home staff could not prevent this. Social service would not fund secure places to keep the children safe.
238. There are a whole series of reasons why vulnerable looked after children will act up and abscond from homes, including being drawn into exploitative relationships, searching for love and affection, and peer pressure. Indeed many children, who were placed in homes at the age of 11, were socialised by other older children in the homes into such dangerous behaviours.
239. However, where children are at such obvious risk of the most serious sexual and physical abuse it must be in their best interests to be kept in more secure accommodation.
240. There are significant costs in doing this. However, the cost of not doing so is higher in terms of, for example, policing costs, medical costs, long terms social costs and the human costs to the child, its family and indeed the child's own children.
241. In my view there needs to be an examination of radical changes, including sufficient powers and funding to keep vulnerable children secure and safe while in care.

Theme 8 : Audit, review and performance improvement.

242. When considering audit, review and performance improvement in the context of the Greater Manchester Police, the Inquiry must begin from the standpoint that it cannot trust

any evidence provided to it by the Greater Manchester Police in relation to the incidents of CSE and child abuse and the audit review and improvement measures in place within the Greater Manchester Police.

243. The findings of the Independent Assurance Review, my own evidence and the evidence of many other professionals in the area demonstrates that the Greater Manchester Police was not (and continues to fail to) maintaining proper records in relation to CSE.
244. Further, the Greater Manchester Police, as an institution, was not interested in any way in reviewing and improving its performance in this area.
245. I have given examples in my narrative statement above whereby very many allegations of CSE, child abuse and child rape were not recorded by the Greater Manchester Police. As such, any records that the Greater Manchester Police does have are wholly unreliable and do not represent in any way an accurate picture of the incidents of CSE in the Greater Manchester area.
246. Although the Greater Manchester Police has responded to the Independent Assurance Review report (a report which the Greater Manchester Police resisted strongly and sought to prevent full public publication of) and has now stated that it will re-open Operation Augusta under the new title of Operation Green jacket; it has only taken these steps in circumstances where it has been forced to do so.
247. I mentioned elsewhere, the Independent Assurance Review is on-going and has added yet another CSE investigation to its work.
248. Further I have exhibited to this statement a letter of the 11 January 2020 from the Greater Manchester Police to a child rape victim, which demonstrates the Greater Manchester Police's continuing unwillingness to investigate child abuse or to treat victims of child abuse in a humane manner. **(Exhibit MO/2)**
249. The evidence will demonstrate that the Greater Manchester Police's data on CSE and CSA is wholly incomplete and unreliable. Without reliable data the public cannot know the extent of the problem and the problem cannot be adequately measured or addressed.
250. I ask the Inquiry to find that the Greater Manchester Police's data on and commitment to review performance improvement in CSE and CSA is unreliable.
251. I again ask the Inquiry to recommend that audit and review of matters pertaining to CSE and CSA, within the Greater Manchester Policing area, are overseen by an independent body.

252. My experience of the CPS in relation to CSE and CSA was very mixed. During an investigation one could call a CPS advice line; however, the lawyers one usually spoke with were junior and had little if any knowledge of CSE and CSA.
253. Indeed we had a CPS lawyer attached to Operation Span. That lawyer was very junior and could provide very little assistance.
254. More recently it has been repeatedly reported that CPS prosecutions in rape cases have fallen to an all time low. This will undoubtedly also impact on child rape cases; especially as abuse by the grooming gangs is complex, costly and the difficult to prove, and therefore the least likely to be prosecuted.
255. Indeed it has also been reported that the CPS used performance targets in relation to deciding whether or not to proceed with allegations of rape. This is very reminiscent of the performance indicators that led to the failure to investigate child abuse in Operation Augusta.
256. The CPS must have sufficient resources and expertise in order to advise police in CSE and CSA investigations and in order to ensure that all possible prosecutions of child abusers are taken forward (i.e. not as in the Manchester experience where scores of child exploiters and abusers went unprosecuted.)

Child Sexual Exploitation as a National Priority:

257. I have been asked to comment on whether the designation of CSE as a national Government and policing priority has changed or improved local responses to tackling child sexual exploitation.
258. In my view, it has had little effect.
259. In the context of the Greater Manchester Police, the Inquiry need not look further than the Independent Assurance Review Report of 14 January 2020 and the Greater Manchester Police's attempts to water down that report and prevent its full publication, and the Greater Manchester Police's response to that report.
260. I have detailed elsewhere in this statement the profound and deep-rooted negative perceptions of vulnerable and looked-after children that are so widely held by police forces,

local authorities and other professionals which inhibit action on child sexual exploitation, disruption of CSE and protecting children from it.

261. The vulnerable and abused children are widely viewed as the problem and criminalised rather than being treated as the victims they are.
262. The independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is playing a vital role in raising awareness of child abuse and child sexual exploitation across the country.
263. Until recently, child abuse and particularly child sexual exploitation were almost hidden issues, despite the fact that child sexual exploitation was so widespread and so well-known of by policing, local authorities and others.
264. Until or unless vulnerable and looked-after children are perceived as and treated as being full members of society who are entitled to the same levels of protection and support as, for example, children in comfortable middle class homes, vulnerable and looked after children will continue to be at exceptional risk.
265. Furthermore, simply 'designating' child sexual exploitation as a priority does not of itself produce any material change. If the government wishes to demonstrate that it is serious about this issue, it must dedicate the time and resources necessary.
266. For example, performance indicators do not sit easily with tackling child sexual exploitation. Child exploitation is a complex issue that takes time, skill and dedication to address. There must be better ways of measuring performance on CSE than simple tick box performance indicators.
267. This is one of the reasons why I consider that there may be significant merit to my proposal that looked-after children be designated as a class of people entitled to protections under the Equalities Act 2010. Such legally protected status could be used as a means to compel better practice, policy and outcomes for looked-after children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation.

Race and Ethnicity:

268. I have detailed, in the course of this witness statement the fact that a very large number of those involved in child sexual exploitation in the north of England came from particular ethnic groups and communities.

269. It is my firm belief that the Greater Manchester Police and other police forces in the North of England were very reticent in investigating child sexual exploitation, as they feared being accused of institutional racism by targeting significant groups of men who came from the same ethnic background.

270. The detection, investigation, disruption and prosecution in relation to child sexual exploitation should be colour blind. Sensitivities surrounding race relations should play no part whatsoever in the protection of children.

271. However I also believe that consideration should be given to a recommendation that, as with other types of assaults, consideration is given to ensuring that the 'racially aggravated' element of the sexual assault/rape forms part of the charge, where the evidence supports this.

Conclusions

272. I have been asked to provide any further observations which I consider may assist the Inquiry with its understanding of the nature, causes and effects of organised child sexual exploitation by networks and how it can be stopped.

273. **Firstly**, I think it is vital that the Inquiry make findings setting out a clear understanding of how widespread and serious a problem child sexual exploitation is, particularly for vulnerable looked-after children.

274. In my experience and based on the evidence, there is not a significant town or city in Britain in which vulnerable and looked-after children are not being sexually exploited. Evidence to support this can be found by reference to the Independent Assurance Review, the IICSA's own findings, recent investigations and reports into child sexual exploitation across Britain.

275. Child sexual exploitation is a serious and nationwide problem. The Inquiry must state this and an estimation of the extent of CSE in Britain in its report in this investigation.

276. Exploitation of children is growing quickly. For example, the phenomena of 'County Lines' has exploded across Britain with organised gangs using vulnerable children in the illegal drugs trade. Organised gangs have become highly sophisticated at targeting vulnerable children for exploitation. However, the exploitation of children has now gone beyond vulnerable and looked after children and children even in more affluent families are

now also being drawn into exploitation. As such, CSE is a fast growing and urgent issue. It must be understood that a child can present a far more valuable commodity than drugs, as a child can be sold repeatedly; and as such can be a rich continuing source of income to the organised networks.

277. **Secondly**, it has been my experience, and the experience of other officers engaged in this area in other parts of Britain, that the detection of child sexual exploitation (certainly in area of vulnerable and looked after children) is not particularly difficult to detect.

278. As I have detailed in this statement, in relation to my work on return to home interviews, professionals working with looked-after children are aware of the large numbers of children who are absconding from children's homes and the risks to which they are being exposed.

279. The detection of CSE (in this area) does not and would not require complex or costly policing and local authority steps to identify where child sexual exploitation was occurring in the context of looked-after children in care homes.

280. Thirdly, it is also very possible to significantly disrupt child sexual exploitation by organised networks in the context of looked after children.

281. In my experience, those exploiting looked after children were not particularly sophisticated; they have tried and tested methods for accessing and exploiting, particularly looked-after children. However, with a reasonable level of policing resource, and the political will to do so, significant numbers of persons engaged in the sexual exploitation of looked after children can be identified and disrupted.

282. Unfortunately in my experience abusers of children have learnt that the police do not actively pursue child sexual exploitation. Indeed the evidence in Manchester and elsewhere shows that most abusers are not investigated or prosecuted. As such, the abusers feel a sense of impunity and the abused children learn that no one will act on their disclosures of abuse, Nor protect them from abuse. They are in many respects 'forgotten children'.

283. Those exploiting children in other newer contexts, such as county lines, are more sophisticated.

284. Therefore, at least in the context of looked after children; we already know who many of the children who are subjected to CSE are; they are looked-after children in care. We also know where these victims and potential victims are, they are in local authority children's homes. Similarly, we are also able to quite readily identify many of those exploiting children. As such, we know who, where, what and how to tackle and disrupt child sexual exploitation in the looked after area.

285. The only question remains is why are we not doing so.
286. However, there is a wider and growing picture.
287. There are many child victims of CSE who I have worked with in my policing career who were not in care. Many of these children were living at home with a family member and were often on the child protection register.
288. Children and families in this category are routinely viewed as and treated as problem families rather than being families at risk and who need additional support and early intervention to prevent the risk of CSE.
289. Again in this category, we can readily identify the children who are at risk, because they are on the child protection register. Schools are often also aware of which children are at risk from an early age.
290. Again, the risk of CSE in this area can be addressed; however, it will require the commitment of additional resources. Any resistance to the cost of early intervention could be overcome if the Government undertook a cost benefit analysis of the savings that would arise from supporting at risk families and children at the earliest stage.
291. Finally, as I have said, CSE is growing both in terms of frequency and sophistication. We need only look to the growth of county lines to see the truth of this.
292. Thus CSE is a present, fast growing and very serious issue that must be addressed as a national priority.
293. I believe that it is a matter of urgency that a national strategic plan is developed and implemented in order to address the growth of Child Exploitation, including child sexual exploitation.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: _____

Margaret Oliver

Dated: _____

Witness Name: Maggie Oliver
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits: 2
Dated: 5 February 2020

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

LIST OF EXHIBITS

SER	EXHIBIT REF	DATE	DESCRIPTION
1	M/1		Letter from Detective Sergeant (Rtd.) Chris Owens 3 February 2020
2	M/2		Letter from Greater Manchester Police to child rape complainant – 11 January 2020

Witness Name: Maggie Oliver
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits: 2
Dated: 5 February 2020

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

EXHIBIT MO / 1 – Letter from Detective Sergeant (Rtd.) Chris Owens 3 February 2020

Witness Name: Maggie Oliver
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits: 2
Dated: 5 February 2020

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**EXHIBIT MO / 2 – Letter from Greater Manchester Police to child rape complainant –
11 January 2020**
