Introductory remarks

1. Thank you for the opportunity to present oral and written evidence to the Committee. I hope it may be of use in considering the serious issue of Child Sexual Exploitation not just in Rotherham but across the Country.

2. I hope it is also of assistance in considering the very grave steps taken by the Secretary of State in removing the democratic rights of people in Rotherham.

3. I accept full responsibility as Leader of Rotherham Authority for the way CSE was handled during the period September 2003-14 and the Jay report’s criticisms of our lack of protection of young people in Rotherham, which was the reason I resigned immediately as Leader of Rotherham on the report’s release. I also resigned as a councillor and am no longer a member of the Labour Party.

4. The views that follow are my own and based upon my 10 years experience as a Leader of Rotherham and a family man. I respect women and brought up my daughters to be confident and self-determining, my eldest daughter had multiple sclerosis, and my wife and I cared for many years before she died last year.

Rotherham context since 2003

5. We first become aware of sexual exploitation in 2004 when we heard from Risky Business about the issues. I set up a Task and Finish Group which I initially chaired to get it off the ground and then passed on in 2005 to the Executive portfolio Holder and Chief Executive. This is normal for Leaders and for me. I gave it my authority to get it taken seriously and then as it got established withdrew to the wider strategic role. It was my judgement that it was then embedded into the normal governance arrangements which is why it appears to “disappear”.

6. During the period 2005-7 there was increased funding for Risky Business; specialist staff appointments; no mention in Inspection reports of any specific problems; joint work resulted in prosecutions additional training for members which alluded to the fact that this was an issue with Pakistani heritage men.

7. During 2008-9 the work of Risky business was expanded; Operation Central resulted in 5 men of Pakistani heritage being convicted. There was work with taxi drivers and licensed premises on the preventative agenda which resulted in intelligence supporting the safeguarding of children. There were further reports on financial pressures within the service and I supported the allocation of extra funds. There were two reports in 2008 and a new Executive director was appointed.

8. In 2009 I got more involved directly again as we received an OFSTED report saying we were inadequate in October and then instead of improving we got an Improvement notice in December. The Chief Executive had retired and so I needed to play a greater leadership role before the new one was appointed. I did put the challenge down to the Executive Director that if there was not improvement she would have to leave. We were the Council who came out of the intervention with the fastest ever turnaround in 2011.

9. The new Chief executive had an increased focus on the issue of CSE and Childrens services and in 2010-11 with the appointment of Paul Lakin as new Executive cabinet member I believed we had strengthened our capacity. There were major resources invested in Childrens services; Risky Business was given further funding ;there was action on taxi drivers revoking licenses where no convictions; there were more convictions and following the murder of Childs S a lessons learnt sub group was established.

10. During 2012 -13 there was establishment of a new specialist CSE service and further joint operations with the police. The Council retained a focus on safeguarding; the police on prosecution. However we instigated investigations and reviews following accusations by the Times newspaper, as did the police. Of these the
Barnardos report gave positive feedback; the police inquiry cleared the Deputy Leader of any wrongdoing and then the Jay report was commissioned in response to the continuing questions being asked.

11. The Jay report and others describe how the dynamic in many places was such that abused children were not heard or listened to. I accept that and the responsibility for not pursuing the police and officers faster. In fact those who were listening were themselves unheard and we should have responded to Risky Business earlier. Did acknowledge the problem but not fast enough and this was not good enough.

12. I believe that there was and remains a deep seated sexist attitude towards young abused women affecting whether they are listened to; lack of professional integration and multi disciplinary working respecting youth work as equal to social work; There was during this period a lack of clarity and guidance within the criminal justice system on child sexual exploitation as a crime creating failure to secure prosecutions; lack of crime reporting definition within the police. There was in Rotherham also a failure to learn from Operations and Serious Case reviews and seek external expert strategic evaluation earlier.

13. My biggest regret having looked at the excellent report Ann Coffey MP on the situation in Greater Manchester is that we did not hear enough of the voices of the children and young people and their parents. This is also recommended by both Barnardos and the Children’s Commissioner in their recent reports.

14. It was a shock to hear that almost 9% of all children and young people aged 10 years to 16 years in Rotherham had suffered from child sexual exploitation over the last 16 years. This is what 1,400 represents.

15. How shocking is it to contemplate that over the last 16 years 500,000 children and young people could have been subject to child sexual exploitation in England.

16. No single case is acceptable and although we did take action proportionate to what we believed the issue to be. This was not enough. Whatever the scale we should have done more; should have been more effective at making it stop and I have included some recommendations based on reflecting on what has happened to help this in the future.

17. I wish that we had commissioned Professor Jay much earlier for her strategic and independent perspective would have given Councillors the intelligence needed to challenge the system and make sure outcomes were being delivered. It is a key message from the Rotherham experience. I have set out how as a Leader I made judgements based on professional advice and external inspection judgements of those professionals together with testing against local intelligence. The Jay report gave an oversight of the whole system functioning. However, the Rochdale review I believe followed a more constructive process.

18. I was reluctant at first to commission it as I thought it was just a “back covering” exercise as the police were commissioning three reviews. I don’t think it was quite what people expected which is to be commended. I think people thought it would show that despite earlier lack of progress we had got a grip of the issues. However my view is that painful as it has been if it has lifted the lid on CSE then that is a good thing.

Context and timescales

19. The lack of prosecutions and convictions in Rotherham is the biggest failure as this is the most effective way to stop it. We did take other action following the other police operations in 2009 and 2011 there were abduction notices and the council revoked taxi licenses where the police did not take action. Jay quotes the frustration of the Licensing manager on this.

20. The Council did focus on the safeguarding role and we appointed a dedicated manager for CSE in 2007 something other places are only just doing. Jay acknowledges an improved focus on safeguarding children who were being exploited which is the other side of the coin to prosecution. “This was evidenced in child sexual...
exploitation strategies and action plans and in a clear pathway for referral to children’s social care.” Though it was still extremely variable.

21. In both the Jay report and the Casey review the children and young people are reduced to numbers and Case studies. It is not an easy thing to achieve Voice but is possible and is linked to the valuing of Voluntary and Community organisations and Youth services.

22. I absolutely refute the suggestion that we didn’t act on the information given by our youth services and then closed them down as if this was cause and effect. This is typical of the conflation and misrepresentation of complex issues which can lead to wrong solutions and missed opportunities to improve.

23. Over the ten year period as can be seen from the chronology I have attached we did take their input seriously and without seeking to pass any blame it is reported in the Jay report that there were professional rivalries which got in the way of effective working and stopped us being as effective in dealing with the issues.

Demonisation of Rotherham

24. I regret the demonisation of the town and the effect on local people Great attempts have been made to portray Rotherham as “different” both to justify the removal of the Democratic rights of the people of the town and to avoid having to face the uncomfortable truth that if Rotherham isn’t different then the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation is bigger than people think and that the challenges of dealing with it are also not being met across the country. I am deeply saddened at what has happened in my town where I still live to children and young people that I have always sought to protect. The uncomfortable truth is that Rotherham is no different from many other places

Context and History

25. There is as always a need to understand the gradual emerging of evidence of sexual abuse and grooming in Rotherham. The period concerned is extensive 16years.

26. Scale of abuse; Ann Coffey MP for Stockport sets out the issues and reports that there were 13,000 reported cases of Major Sexual offences against under16s in the past 6years in Greater Manchester with only 1,000 convictions. Over 16years this is potentially 34,000 over the ten authorities. In terms of scale of abuse Rotherham is not different. It appears to be lower than many places. Comparator figures could be 363 in Sheffield; 407 in Derbyshire; 140 in Southampton and 87 in Rotherham. I have attached at Appendix 3 some other statistics emerging about the scale of child sexual exploitation in the UK

27. Response to the issue The University of Bedfordshire report for the office of the Childrens Commissioner in 2008 says that half the areas included in the exercise were “just starting out “to establish a multi agency response to child sexual exploitation which included challenging offenders. This report says Local partnerships that are developing expertise in building prosecution cases initially face significant organisational issues. Up to 2009 the concept of child prostitution was still alive. Guidance was only issued in August 2009. This is the time when we in Rotherham too began to be more effective. The LGA states that since 2010 the scale of Child sexual abuse has become much clearer following a two year inquiry by the Childrens Commissioner into sexual exploitation and the development of a national action plan. By mid 2011 only a quarter of England’s Local Safeguarding Boards had implemented the 2009 guidance. By April 2012 a third hadn’t even pledged to develop an action plan. Many areas are still developing or updating their response.

If we are to be judged as failing it would appear other areas may have similar issues.

28. Response to the jay report For clarity on the Jay report I was not involved in drawing up the terms of reference of the report. I had one 40minute interview with Professor Jay and so my experience and understandings of what went on over the ten years were not really reflected. This does not mean I refute it or deny it. I had no
opportunity to review or discuss the findings prior to or since publication. This seems to be at variance with the process followed in Rochdale.

29. I had not seen the 1,400 number until it was published and had no explanation as you have had as a select committee. Some of the alleged denial arises from this I think. After years of believing and having both professional advice and external inspection outlining that the scale is at a level being managed albeit not as well as it should be at times and that the prosecutions are in proportion to hear such a contradictory message is difficult to absorb.

30. Aggregating the figure and putting starkly all the vile things that the children and young people were subjected to over the 16 years was shocking. Also shocking is the idea we ignored it or covered it up. Nothing could be further from the truth. We held seminars, briefings, tried to get to grips with it. I believe that frontline workers did their best.

31. The assertion that perpetrators could act with impunity is part of the problem with this offence nationally. I have met parents in Rotherham since this happened and I understand their anger and frustration. I repeat that I wish we had done more and that I had challenged both Council officers and police to do more. I wish that I had had more direct intelligence and have asked why those parents did not come to me directly at surgeries or at the town Hall. They say they thought I would be too busy. I have had many issues raised with me over ten years by thousands of people. I am unsure why this one was not one. I think Leaders do need a clear line of sight on this issue and treat it as a high risk Health and safety issue with missing young people being reported on a weekly if not daily basis.

Some key issues from the Jay Report

How Youth and voluntary sector services are understood and supported

32. Youth services have been a priority in Rotherham and the Jay report acknowledges their success. We were responsible for this success as much as for the failures. However Youth services nationally have always been a Cinderella service and Youth workers are not given the professional respect they deserve. It is often the case that those who speak up for the marginalised and powerless are themselves ignored. This is both a professional and political issue.

33. The alleged closure of Risky Business was also more complex than it is presented. It was recommended in the Serious Case Review of the Murder of Child S that the Risky Business Staff should be the “subject of greater management oversight and supervision.” This is why they were incorporated in the central CSE team. It is important because to oversimplify does a disservice to those involved and again can mean real learning is missed.

34. The position of Risky Business in Rotherham is that it was pioneering and that it was well regarded and listened to. It was resourced by the Council and this was increased a number of times as need was brought forward. It had as the Jay report points out a challenging relationship with other professionals at the frontline who questioned its professionalism. This is a challenge faced by many youth and community based organisations operating in multi agency partnerships.

35. The lessons here are not that Rotherham shut it down to guard its reputation but that we potentially relied too heavily on it and that we failed to develop complementary professional roles to support it and create an effective partnership retaining the trust and relationships with the children and young people whilst offering complementary support services. Its incorporation into the Council was well intentioned but probably misguided.
36. Youth and voluntary sector organisations play a unique role; they are trusted and need to remain outside of the statutory services to retain that position. Any issues of professionalism can be dealt with through commissioning and relationships.

37. In the current climate of cuts to budgets the position of Youth services is in jeopardy. Many Councils are decimating their services. The amount of money spent on services for teenagers in England has fallen by 36% in the past two years. Tory MP Tim Loughton said the £438m reduction in spending was disproportionate. London Boroughs Kensington and Chelsea cut by 78% Tower Hamlets by 65%; Tameside, Stoke, Warrington cut by 70%. Rotherham cuts were in this context.

Developing Professional practice and Learning on CSE

38. Professional practice in this area is developing and needs modernising. We are moving from a culture of wrongly labelling behaviour as “child prostitution” to recognising it is “child sexual exploitation”. This shift is taking place across agencies and society. Some views are deep seated and assumptions have still to be challenged. Rotherham is criticised for still having these discussions by Louise Casey when MP Ann Coffey’s report highlights that there is still work to be done. Cultural shift of this kind is not a straight line. Although the issue has been live in Rotherham for a number of years understanding has shifted as national thinking has also shifted. We have been ahead and behind the curve of some of this change as is usual.

39. The Jay report charts the reality of the issues with our performance and the progress made. On supervision we were criticised in 2003, 2009 and 2011 however “current supervision policy (she states) is clear, comprehensive and specific about frequency and content.” It was specifically in response to the 2009 criticisms that I personally made sure there were increased resources to enable proper supervision and reduce case loads.

40. The failure to learn from Operations which failed to secure any prosecutions is also a major failing identified by Jay. However Current cases which were audited were considered to be “relevant, comprehensive and an example of good practice.” demonstrating learning and progress.

41. Professor Jay states that the “Emphasis that Rotherham is now giving to quality assurance and continuous improvement in relation to child sexual exploitation is an extremely positive development. The achievements to date are considerable and we recommend that those in authority ensure that quality assurance work in respect of CSE will continue to be appropriately resourced and supported as a key factor in practice improvement."

42. Ten years after the first Integrated Childrens Services there are still issues of demarcation and a gulf between professional practices. This is an issue that needs to be tackled. These issues are touched on in the Childrens Commissioners report.

Lack of Convictions/dealing with perpetrators

43. It is not my intention to defend South Yorkshire police but it should be pointed out that in the Jay report she points out that “the police were commended by the trial judge along with children’s social care for their handling of a successful prosecution in 2007. Shortly thereafter work began on what would lead to the successful prosecution of a further 5 offenders in 2009 as part of Operation Central brought about by excellent joint working between the police, Risky business and children’s” social care”. (according to Jay)

44. Jay also at 8.6 talks of the operations targeting hotels and limousine companies and the operations to target high risk missing children. Joint training of hotel managers had delivered results. She states “that the police were now appropriately resourced to deal with child sexual exploitation and had a clear focus on prevention, protection, Investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators”.

45. The issues are not confined to Rotherham or Manchester. The increasing number of prosecutions is in part due to the clarification and initiative of the CPS in setting out guidelines for prosecution. However Rotherham is
criticised for a lack of prosecutions when this is clearly the remit of the CPS and Home Office. I would welcome some interrogation of the South Yorkshire CPS on why it failed to prosecute. However I think that the issue of national context and guidelines illustrates the need for local action to be seen in its wider context which ever the service. Given how long recent cases in other areas which are just being prosecuted have been investigated there must be a wider issue.

There may be questions to ask about the functioning of the previous Police committee rather than the Police and Crime Commissioner.

**Political correctness and failure to recognise the role of Asian men in CSE**

46. My approach is to tackle issues as I outline later on the issue of Roma. I would never back away from tackling the issue because of race. As stated earlier I alerted other councils to the potential of this issue.

47. I am not by any definition “politically correct”. This assertion may relate to the time period prior to my Leadership which was only from the end of 2003 when the period covered was 16 years. This time frame includes 9/11 which impacted significantly on issues of Community cohesion and safety. Although before my Leadership I hope the inspection has recognised this. A further fact to take into account is that an Asian taxi driver Sarfraz Khan aged 30 yrs was stabbed to death and his car and body burnt in 2000. This had a resonance for many years.

48. I do not believe that this means there should be no discussion of whether Asian men have perpetrated CSE. I have never suppressed discussion on this basis. The reason I have always given for exercising caution in naming perpetrators is to ensure that they do not compromise any police or CPS action and most importantly that the girls involved were not compromised on the advice of Risky Business.

49. In respect of Community cohesion we have worked hard to achieve respect and integration. This has involved challenging those who have moved to the Borough to understand and work with the accepted standards and social norms. We have negotiated compacts and worked hard to understand how to enable people to integrate well.

50. I have never made any secret of the fact that there have been and are issues of CSE to be dealt with in Rotherham and I have always tried to deal with them in the same proactive and transparent way I deal with all issues of priority and of children’s safety and well being. I understand the sensitivities, the prejudices and cultural assumptions which exist and which make dealing with the issues a challenge. I have never shied away from these.

51. There was national government guidance and policy on Cohesion which Rotherham followed. However this was never an excuse for not taking action. I never gave any message that we should not act because of this nor would I ever. The safety and well being of the girls would be paramount whoever the perpetrators were. Any softly; softly approach was suggested by Risky Business and the police because of protecting the girls and ensuring prosecution.

52. Some Labour Group Members believe and have always maintained that there are too many “immigrants” in Rotherham and that Asian people get preferential treatment. They are disposed to believe this in every situation. To say that people had anxieties regarding Asian perpetrators needs to be taken in this context. There are current anxieties in Halifax and there were in Bradford and Rochdale. It is too easy to claim that this had an impact on enabling Asian perpetrators.

53. I was aware of the anxieties of Members but could do little to address them. It does not mean that their anxieties were well founded or that they could not express their views or were prevented from doing so or that this was material in affecting the council’s action towards the situation.
54. There have been many debates on Community relations within the group formally and informally. These are complex issues and everywhere in the country face the same blend of informed opinion and prejudice as Councillors reflect the wider communities they serve. Rotherham is no different.

55. The Chief Executive of Barnardos said that the recent focus on race issues with sexual exploitation cases could put more children and young people at risk. If you focus on one model of sexual exploitation children who are being exploited in different circumstances won’t see it’s an issue for them as well. Young people who need support won’t come forward because they don’t fit the model that’s presented.

56. Keith Vaz Chairman of the Commons Home Affairs select Committee said it is wrong to “stereotype a whole community” We have been pilloried for suggesting that this should be the case in Rotherham. This is now what has happened in Rotherham.

Effective Scrutiny

57. Rotherham was commended as performing well on scrutiny by CPA and the Centre for Public Scrutiny said we were an exemplar of good practice. We took it seriously resourced it and integrated it into our decision making systems. We helped set up scrutiny networks across south Yorkshire and Yorkshire and Humber. We did joint Health and police scrutiny across south Yorkshire.

58. We have lots of examples of when scrutiny changed our course and had an impact; a review of Women’s refuges had a major impact. The overall Chair of Scrutiny attended every cabinet and challenged me before meetings on issues. Things were changed or withdrawn.

59. We tried to be proactive not just reactive and it contributed to policy development. On Use of Bailiffs and on the Floods its reviews were very effective.

60. Scrutiny of CSE and the progress made was as hampered by the lack of wider understanding as the whole system. There is a need to use Specialist advisers such as Professor Jay to ensure rigour. This is why I stated that I wish we had used her earlier.

61. I believe that this issue has highlighted how local/sub regional scrutiny could be strengthened by adopting a more select committee approach and that MPs have shown how they can play a lead role in championing these issues which affect all communities. This is apt as there were failures of national agencies at local level and local agencies.

Effectiveness of Partnerships

62. The nature of partnership working and Leadership is that it develops and changes and the partnership has to maintain focus and renew purpose. We appointed staff to ensure this in part and the partnership manager is a very skilled manager. Over ten years the performance of both police and Health has varied from outstanding to less than what we would expect. We have challenged them on specific issues along with our other south Yorkshire colleagues.

63. On the issue of CSE there are clearly issues for all agencies to consider and this includes police and health. I don’t consider that the partnership did anything that made dealing with the issues less of a priority or concern. The issues were not raised separately via the partnership.

64. I am unaware why the Voluntary sector Chief Executive letter was not responded or why they did not follow up with me or the Chair of the Safeguarding Board. I had a strong working relationship with many voluntary and community organisations. The Safeguarding partnership processes in the Borough were thought to be dealing with the issues. I think this is the case across the country. Ann Coffey’s MPs report received input from LSGBs not councils.
Impact of Leadership culture;

65. In order to make change political leaders in any council have to be able to assert authority. Those not promoted or given posts can describe “powerful leadership” as a problem. This is a burden all political leaders share and many of us can with hindsight be described as bullying.

66. I have sought to be collaborative and cooperative in my leadership as I believe that no leader can succeed alone. I do hold strong views and am aspirational for Rotherham. However I am reflective and am sure that over ten years I may have offended some people. I have apologised when I thought I had been overly critical and did ask the former Chief Executives to give me feedback as I am aware how powerful the political leadership role is.

67. I have had many long term effective working relationships with men and women Members, Partners and officers. Many of these from Rotherham and beyond have been in touch to say how they cannot believe what is being said. I have sought to give real active service to Rotherham through numerous charitable activities; acting as a crossing warden when we were short to encourage others; raising funds for Macmillan, for the local Hospice; undertaking visits on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce to bring business to the town. I have worked tirelessly and have been warned about my health repeatedly because of the amount of time and effort I have put in.

68. It is not true to say that there was no improvement under the council culture or leadership. Our leadership in Rotherham was externally inspected and again no negative feedback given. I have attached a list of some achievements which are largely ignored in this process as a reality check. We were achieving on a number of fronts. Local MPs worked constructively with me as Leader as did Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour leaders across the region. I was asked to chair many sub regional groups and mediate between councils on issues.

69. The accusations that there was a culture of sexist bullying need to be seen in this context. We had a low turnover of staff and no less women employees or managers than other councils. The 5 sexist remarks quoted in the Jay report are over a period of 16 years. Some I am aware were under previous administrations; said by Members who have not been on the Council for years. Some were taken out of context. I defy any organisation to defend itself against the accusation of 5 sexist remarks over such a long period.

70. I am sure many women have experienced sexism in Rotherham as they sadly do everywhere. This does not excuse it in Rotherham but contexts it. Putting the two issues of sexism and bullying together is also not evidenced. Bullying is a serious accusation of sustained and deliberate misuse of power. It is being bandied around as a generic term with no evidence of how it manifested.

71. Whilst I can accept in the Jay report that the idea is put forward to try to explain “lack of action or challenge” there is no evidence that the “lack of action or challenge” was any different to other places; indeed there was action. The failures described are not related to overall leadership they relate to more specific sexist views relating to the children and young girls involved.

72. The sexist remarks quoted as evidence of a sexist culture are over 16 years and relate to a range of people who were not there at the same time which makes it hard to accept them as evidence of such an oppressive culture that no one dare speak!

73. In respect of the accusations by Members they need to be set in a context that we had dealt with an issue of accusations of bullying by a particular Member of the Group in 2007/8. This included action by the Regional Labour party and the local Whips. There followed a survey of Members on bullying which raised more issues which were subsequently acted on. I am informed that some of those who were subject to these accusations and investigations are involved in making the current accusations against me.
74. Current Members have informed the Casey review that not only were they not bullied by me and the other Leadership Members but that they were protected by the leadership from bullying. Rather than as Casey states “presiding over a bullying culture” I have always challenged bullying.

75. Similarly with staff; there were robust procedures and policies in place which were used. The Council ran full Employee surveys every three years and Pulse surveys as a quick temperature check. A review of these would show that staff were generally positive about how they were supported and that there were some concerns raised which were followed up. In 2013-14 there were 13 complaints of bullying; 5 of which were upheld and 8 were not. There were established processes which were used. There were confidential first line officers who staff could use to report concerns to.

My Leadership approach I have used the following approach to making judgements

76. Firstly I have always had constructive relationships with chief executives as principal advisers. My key chief executive relationships have been with Mike Cuff and Martin Kimber both of whom I found to be extremely professional, capable and both gave wise counsel advising me of the implications of decisions and different courses of action. They advised to the best of their knowledge and ability and I always found them to be transparent open honest and challenging as appropriate. I have worked with a large number of chief executives across the Yorkshire and Humber Region and beyond and believe that they compared favourably to others. Similarly with other senior managers I trusted them and sought professional advice on all issues. I have worked constructively with senior officers to deliver all the successes I have highlighted they are as much theirs as mine. The Local Government Association and other professional bodies quoted Rotherham as good practice in this area confirming that the professionals were respected within their field.

77. Secondly I used the external inspections of the Council to test the effectiveness and performance of the professionals. This also extended to partners and partnership working and I always sought out good practice from other areas. This is why I chaired the regional improvement partnership to learn from other councils.

78. Thirdly I have always had an Open Door policy for everyone and have always been open to challenge. I used local intelligence and relationships to test out the first two; professional advice and inspection feedback to see if it fitted with the reality of Rotherham. I had an extensive network in Rotherham and was at meetings and events every day; day and evenings as well as weekends.

79. I applied this approach to CSE. I listened to professional advice. I checked this with inspection reports and tested it against other intelligence. I did this continually as the issues progressed. It may be said I relied too heavily on professional advice but the inspectors did not contradict it and when they did I intervened. I had no local intelligence challenging the picture I was given. This would have been different if as in the case of Ann Cryer MP in Keighley parents or others had made a direct approach to me, any Councillors or the MPs.

80. Inspection reports and progress reports These are the external challenge I relied on It is not clear why there is an accusation of lack of challenge as is clear from this CQC and Ofsted report Inspection of safeguarding and looked after Children Rotherham 19-30th July 2010 published August 2010 I was challenging and we did improve significantly. Had I been fully aware of the scale of CSE and lack of action and possible legal options open I would have done what I did on this report. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. During this period external inspection was not highlighting the issue in the way the most recent report does. I relied on professional advice that we were improving as the report says.

81. “Overall effectiveness Grade 3 Adequate, statutory requirements are met and there have been recognisable improvements in safeguarding since the Government issued a Notice to improve in December 2009. The strong corporate ownership of the improvement plan involving the Leader of the Council, lead member for Childrens chief executive and chief executive of NHS Rotherham has ensured that there is robust leadership and clear strategies in place to support the improvement process”
82. “Pace of change has been significant”

“Rotherham’s Safeguarding Board exercises increasingly effective leadership”

Capacity to improve Grade 3 Adequate

“Determined and strong corporate leadership has led to significant recent improvements in provision for the most vulnerable children.”

A robust and well monitored action plan is tackling the remaining challenges”

Additional £3.1m allocated to improve front line services for the most vulnerable

“Local partnership working is good South Yorkshire police ...contribute well to strategic developments”

83. Whilst the report mentions updating the protocol on young people missing from home, Care and education there is no mention of CSE or the issues which the Jay report sets out.

84. As a Leader I relied on expert advice and as can be seen from this acted to address areas highlighted as of concern. The Ofsted reports gave me comfort that despite challenges which still existed we were making progress. I made sure resources were available to address the issues and did ensure challenge. I chose the Cabinet members for Children because I had confidence in their ability to make an impact.

85. These extracts are only a few highlights. Many of those who are claiming they didn’t speak out because of political correctness could have told inspectors anonymously of their concerns.

86. OFSTED itself failed to highlight the issue in Rotherham. The latest report published November 2014 is critical after the Jay report. The 2011 assessment is adequate; issues raised in 2010 had been addressed .The improvements made to safeguarding meant the service was removed from intervention. We invited a peer challenge to look further at improving local safeguarding. Hardly the actions of an authority trying to cover up. There is no specific mention of CSE.

87. The 2012 OFSTED report judged Rotherham to be adequate overall. It said that “Information on children who go missing and young people at risk of sexual exploitation is shared effectively at an early stage and work is well coordinated to support these children and young people. It found leadership and governance to be adequate and that the “local authority has established and resourced a clear focus on the provision of child protection services and delivered some key priorities such as improving the consistency and timeliness of responses to referrals .”

88. It does say that the level of partner agency support was variable and “despite extensive efforts by the local authority there are not multi agency arrangements to screen domestic violence however good collaborative working with the police and local authority has resulted in a targeted and successful approach to tackling CSE which is further strengthened by a commitment to establishing a team of qualified social workers based within the police protection unit.” It said the Lead Member for Childrens services provides effective challenge within a supportive and collaborative political framework. “It also highlighted the additional funding in the context of difficult budgets.

89. The recent OFSTED report published in November 2014 “The sexual exploitation of children; It couldn’t happen here “looked at 33 published inspections and 36 aligned inspections of Childrens homes and found that local arrangements are often insufficiently developed and leadership required is frequently lacking. It found that many professionals have failed to apply child protection processes to young people at risk of being sexually exploited which is why its prevalence is not well understood even in places with high profile cases. The report highlights that partnership action is disjointed and data sharing is poor.
90. Two of eight councils inspected had no strategy and four no action plan. Local arrangements are poorly informed by local issues and self assessment and don’t link to other strategic plans. Not all police and local authorities are using their full range of powers to disrupt and prosecute perpetrators. Low numbers of prosecutions are achieved in comparison to the number of allegations made.

91. I have highlighted this for balance. I am aware there were serious challenges in Rotherham and that adequate is not good enough for the children of Rotherham. We were in Ofsted view making progress, taking things seriously

92. I highlight these facts/evidence from the report to show that Rotherham was not different in its failure to deal with the issues and that it is not helpful either for Rotherham or others wanting to learn from what happened to think it was. This can lead to the idea that there was a simple reason when the issue is more complex and the conditions for it to be ignored exist everywhere.

93. These issues highlight systemic failure across the country and are not the product of wilful neglect in Rotherham or the culture of leadership for that matter. It would seem nowhere has got it right yet. It is wrong to pillory the first places where the issues are opened up as if it is somewhere unique which is what this report is saying too.

Some Personal reflections

94. I was stunned by the numbers set out in the Jay report and the detail of the abuse outlined and the vitriol of the Casey “review”. I do feel I should have known and done more but I think it’s important to have an honest appraisal of what happened and why it happened and not just make accusations which are mostly vague and unsubstantiated. The reporting of failure is easy. Understanding why it happened and learning the lessons is harder but just as important. Being fair and balanced and rational is vitally important even though the issues are emotive. It is as if the emotion of the issue has taken over and allowed anger to be vented irrespective of the facts.

95. As a politician I accept my share of the blame. I am concerned for the future and for others to be treated fairly.

96. Many people have not read the Jay report and just build on the last headline without substantiating what they say. It is a disservice to those who face CSE to do this.

97. People are rightly angry about what has happened, as I am. They are seeking answers. They feel let down that people like me in leadership roles could not stop this happening. I have taken political responsibility through resigning.

98. I have championed women’s leadership in Rotherham through the Athena awards expanding what was a specifically business based programme to include women’s achievements in the community and public service and mentored an Asian woman as part of a leadership programme. I supported Sarah Champion MP to be selected when many local party members wanted to see a more locally identifiable candidate Mahroof Hussein who had been giving public service to the town for many years. I got other councillors to support her campaign and received a phone call from Ed Milliband as Leader thanking me for showing “real leadership”. At an Athena awards dinner which recognises Women’s Leadership in Rotherham, I was hosting as Leader I thought it fitting that Sarah Champion present the overall award as new MP for Rotherham to give public recognition to having a woman MP

99. When I suggested I might retire two years ago I was overwhelmed with requests from Partners, Members and officers asking me not to leave. I knew that I needed to hand over leadership and had been telling people that they needed to step forward. My priority has always been to do the best for the people and town of Rotherham and not the Labour Party. Again this has not always made me popular within the Group. The idea that all anxieties and disagreements in a Labour group can be managed perfectly is unrealistic.
Responding to Casey

100. It does feel like a witch hunt and not a fair and evidenced assessment of the governance capabilities of Rotherham or a rigorous exposition of the failures on CSE set in context. I think that the former Chief executive in his letter to the committee pointed out the difficulties for those tackling emerging issues.

101. I think it likely that many places are doing less than Rotherham. The prosecutions in Derby took three years. The scale of prosecutions across the country is proportionate to that in Rotherham. Yet Louise Casey makes assertions about our failure to act that are not consistent with the realities of the time.

102. It is one thing to say people were using an old fashioned idea about child prostitution in Rotherham when this is still the case in many other places Greater Manchester for one as Ann Coffey’s report says. Yes we were wrong but so was everyone else at the time. We were simply discovering the problem and our failings earlier.

103. Casey claimed that “Whilst you were aware of the issues of weak performance in Childrens safeguarding and the issues of CSE and sought to give those services some priority, you were not sufficiently challenging of the Chief Executive and the Executive Director to ensure improvement was being delivered in addition you failed to ensure that the Councils legal and regulatory toolkit and its disruption capability were mobilised to tackle perpetrators.” We were the fastest improved council from intervention. We used abduction orders, revoked taxi licenses, expanded the work of Risky business and opened new youth facilities. It is also claimed by Casey that there was a lack of joint strategy with police on tackling and disrupting perpetrators where prosecutions cannot be pursued. She makes no comparison with other areas of whether we were worse or ahead on this. Many places are only just now using alternative tools.

104. I met Risky Business in 2004 at the meeting I chaired and thought they were credible and informed so took their advice to go softly, softly so as not to prejudice the prosecution of the men or put the girls under pressure. I did react angrily that this was happening to young girls in our town and said it had to stop. I set up a committee to deal with the issue urgently and delegated this to Mike Cuff and Sean Wright whom I believed to be extremely competent and committed to dealing with the issues and to my knowledge did so.

105. Given the scale of the issue I thought our action proportionate. In the entire firestorm I don’t believe there was a cover up. I was told there was not enough evidence for the CPS to proceed. I had no evidence to contradict this. Nor has any been suggested. The current prosecutions in Halifax date from rapes and abuse from 2006-11. It has taken 6 years to take action.

Local Democracy

106. To say that one party domination is a reason is to sanction the removal of local democracy is extremely dangerous for democracy. If people in Rotherham wanted to elect a Labour council and even opposition members crossed the floor that is the choice of local people.

107. To impose commissioners on the basis of a short review which was dealing with historic issues is not serving the interests of local democracy. Because of the horrific nature of the crimes involved there has been little challenge of what has happened.

108. There has been a large degree of trial by media and a degree of “who can be most righteously indignant”. The Chief Executive of Barnardos was effectively bullied on TV because he would not call for the resignation of the Police and Crime Commissioner. There was some imputation of what people would think of Barnardos if he didn’t when they have been working with children and young people on this issue since the 1990s and giving great support.

109. There are accountability issues for Central Government as Health, Criminal Justice including Police and CPS have all been part of the “collective failure” of Rotherham. This is in my view why Rotherham’s local leadership is
being blamed so vociferously to avoid any collective responsibility. It is how local and national systems have come together which is in part responsible. It is why there are issues from Southampton to Cumbria and crimes from Derby to Oxford to Reading.

Conclusions

110. Rotherham has been dealing with one of the most challenging issues that face Communities during a period of major shift in thinking and social attitudes towards the issue. We were at times ahead of the curve and at times failing to deal robustly with safeguarding our most vulnerable young people.

111. I have accepted political responsibility and accountability for this failure.

112. I have in the interests of learning the lessons and dealing with the reality of why we failed set out why I think it was; not for the reasons Louise Casey has asserted.

113. I Believe that there was and remains a deep seated sexist attitude towards young abused women affecting whether they are listened to; lack of professional integration and multi disciplinary working respecting youth work as equal to social work; There was during this period a lack of clarity and guidance within the criminal justice system on child sexual exploitation as a crime creating failure to secure prosecutions; lack of crime reporting definition within the police. There was in Rotherham also a failure to learn from Operations and Serious Case reviews and seek external expert strategic evaluation earlier.

The Future

114. I believe that the Voice of survivors and their families needs to inform the way forward. It would have assisted in Rotherham had I as Leader had a direct line of sight on the issue and I think it should be escalated to a high level of reporting so that Leaders are directly informed of missing young people on a daily basis and action on perpetrators weekly.

115. I hope that the Jay report has contributed to how Child Sexual Exploitation is tackled and will increase the level of prosecutions and support to children and young people.

Appendix 1 Chronology of key dates

Summary

Period of Leadership; September 2003- September 2014

Prior to this although a Councillor I had no knowledge of the issue. Nothing was passed on by the previous Leader Mark Edgell. I am aware that the Chief Executive Ged Fitzgerald at the time has stated that he has no recollection of the issue. He gave me no briefing on the issue.

September 2003

- Became Leader; at this time I was more dependent on professional advice as was not experienced.
- The Rotherham Partnership was emerging and I was involved in its development.

2004

- In November attended Children and Young Peoples Board presentation on sexual exploitation with Risky Business was shocked to hear of the issues they described and vowed to stop it
- Established a Task and Finish Group which I chaired to get it going and make sure things happened.
- Chaired first two meetings established Action Plan , then passed on to Cabinet Member ,Georgina Boyce to lead
- Things appeared to be heading in the right direction progress being made
- Inspection report spoke of strong senior leadership
- No mention of CSE in Inspection report

2005
- Seminar/briefing session to ensure member understanding of issues; attended by 30 members reassured that action being taken to deal with issues
- Clr Shaun Wright appointed as Cabinet Member responsible
- Integrated CSE into three year Community Safety strategy
- Merger of Childrens services

2006
- March Conference on sexual exploitation kept the issue on the political agenda; public discussion of the issues shows not hiding from dealing with the issues or suppressing debate.
- Action plan produced and appeared again that things were happening
- Plan went to Scrutiny panel
- Risky Business were given more resources
- August there was a 3 month secondment?

2007 (dealt with Major Floods in Rotherham; very intensive work)
- Ast Safeguarding manager appointed on CSE
- Risky Business given more support;
- Joint work resulted in prosecutions
- Reports to scrutiny and Safeguarding
- Training seminar for Members July

2008
- Risky Business increased funding to deliver multi disciplinary work drop in centre and weekend support
- Operation Central; 5 men convicted
- Work started on taxi drivers and Licensed premises on preventative agenda hotels etc
- New Executive Director Appointed
- Further report on budget pressures
- 2 reports Nov 2008

2009
- January progress report
- May external assessment/Children First
- OFSTED report inadequate Autumn Improvement Notice December; Chief Executive retired and new one not yet in post so took personal responsibility. Laid down challenge to Director to put right or would have to leave.
- New Chief Executive appointed increased focus on issue

2010
- Operation Czar
- Taxi Licenses revoked council taking action where no convictions
- Abduction notices used
- Lessons learned/ sub group established
- Clr Paul Lakin appointed as Cabinet Member
- 5 convictions
- Child S was murdered
- Risky Business enhanced
- Major resources invested in Childrens services

2011
- Operation Chard
- Abduction notices and taxi licenses revoked
- Came out of Intervention/fastest ever turnaround
• Regional conference on lessons learned from Operation Central
• Conviction of man for 17.5 years for murder of Child S

2012
• Serious case review on Child S
• Times article alleges cover up
• Operation K – Alphabet joint with Sheffield Police
• Operation Kappa several others
• OFSTED Inspection report child protection adequate commenting on significant improvement
• New specialist CSE service established
• Times alleges cover up involving Deputy Leader advised him to stand down while investigated
• Deputy Leader cleared and reinstated
• Scrutiny panel on learning lessons from Child S case Serious Case Review
• Operation Carrington joint investigation

2013
• Chief Executive/Director of Childrens gave evidence to Home Affairs Select Committee
• Barnardos Practice review initial high level review given positive feedback
• Independent inquiry commissioned took 6 months to secure Professor Jay

2014
• Independent inquiry findings published
• I apologised unreservedly to the children and young people we have let down and resigned

Appendix 2

Some Achievements in Rotherham

Whilst CSE is a critical issue for every Leader the demands of the role mean that other pressures and priorities realistically will demand attention.

116. Gave leadership on response to major Floods in 2007. Visited the areas and the people with Prince Charles. Was there day and night during the floods. Ensured the Council response was effective and gave the permissions needed for resources and response beyond council policies to make sure people were safe and in comfort. Following the floods went back and held 6 public meetings to listen to the public grievances and concerns. This stage is important as people are angry and concerned and need to express this and get a response.

117. The Imagination Library brings a book a month to every under five in the town. When I heard of the scheme on a visit to the US funded by the Rotherham Chamber I thought of the poor results at certain Key stages and heard the research that showed impact on reading age and Children’s learning. I brokered bringing the scheme to the UK and got funding for it from the Chamber to start. It is now well established and Sheffield University are researching its impact.

118. Encouraging families to learn to cook and improving quality of schools meals and tackling obesity. Worked with Jamie Oliver to establish Ministry of Food after challenging him on his intentions towards Rotherham. I learned to cook some key recipes and taught other people. Again mainstreamed initiative working with Health partners. Created sustainable project to tackle obesity and teach people to cook and worked to roll out across Yorkshire.

119. Encouraging and celebrating Women’s leadership; supported introduction of Athena awards in Rotherham again initially in partnership with Business community but widened its remit to include all public sector and voluntary and community sectors. Again worked to make this sustainable and led by women recipients. It has become a real celebration of women’s leadership.
120. Developing Magna Centre ensuring this has become a real resource to the community of Rotherham as well as an economic benefit I served on its Board and encouraged local, regional, national and international organisations to use it to ensure its future. It offers a fantastic educational and play-resource for children. It is visited from overseas as a good practice example of regeneration of old industrial plant.

121. Regenerating Rotherham Town Centre this was a very high priority to create a safe, welcoming, thriving centre with good transport links. Secured Millions of pounds investment. Mary Portas recognised our work in this area as successful. I promoted the idea of Wall art to attract people to the town and add a sense of belonging. Have supported lots of events to create civic pride including celebrating the return of the Yorkshire Regiment on Yorkshire day. Creating a family atmosphere in the town.

122. Maintained the Rotherham Show as one of the few of its kind still going to give families who can’t afford a holiday a chance to enjoy a few days of fun in the park.

123. Created new town centre offices for better access to the council more welcoming and friendly with a café in the ground floor. Linked this to civic catering to sustain the jobs of local people.

124. Restored the Town Hall in a way which honoured the past but was functional for the Council business. Valued and recognised the staff who worked for the Council creating camaraderie born out by low turnover and length of service. Gave a Christmas meal every year paid for by myself to all the staff that supported me and the Council governance or done particular service that year.

125. Managing difficult Budgets and financial decisions. Have successfully managed the retention of jobs and services in the face of constant budget reductions through long term strategic planning. My philosophy is to maintain the roots of every service so that they can grow back rather than close things down. I intervened to ensure the future of the Women’s refuge when threatened with cuts. In the context of declining budgets I defended the resourcing of Children’s services as a priority particularly after the inspection report which highlighted issues I made resources available and made it explicit that the Director should always ask for the resources needed and not assume that none were available. Developed an entrepreneurial approach to securing resources and secured many through leverage and partnership outside of Rotherham.

126. Creation of successful Rotherham partnership; worked over many years to build an effective and successful partnership with all local agencies and partners. My philosophy has always been that without a thriving economy Rotherham could not be a thriving town and against some peoples opinions I build strong working relationships with the private sector and the Rotherham Chamber in particular. This saw them have their president on the partnership Board and they sponsored many activities and make things happen for the town. I have concerns as do they that this strong partnership will not continue.

127. The partnership included Health, Police, and Voluntary and Community sectors too. The principal of the College was on the Board. It had an Independent Chair Brian Chappell which allowed me to speak from the Council’s point of view. The Partnership had monthly meetings to get things done. It included the Divisional Commander, Senior Health managers, Chair of Governors Job Centre Plus and Chamber Chair. Membership changed over the years but commitment stayed strong across the agencies.

128. It took up controversial issues and challenged individual partners such as Job Centre Plus when it came to light that people had no money for food at Christmas a scheme of food vouchers was put in place within a week. Discussions were open and robust. Strategic responses to the Credit Crunch and Flooding were examples of proactive action. It provided an open platform for people to bring issues for discussion.

129. Maintaining Rugby Union club in the Borough; through connecting it to creating learning opportunities for young people. Matching local needs and creating opportunities. Supported the Club with the RFU to ensure its future.
130. Securing the future of and Enabling Rotherham United Football Club to move to a new Stadium; brokered over many years connecting local business people who could sponsor the club and brokering the Rotherham partnership involvement in securing the Stadium. This required local knowledge and networks and good relationships. Worked with Howard Webb as a local resident and leader within Football on this.

131. Encouraging the integration of Roma people in Rotherham and the UK and Europe There were concerns about problems in Eastwood an area where many Roma families had settled. I worked personally with the ward members and lead cabinet members to adopt a more strategic approach. This was based on consultation and engagement of the Roma community through a project led by a Muslim woman and funded as an exemplar project by the Regional Local Government Association LGYH. It challenged Roma men to get involved and I personally attended meetings with them. It challenged the families to take responsibility for the well being and education of children and there was partnership work with Health and Childrens Services. It also meant brokering a community covenant and educating Roma people about the norms of British life including waste management and other basic issues. The project was very successful and is seen as good practice within the European Union. I became the LGA spokesperson on Roma and served on Migration Yorkshire.

132. Rotherham has twin towns with Roma populations and on visits I became informed of the position of Roma in these and other EU countries. As a member of Committee of the Regions I produced an Opinion on Roma which found that local government should play a significant role in settling and integrating people who migrate and that resources should follow families’. It challenged home countries to improve conditions for Roma people. This involved working with staff from the Committee of the regions and LGA.

133. Leadership and Networks in Yorkshire and Humber, UK and Europe I chaired LGYH for two years plus chaired the Improvement partnership and South Yorkshire partnership. During this time helped transform the regional assembly while we were establishing the new City Region arrangements. Built strong and effective cross party relationships to deliver for people and places in Yorkshire and Humber as this would benefit Rotherham. In seizing opportunities and investment I had a Dartboard philosophy. Firstly try to benefit Rotherham the Bull’s-eye then south Yorkshire then the wider region.

134. As chair of the Improvement partnership for three years I used this to learn about good practice in other areas and bring it back to Rotherham. I made sure we supported all councils in difficulty such as Doncaster, Hull, and North East Lincs and created a compact agreement to make sure there was trust so that people wouldn’t conceal failure for political or professional reasons.

135. I visited every Leader and Chief Exec to broker this. It was unique nationally. It was a statement of intent of course and we were working to make it real. The blame culture which exists makes it harder to improve. We need to move away from this if we want true accountability and progress. We created networks to support improvement and deliver transformation. On Childrens services we funded a programme of work including resolving the shortage of Childrens Social workers and poaching through collaborative working and developing our own staff. This also developed common child protection policies to avoid induction issues when staff moved between areas.

136. I secured £25k to organise a seminar in Rotherham on Child sexual exploitation to create better understanding and get people to recognise that this was an issue in more places than Rotherham. Keith Vaz MP and Andrew Northcliffe were invited to this. Neither attended. (The Jay report was not the only action taken to expose the issues and learn lessons.)

137. Enabled leadership within the region on other regional improvement on Health and social Care integration, Carbon reduction and specific issues such as response to Flooding.

Rotherham worked on using electric vehicles to reduce council’s carbon footprint and were successful in promoting this across Yorkshire and Humber.

139. Personally led study tours involving Members and officers from Councils across the region.

- To Rotterdam after 2007 floods to learn about their management of Water strategies and their approach to Community Cohesion very different to ours.
  
- To Duisburg on town centre regeneration and regeneration of industrial areas

There was considerable learning from these which was shared in publications distributed to all councils. Again they helped build cross party relationships and trust.

140. Supported the Humber authorities and Scarborough to promote off shore wind and to get the Humber Tolls frozen.

141. I have worked to make Rotherham a high performing Council. In 2005 the Council was rated as the most improved Metropolitan Borough in the country. In addition I have focused on ensuring economic growth and have succeeded in achieving improvements in this as well as in reducing crime and improving health and well being against a context of real challenges

Appendix 3

Sexual Exploitation across the UK

1. Channel 4 have undertaken a Freedom of Information request from Safeguarding Boards which shows how much of a problem the issue still is and how the scale of it is still not being recognised. The figures they have obtained suggest a greater scale of problem in other areas than there was in Rotherham. They have posted a video of the investigation on You Tube and in particular have covered Bradford today and what is still happening there.

2. In Calderdale there has just been an announcement of what is said to be the biggest child sexual exploitation investigation in the country.25 men arrested for offences which took place between 2006-2011. A year long investigation saw them arrested in 2013. For 5 years the abuse went on and it’s taken 2 years for them to be arrested. The girls involved were in Calderdale Council care. Rotherham is accused of inaction and taking too long to act on perpetrators. Is this not the case in Calderdale?

3. In Bradford former MP for Keighley; Ann Cryer highlighted issues of young Asian men grooming underage white girls in 2002. She said she thought it was a purely local issue and that no other MP raised the issue had they done so she could have had an impact on Labour party national policy. 7 mothers came to see her. This direct contact did not happen in Rotherham.

4. She has said no one wanted to know; not Bradford Council, Police and it took till 2004 when there were prosecutions. Barnardos say in the Channel 4 documentary that they are working with approx 100 victims of grooming a year in Bradford. This is equivalent to 1,600 over 16 years. Whereas in Rotherham there appears to be improvement the situation in terms of outcomes would seem to be the same if not worse in Bradford despite the establishment of new services.

5. The Local Government Minister who recently spoke of “gangs of Muslim men raping white kids “was not only a councillor during the period when Ann Cryer made her appeals to the Council he was deputy and Leader between 2004 and 2006. If there were an Independent review by Professor Jay on Bradford over the past 16 years what would the story be and what kind of culture would it find in Bradford?
6. 28 men have been arrested in Keighley for offences against young girls again following lengthy investigations and all 70 arrests in West Yorkshire have come after the Jay report. In the previous three years there were just 5 convictions of Asian and 47 white; 1 black perpetrators across Bradford, Calderdale, Leeds, Wakefield and Kirklees. Casey criticises Rotherham for its low conviction rate. Compared to the population and potential children affected in West Yorkshire this would suggest there was a problem there too and that Kris Hopkins MP suggestion needs to be considered in this context. If he is right then they are not being dealt with.

7. The Bradford Telegraph and Argos reported that the number of child rapes has soared in West Yorkshire to above the national average 340 in the year 2013-14 and increased from 222 in 2012-13. This is 76.2 per 100,000 population. The average for England and Wales is 59.5 per 100,000 population and the crimes solved dropped to 22% against the average of 31%. Drops of 5% since 2009. There are clearly issues to be worked on.

8. This week further arrests in Rochdale follow 3 years investigation and date back to 2006. Further indication of slow response beyond Rotherham and South Yorkshire.

9. Channel 4 news has discovered further evidence of the scale of CSE though this is difficult to establish. Only half of the safeguarding Boards replied and many say they do not know the extent. There is confusion about actual crimes and at risk numbers. If their figures are extrapolated over 16 years that’s 96,000 at risk in half the areas. Within the Jay report the figures were based on Childrens services case contacts which would equally give a mix of actual offences committed and at risk.

March 2015