

## **Part B: See Me, Hear Me – a Framework for protecting children from CSE**

Throughout this Inquiry we collected views from children and young people. Some of them felt let down by the system. They informed us of how professionals paid little regard to their opinions and to their identity, beliefs and feelings. This made them feel they did not understand or care about them and that statutory services were more interested in their abuse.

*'They acted like they knew everything about me, but they don't know me.'*

They felt they were being judged by professionals who would talk over them with language that was harsh or that they did not understand or that was condescending. This made them feel confused and even more vulnerable and unsafe.

*'I had to talk to crowds of people and tell my story over and over again.'*

Children and young people stated how daunted they felt about the number of people they had to talk to and the number of times they had to revisit their personal experiences of abuse. Often the people working with them were constantly changing and this made it hard for them to develop trust and be open.

*'They didn't do what they said they would.'*

Children and young people told us how they felt let down by the system. Often professionals did not follow through on their decisions and failed to provide them with continuous support and care. Some children and young people we interviewed had lost hope and told us:

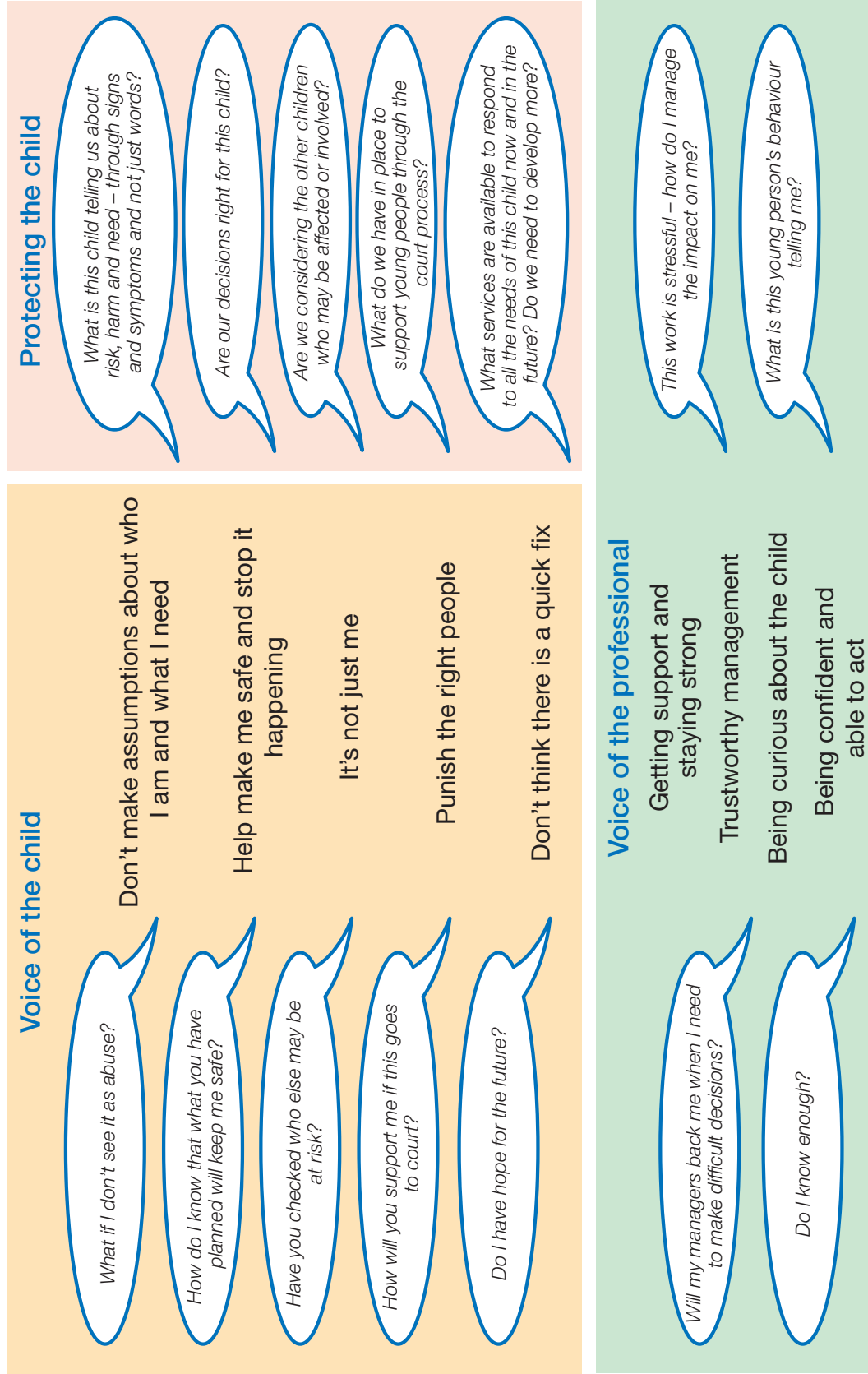
*'I don't know what would make things better. I don't think there is anything that can.'*

From the evidence we gathered, it was clear that those who failed to protect and support children and young people were not hearing their voices and failing to produce a child-centred approach. As a result, based on the expertise gained from this Inquiry, we developed **See Me, Hear Me** – a Framework to guide professionals and agencies through this process.

**See Me, Hear Me** is the Framework for protecting children – from strategic planning to operational interventions – in order to prevent child sexual exploitation and to deal with it when it occurs.

It is a child-centred Framework focusing above all, on ensuring that children and young people who are victims of CSE or at risk of becoming victims, are seen, heard, attended to and understood. It is about making their needs and experiences the central and driving force behind all decisions and actions. It is about making the child visible.

**See Me, Hear Me**  
**A Framework for protecting children**  
**Figure 10: Getting the focus right**



Underpinned by: Children Act 1989, UNCRC Articles 3, 12, 19, 24, 34, 39.  
 Seven Principles: 1) The child's best interests must be the top priority. 2) Participation of children and young people. 3) Enduring relationships and support. 4) Comprehensive problem-profiling.  
 5) Effective information-sharing within and between agencies. 6) Supervision, support and training for staff. 7) Evaluation and review.

## Voice of the child

These are the questions that will be in the mind of a victim or potential victim of child sexual exploitation. At whatever level they are working, everyone involved in combating CSE should know who the child or young person is (their identity); what they are thinking; and ensure they have answers to the questions they are asking.

These questions have been compiled with and quality assured by a group of young people all of whom have been victims of sexual exploitation.

<p><b>Voice of the child</b></p> <p>Children and young people are too often left without help because they are invisible to the agencies charged with their protection. <b>See Me, Hear Me</b> has been developed with the help of young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation. The purpose of questions below is to bring their voices right into the heart of all planning and decision-making about child sexual exploitation.</p> <p>Children and young people devised these questions with us and have told us that the answers to all of them are important.</p>	<p><b>How to use these questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use them to think both about preventing abuse and responding to children's needs when they have already been victims of abuse.</li> <li>• Involve them at every stage – when developing your local strategies, when building resilient communities, when taking action to protect an individual child. The questions are not in chronological order. Always start from where the young person is at and tailor your responses accordingly.</li> <li>• You may need to revisit some questions repeatedly.</li> <li>• Always check with the young person – it is their life.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Don't make assumptions about who I am and what I need</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Have you thought about me from the start?</li> <li>▶ What if I don't see it as abuse?</li> <li>▶ Have you asked me what I want done and made sure I have a say?</li> <li>▶ How are you going to tell me what is likely to happen?</li> <li>▶ Why are there so many of you involved and talking about me? Have you explained that to me?</li> </ul>	<p><b>For the LSCB:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use these questions to evaluate the interagency strategy; to consider information-sharing agreements and engagement with the local community in making children safer.</li> <li>• The child sexual exploitation sub-group in particular should use these questions to guide strategy and ensure the involvement of children and young people</li> <li>• Consider local information for children, their friends and family members so that they know who they can tell and how to access help.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Help make me safe and stop it happening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How do I know that what you have planned will keep me safe?</li> <li>▶ Are you going to stick with me?</li> <li>▶ How do I know I can trust you to help me?</li> <li>▶ Who is taking the overall charge of helping me?</li> <li>▶ Are you all working together – I don't want to keep telling my story over and over?</li> <li>▶ I don't know how to talk about what's happened – how are you helping me do this at a pace that works for me?</li> <li>▶ What are your plans if I go missing – I may have been abducted?</li> </ul>	<p><b>For schools and colleges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider whether there is a safe environment and a culture within which children and young people can talk about abuse with someone they trust (Mortimer et al, 2012).</li> <li>• Draw on these questions to consider how the planned curriculum includes ways to help children and young people recognise gender stereotyping, abusive situations, and so address issues of consent and how to develop healthy relationships.</li> </ul> <p><b>For police and CPS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do these questions mean for our process?</li> </ul> <p><b>For commissioners of services:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have the right information and do we ask the right questions so we can commission services for addressing the emotional needs and mental health of exploited children and young people?</li> </ul>

<p><b>It's not just me</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Others at my school and where I am living are at risk – what are you doing about them?</li> <li>▶ Have you checked who else may be at risk?</li> <li>▶ Have you checked whether any of my family or my boyfriend/girlfriend are gang members?</li> <li>▶ What about my family or friends – what do I tell them, what should they know, are they safe, will they help, will they be OK with me? What are you doing to help answer these questions?</li> </ul>	<p><b>For all agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there specific equalities issues that need to be considered and responded to?</li> <li>• Consider whether and how to provide a safe environment for children to tell. Make sure you understand the recognition and telling framework – children do not describe their experiences in a neat linear fashion.</li> <li>• Consider how best to share information about vulnerable young people and manage the number of people involved in working with them.</li> <li>• Do cross agency prevention strategies address these questions?</li> <li>• What about your children who are out of area – how are they being supported and protected?</li> <li>• Have we mapped all gangs and gang associated girls?</li> </ul> <p><b>For all:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't turn your back, it happens, talk about it.</li> <li>• If the child or young person does not recognise the situation as abuse, consider what to do to help them see it is not acceptable.</li> <li>• Make sure that there is a shared plan you are working on with the young person so they can have a bright future.</li> <li>• Plan ways of engaging with children and young people and getting their feedback on whether prevention and protection processes work for them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Punish the right people (bringing the perpetrator to justice)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How will you support me if this goes to court?</li> <li>▶ There are lots of people who have hurt me. What are you doing about them?</li> <li>▶ Some people who have hurt me are my age. What about them?</li> <li>▶ So now if you've stopped them, what will you do to try to make sure it doesn't happen again?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Don't think there is a quick fix</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Have you helped me understand that it wasn't my fault?</li> <li>▶ Are you supporting my family to help keep me safe?</li> <li>▶ Do I have hope for the future?</li> <li>▶ Who is going to help me to get on with my life, step by step?</li> <li>▶ Although things are getting better, I am still fragile. Who will be there for me for as long as I need them?</li> <li>▶ This shouldn't happen to anyone- what are you doing to help all children and young people to keep safe?</li> </ul>	

## Voice of the professional

Working with children who have been sexually exploited is extraordinarily difficult and disturbing work. The Inquiry saw first-hand the huge emotional and psychological toll on those on the frontline who are driven to act by a passionate determination to stop sexual exploitation. Agencies have a responsibility to care for and support the professionals doing this work. The questions make agencies face their responsibilities to their staff for it is through their staff that they meet their responsibilities to vulnerable children and young people. Without the right training and support, frontline staff cannot act effectively.

These questions, and those in Protecting the child (below), have been compiled with the help of key representatives from the police, social care, the voluntary sector, health, education and academia. Their contribution has been invaluable.

<p><b>See Me, Hear Me – Voice of the professional</b></p>	<p><b>How to use these questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For planning structures and support at strategic and the individual levels</li> <li>• For managers and practitioners to think about their own needs: feeling, reflecting and acting</li> <li>• For managers to consider how they can support and enable their staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>Getting support and staying strong:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ This work is stressful – how do I manage the impact on me?</li> <li>▶ I need time to reflect – can I get help with this?</li> <li>▶ Can I ask for support without being seen as weak?</li> <li>▶ Is there support available for me without me needing to ask?</li> <li>▶ I cannot face doing this work any longer – how do I stop it affecting my personal life?</li> </ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do practitioners and managers in all agencies have the type of supervision which helps them deal with the impact of this work?</li> <li>• Are managers trained to provide effective case management and reflective supervision?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Trustworthy management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Am I being given the time I need to see and get to know this child?</li> <li>▶ Is there a strategic vision which supports my work?</li> <li>▶ What can I expect from my managers to support me?</li> <li>▶ Will my managers help me to make good decisions?</li> <li>▶ Will my managers back me when I need to make difficult decisions?</li> </ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a framework of policies and structures in place to support and guide staff and do they know about them?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Being curious about the child</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Have I noticed everything I need to notice?</li> <li>▶ Could I have missed anything?</li> <li>▶ What is this young person's behaviour telling me?</li> </ul>	<p>For example think and sound out whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are using all your senses and your gut instinct when you see a child or young person</li> <li>• There may be reasons why they might not tell you what is going on</li> <li>• There are signs that something is very wrong even if they deny this</li> <li>• You can make sense of what is making you uncomfortable and know who to ask for help</li> </ul>

<p><b>Being confident and able to act</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Do I know enough?</li><li>▶ Who can I work with on this to share expertise?</li><li>▶ Do I agree with the decisions being made?</li><li>▶ If I disagree with the decisions being made, how can I challenge these?</li><li>▶ If I challenge a decision, will I be supported?</li><li>▶ Have I done all I can and should do for now to make this child safe?</li></ul>	<p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there enough of the right training in place for all agencies?</li><li>• Is there a safe and healthy environment in which practitioners can challenge and be helpfully challenged?</li></ul>
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## Protecting the child

These are the questions agencies need to satisfactorily answer in order to fulfil their responsibilities to keep all children safe. Children and young people who are sexually exploited have suffered significant harm as defined in the Children Act 1989 (section 31). All agencies must follow the statutory guidance detailed in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2013) and the supplementary guidance ‘Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation’, DCSF 2009. These are some points to link the children’s questions to the protection process –they can be used at individual and organisational level and by professionals and managers. These are not a comprehensive list.

<p><b>See Me, Hear Me – Protecting the child</b></p>	<p><b>How to use these questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are some questions to ask at individual and organisational level by professionals and those in management.</li> <li>• They link to the voice of the child questions and should be used in conjunction with them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Don’t make assumptions about who I am and what I need</b></p>	<p><b>For assessment of need, risk and harm: (section 17 or section 47 of Children Act 1989)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we really listening to this child?</li> <li>• What is this child telling us about risk, harm and need– through signs and symptoms and not just words?</li> <li>• Are we helping parents, other children and those who the child trusts, to tell us about what is happening?</li> <li>• Have we met the child’s language and communication needs?</li> <li>• Is the child fully involved in the process of assessment and protection– and are protective family members too?</li> <li>• Are we sensitive to assumptions which stop us seeing the individual child?</li> <li>• Are their specific equalities issues that we need to be mindful of and address?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Help make me safe and stop it happening</b></p>	<p><b>For immediate protection and child protection planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the decisions right for this child?</li> <li>• Are we respecting them and working with them on their safety?</li> <li>• Are we working across agencies in assessing need and investigating risk?</li> <li>• Do we have a clear protection plan, including meeting the needs of the child, which they can understand and work with?</li> <li>• How do we make sure someone they trust will go on working with this child?</li> <li>• If this child continues to deny that they are being abused but we are still worried, what action can we take?</li> </ul>

<p><b>It's not just me</b></p>	<p><b>Responding to the others affected</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we considering the other children who may be affected or involved?</li> <li>• Have we included the others affected in the strategy discussions or child protection conference?</li> <li>• Was this a 'typical case' for our area-if not should we look for more like this and review our notion of what is typical?</li> <li>• Are we working to increase the protective strength of members of the family?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Punish the right people</b></p>	<p><b>Court processes – family and criminal proceedings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the perpetrator is a child, how will we manage this?</li> <li>• Are criminal proceedings being considered?</li> <li>• What do we have in place to support young people through the court process?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Don't think there is a quick fix</b></p>	<p><b>Prevention, long term support and review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are we doing about prevention – including possible future risks?</li> <li>• What services are available to respond to all the needs of this child now and in the future? Do we need to develop more?</li> <li>• Are we reviewing work with young people to check whether help has been helpful and whether promises have been kept?</li> <li>• How are we reviewing overall practice against outcomes and the key principles?</li> <li>• Have we put support in place for the family so they can be helped to keep their child safe?</li> </ul>