

THE
CRY
OF THE BRAVE
AND
BROKEN
HEARTED
PARENT



Dedicated to all children everywhere,
whose vulnerability is living in a world
of sexual predators



...from loving parents that want change

Thank you to all of the parents and carers affected by child
exploitation who have contributed to this publication.

Produced working in association with Parents Affected by Child Exploitation (Pace).



Introduction

This publication has come about to tell the truth of the pain and anguish of parents who have had their children stolen from them, whilst (*and despite*) being within their loving care, by sexual predators outside of their families or knowledge. Child exploitation and grooming is a problem that's not being addressed effectively or quickly enough.

The National Crime Agency received 82,109 individual industry referrals for child sex abuse images in 2017 - a 700% increase since 2012.

We have collected together in Part One of this booklet, numerous examples of real-life expressions of fear, trauma and helplessness from many distressed parents - titled 'Our Tears'.

This seems necessary to help others see we are devastated and reaching out for help to keep our children safe, just like any parent would in this terrifying situation. Our children have not been neglected or been under any care provision. The National Crime Agency recognises that children from 'stable homes' are targeted by county lines criminals. We have simply granted our children some internet access, allowed them some normal time out with friends with the usual precautions in place, and lived our lives. Yet the horror has unfolded before us. This is our cry of compassion to parents everywhere; from every social class, nationality and family set up.



In Part Two, powerfully titled **‘The Second Tier of Destruction’**, there are examples of real-life responses we have received from various authorities that are deemed applicable to seek help from. It is vital to include these to highlight the further damage that is so often done to our families, the victims and us, their parents. We can encounter a second tier of trauma by those in professional positions, which often destroys the last threads of a relationship remaining with our children, that has already been attacked by the perpetrator. This renders us even more helpless to help our children.

In light of these destructive and absurd responses, many of us have been forced to doubt whether our current authorities are truly working towards child safety. We the parents, are the most knowledgeable people in our children’s lives and can help to gain information and evidence relating to the perpetrator.

If we are supported to help our child keep the essential family bonds that are targeted by grooming, we have a chance to keep them safe. Incredibly and contrary to this seemingly obvious need for support of parents, we are often falsely accused, abused and victimised by professionals and the systems currently in place, without evidence or warrant. Consequently, any chances of keeping our children safe can be completely lost. These inhumane and ill-equipped (at best) responses need immediate and national change with all action directed at stopping the perpetrators.

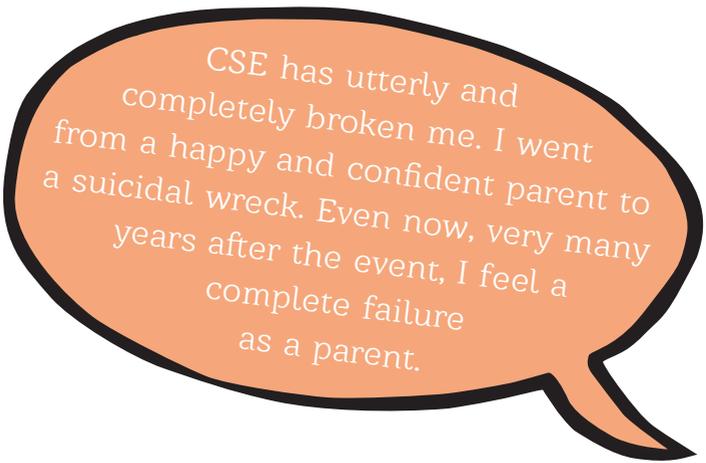
This generation of affected parents, and those before us, have taken the brunt of this damage but we want to stop this for future generations now.

Part One

Our Tears

Below are real life examples of the experiences parents have endured on their journey trying to protect their children.

“Feeling grief stricken, in shock, helpless and angry all at the same time. Every time I look at my beautiful, sweet daughter I am reminded that her childhood was cruelly taken away from her. I feel so afraid for her. I feel angry at myself that I wasn’t there in those moments that she may have needed me. And then there is the feeling of overwhelming loss. Loss for her innocence and that life will never be the same.”



CSE has utterly and completely broken me. I went from a happy and confident parent to a suicidal wreck. Even now, very many years after the event, I feel a complete failure as a parent.

“We had no understanding of what was actually going on. What had happened to our lovely and gentle daughter? A sense of loss. We gradually learnt about her ‘boyfriend’ but the word grooming, let alone any understanding of it, barely existed. We were completely at sea in a world

that was totally alien to us. Is ‘incomprehension’ an emotion? We were also sad, exhausted and angry, trying to continue with demanding professional jobs while having broken nights as our daughter went missing. We were angry because all the blame was put on our daughter, whilst there was no interest in her ‘boyfriend’. We felt so alone.”

“ Another feeling was that of powerlessness. As someone who is used to problem solving, here was something that was defeating us. I felt the determination to work for change, for understanding what was actually happening, to show that the perpetrators were the problem; not our children, or us.”



We as parents
were at our wit's end.
We didn't know
what to do.

“ All we did was ask for them to help her and us. To stop the perpetrators and the gangs from having access, and to help her deal with the trauma post the abuse, the grooming, the violence, the effects of gang grooming on my child. We requested they provide access to ‘talking therapy’ help or to creative resources, such as art or music therapy. To allow family mediation between us so she would know that we are neither the enemy, nor the threat and that we love her and would do anything to have her return back to us. Who makes these rules? Who destroys these homes and families? Who causes this chaos of pain? The perpetrators yes, but also the ones who we ask for help; the ones who should know better. They are also perpetrators and they get legally paid for it.”

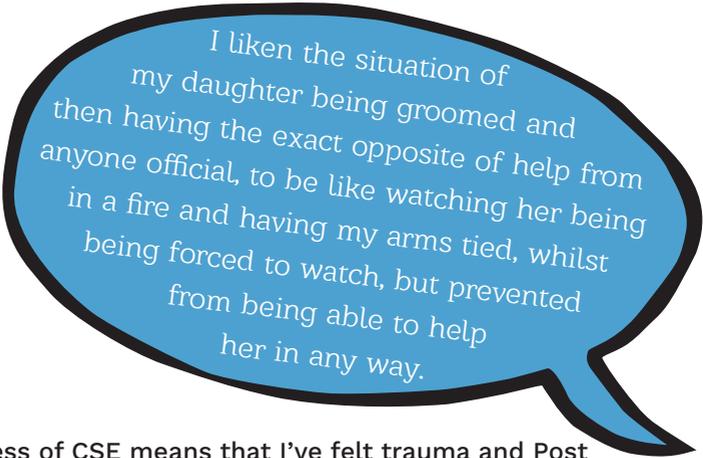
“ My daughter has been taken away, not because of me, but because of ‘animal’ men who used her. I feel sadness every day I see the mums and dads with their children... they have their children with them. I want to shout out, “Enjoy your children as long as you can”. I feel frustrated that I hardly

get to see her. I feel I'm living in a bubble waiting for it to burst so I can be with my daughter again."

“ I could talk about despair, isolation, grief, fear and a whole range of other emotions that I have felt during this ongoing ordeal. These emotions are brought about again and again by the way parents and children are sometimes treated by professional agencies.”

“ I felt a bad mother, but when I think rationally, I know I kept her safer than anyone else had done both before and since. Like other mums, I went out in search of her night after night until the early hours, in car parks, pathways, garden parks, fields and cafes. No one came with me. The tools I took were a torch, rape alarm and a coat. I walked alone night after night and then I went to work regardless of sleep and did a full-time job. I often felt scared on the searches but this was nothing compared to the fear I experienced when being judged by the youth police officer or social workers, or even teachers. I worried endlessly for my daughter.”

“ So here we are. Without her at home. One social worker, just one was all it took, to topple our family kingdom, to disrupt our world forever. We may never know her reasons but we do know it was unjust and her methods despicable and unfathomable. Where is the justice? Where is the law? What about the rights of the child, of the family, of the grieving parents?”



I liken the situation of my daughter being groomed and then having the exact opposite of help from anyone official, to be like watching her being in a fire and having my arms tied, whilst being forced to watch, but prevented from being able to help her in any way.

“ The lengthy process of CSE means that I've felt trauma and Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) like symptoms at various stages for years, with no help. It feels so cruel. All my reading and seeking recovery has brought me through so far, but I am simply not the same person I once was. In some ways I've firmed up my parenting intuition and good standards; I had to, as it



The Long Walk:

A Plea to the Learned



Conception joy nine
months of wait,

Pushing out through a
narrow gate,

I cry, then faint, losing
so much blood,

I **welcome my baby** into
our twosome hood.

Puddle jumping,
riding bikes,

Climbing trees and
taking hikes,

We paint and draw, **play
dress up games,**

Puzzles, dancing,
making up names.

Schoolwork, friends,
parties galore,

National Trust,
sleepovers

and so much more,

We laughed and cried and
played and danced,

We sang and
loved, our lives
enhanced.

The **sweetest
cuddles,**
the softest
touch,

I could never
love a child
so much.

Then **darkness came**
from a TV screen,

A look, a word, to
break our dream,

Preying eyes and
sticky hands,

Making mini beasts of
the cutest lambs.

Smoking pot and
drinking came,

Running from home
became a game,

Promises of better
from ugly faces,

Taking **my child** to
disgusting places.

My lamb to slaughter
quickly went,

Abusive words and
rage unspent,

Kicking, screaming,
smashing things,

Chaos, disorder this
grooming brings.

Crying siblings,
mama broken,

Calls for help and
gets no token,

So in they come with
clipboards bent,

Judging parents, no
sympathy felt.





Reports were wrote,
truth and justice gone,
Making up stories, from
breast, **the child**
was torn,

With disbelief, my
heart it bled,
All help lost, instead,
with child they fled.

Fighting in court, I
hoped they'd see,
That grooming and
blame didn't come
from me,

Business broken,
money gone,
Moving house, without
her, **no home.**

The judge he rules,
a portly chap,
His stern, drinking face
delivered the slap,
Not coming home but
in another's hands,
A **temporary mother** has
my firstborn lamb.

To a system shattered
by lack of cash,
I implore you to stop
and think of us,
Mamas and papas are
not always to blame,

Victims of another's
grooming game.

They take our kids, **fresh**
meat they say,
Vulnerable and hurting,
they make them play,
They know the words
they use will bring,
"Fresh lambs to our
slaughter" these
bastards sing.

So listen gents and
ladies too,
Those who sit on seats
and make the rules,
Regard our stories, our
sobs and pleas,
Stop the slaughter,
save our lambs.

Save future kids from
grooming hands,
You have the power,
you have the pen,
Stop this pain
repeating again
and again and
again.



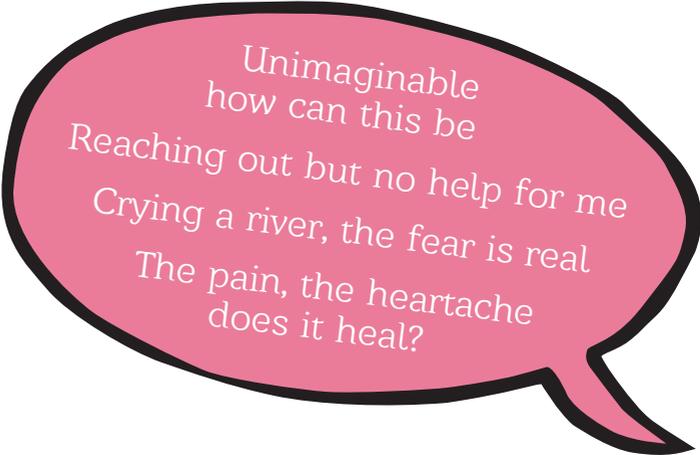
was brutally and unnecessarily challenged. But the pain of not being able to stop a perpetrator getting to my child or not being able to find help for her, still resides as frustration and deep heartbreak.”



We struggled to know
what our purpose was;
we were parents with no
child to parent!

“ I recall the terror I felt for her safety, and making calls to every charity and agency I could think of trying to find support. I was so panicked as I couldn’t get her to see how this man was wrong for wanting to make contact, and to pursue and maintain a secret relationship with her from such a young age. Astoundingly, authorities were so destructive and so far from being clear and boundaried about a child to adult relationship. This bore the pain down to an extreme level. I questioned the world I live in and it has damaged our entire family in irreparable ways.”

“ It’s been the worst time of my life where I have never felt so alone, helpless, rejected, excluded and lost, knowing that there was nothing I could do. Because she continued to avoid all contact with her family, it felt like the death of my child, only we never had a body to bury.”



Unimaginable
how can this be
Reaching out but no help for me
Crying a river, the fear is real
The pain, the heartache
does it heal?

Part One

Summary



As you can see we feel pain in unique ways, but there are some common threads of loss, confusion, isolation, fear and helplessness. The loss of our child's safety, their brainwashing (*similar to Stockholm Syndrome*), their need for help and support, their victimisation and abuse, means their lives and natural development are hijacked – all so harrowing to witness.

If we have the opportunity to remain in or regain a relationship with them, we as parents may be the first to hear their disclosures of rape or traumatic abuse. We see their anguish and feel their helplessness, along with our own feelings being compounded during it all. We endure a multi-layered array of emotions and try to support siblings and grandparents that also suffer the impact. We also attempt to hold together a resemblance of a functioning family, all the while trying to access help for our children. We are traumatised by it all.

We approach services in good faith, expecting to be met with human compassion, professionalism, urgency and support for safeguarding. We need resources to help us help them to see the perpetrators for who they truly are, and to stop the perpetrators accessing our children. **But instead...**

Part Two

The Second Tier of Destruction

“ There is a **stigma** attached to parents of children of CSE and that is that we are incapable, flawed, not good or good enough parents. I have found trying to access the correct support for my daughter an **absolutely disgraceful experience**. This is the thing that stays with me more than the fear, grief, isolation or any of my emotions.”

“ Another comment was, ‘if I had been a **better parent** it would never had happened’.”

“ The things said by professionals that were unhelpful and inappropriate are so numerous I could write a book. One social worker sat in a meeting where we were discussing our missing child and asked if there was any evidence she was **still alive**. She then went on to say she was worried about the **emotional impact** the investigation was having on the **perpetrator**!!! We lost all hope of help at that moment.”

“ I felt **abused** by professionals, particularly at the beginning, when I was going through **acute loss** and disorientation.”

“ I was not treated with any **care** or **respect** by the services. They treated me like an imposter, an interferer and an obstacle. Social services made decisions with my 14 year old that I struggled to make sense of, and that impacted and undermined her father and I.”

“ I was barred from the Strategy Meeting in which it was decided my daughter would be offered alternative care **away from me**.”

“ I was asked to prove I was where I said I was, when I was meeting her. My daughter used to tell the social workers that I wasn't on time, didn't turn up, was late or gave any other excuse, because she was the one who never turned up. I would wait an hour, report her missing, wait more hours until midnight. Instead of the social worker believing me or at

CHAOS

least enquiring, she suggested **I wasn't reliable**. So I was asked to prove my innocence by getting a parking ticket to show I was there. I have a professional work role and I was fully invested in keeping my daughter safe and I was reliable."

“ I felt I had to **defend myself** to those who judged me. I fought with words and knowledge, and asked for evidence from them. For this I was not popular with them.”

“ My daughter was almost 11 when she was first **groomed online**. We took her and her phone straight to the police station. My daughter was obviously defensive, shut off and defiant. The police officer called her, **'A little bitch'**. We all sat there in shock.”

“ We had done nothing wrong but were **treated like criminals**.”

“ I have no idea why the social worker spoke to me so patronisingly. I had contacted every organisation to get my daughter support. When I informed them of everything I was doing to get her help, they said they would **close the case** as they could not offer my family any other support.”

“Surely we knew our daughter best but they didn’t want to learn from us, they had made their decision and it soon became apparent that they felt **our parenting was at fault.**”

“We feel totally let down by **‘the system’** – Social Care and the Police – they have failed us but most of all they have failed our daughter.”

“We were told she was naughty and this was her chosen behaviour.”

“Social Care has told us he is safe with us so they aren’t getting involved.”

“The police have said, ‘She’s allowed to have a boyfriend.’”

“A social services report that had **over 40 errors** in it, stated that the suspected perpetrator is an **‘emotionally supportive person’** for my daughter, even though he pursued her when she was a child and he was nearing his thirties. There was no other investigation or knowledge sought about him. This same report has fraudulently written that my children were known to social services when the school and their own departments could prove otherwise, as I was a childminder with all the full disclosure checks and registration with them at that time. This report was the only interdisciplinary cohesion that was evident and it was to stop me complaining to the ombudsman or the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). I was **verbally attacked** in meetings whilst asking them for safeguarding help and suggestions, although I approached them for help, but the perpetrator was never investigated or deterred.”

The social worker has referred to the 35 year old man, who is currently in prison, as the ‘boyfriend’ of my child.

“My daughter was told by a police officer that, **“if she writes a letter recommending her as a helpful police officer, that she would get her mum off her back for her”**, so she could see the perpetrator whenever she liked. I later found out that some of the police officers of that county were due in court for **failing to investigate numerous examples of child abuse** within just one particular case.”

“**Police officer to my daughter**, “This sounds a bit **‘groomy’**, do be careful”. She said there was nothing more she could do and certainly couldn’t ask to see her phone.”

Social services manager, “We never help these girls, they always go back to these men”.

“We asked for help from social care and they advised us to tell her to stop going back to him, ‘**Tell her to say no**’.”

“When expressing concern for my child’s mental health following being **raped**, we were told, ‘Don’t worry, children are very resilient.’”

“I realised that some of the words I used were being used against me in a brutal fashion. I mentioned the word shock as part of the ‘**5 stages of grief**’ and this was used against me to accuse me of morally judging her. This is when I started to get really afraid that services will scapegoat parents.”

“I was treated like a **meddling parent**. You start to question your judgement when you’re wrongly viewed as a hysterical mother.”

“I feel **enraged** by the treatment of us by professionals. They have wreaked **havoc** in our lives. In fact they finished the job that was started by the perpetrators.”

Police officer, “Even if your daughter is being exploited, she would have to make the complaint”. Half her face was badly bruised and I had no idea where she was living.

“I was told I would be **arrested** if I tried to contact my daughter.”

“Policewoman, ‘Get over yourself, your daughter doesn’t want to know you’.”

“Safeguarding officer, ‘No one will ever believe your son...things like that were bound to happen to him’.”

“Police officer in responding to my daughter’s **numerous rapes**, ‘What, another one?’”

A detective, “It’s parents like you...”

I Turned to You

I turned to you for **advice**

Welcomed you
into my home

Told myself you do your
job unselfishly

Why else would someone
choose a job like yours?

I told you everything,
opened myself up to you
completely

I turned to you in
desperation and tears,
confusion, pain

And you used everything
against me

You told my daughter I
didn't believe her, wrote
reports about **neglect**

Said I was unbalanced
and emotional

I needed to keep my
feelings in check

You threatened to take
my daughter from me

When all I had done was
ask you for help

You were my social worker
and I turned to you.



I turned to you for **justice**

When my daughter
had been raped

You **pressured** her for
a statement that she
didn't want to make

I'd always taught my
daughter to believe in you

You were the good guys –

But you **failed me** too

You said you'd
taken evidence

Then that evidence
disappeared

You told me there was
nothing you could do

You were the police and
I turned to you.

Part two

Summary



Can you imagine fearing for your child's life, knowing they have been coerced into a sexual or controlling relationship, trafficked or used for criminal intent... and then receiving these responses? The responses recorded here are just a small sample of what is still being said and attitudes expressed, that we have received to date.

Child exploitation responses have to stop further victimisation of the victim or their parents.

We need immediate change to help us safeguard our children and the use of methods that include parents as sources of safety for the child, and evidence gathering to bring perpetrators to justice.

We need support to uphold our family, and strength when a perpetrator seeks to destroy the bonds between the child and us in order to control them.

Our current systems are not fit to address child exploitation and are designed for only assessing abuse within the family system. Victimisation of parents must stop – we are not the perpetrators in child exploitation.

HELP US... our children need protecting!

Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE)

Pace was founded as **CROP (Coalition for the Removal of Pimping)** in 1996. Today, Pace is the lead national charity that works alongside parents and carers of children who are, or who are at risk of being, exploited by individuals from outside of the family.

They also provide guidance and training to professionals on how child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, human trafficking and the criminalisation of exploited children affects the whole family. This national training programme includes the UK's first Level 4 Accredited Award in Child Exploitation (ACSEP), our Advanced Child Exploitation Course (ACE), and bespoke training opportunities.

Pace welcomes this report developed by parents in which they powerfully speak for themselves about the impact of child exploitation on their family and the response from services.

It reminds us once again of both the resilience and drive of the parents we support to create positive change for children. Despite their stories, parents are determined to make their voices heard and instigate change.

In response to concerns expressed by parents and staff, Pace has started to conduct a landmark investigation with affected parents into the impact of the social care response on families affected by child exploitation and the safeguarding of their children. Pace is delivering this project thanks to support from DMSS Research. The report will be launched in Autumn 2019.

Pace's Parent Action Group

Are you a parent affected by child exploitation? Are you interested in lobbying for positive changes in child exploitation policy and raising awareness about issues affecting parents?

We are a group of parents who have come together to have a voice and influence change. If you are a parent affected by child exploitation and would like to get involved, we would love to hear from you. We:



Work in partnership with statutory agencies, government representatives, community groups and strategic boards to improve responses in tackling child exploitation



Offer advice and consultation to Pace about delivering the best possible support to parents affected by child exploitation



Undertake research on child exploitation to inform practice and policy



Some of us may share our experiences at training, events or parliamentary meetings to help organisations and services to understand the impact of child exploitation on families, to inform their practice



Bring our individual knowledge and experience together in one place to inform services how we can work together to better safeguard children.

You can participate as much or as little as you like in any or all of our activities in a supportive environment.

Email info@paceuk.info or contact us on 0113 240 3040 to join us.

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Parents against
child exploitation



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