

GROUP LOCALISED CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OFFENDERS: WHO AND WHY?

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Abstract

Since 2011, the prosecution of Asian men for group localised child sexual exploitation (GLCSE) in the UK has led to two opposing positions: (1) Asian men have been unfairly demonised; and (2) Asian men have a disproportionate propensity for GLCSE. We analysed the evidence in the public domain in different two ways. First, we collected newspaper reports of GLCSE cases, and completed a comprehensive review of the literature, government documents and official case reviews. Our data consists of 498 defendants in 73 prosecutions between 1997 and 2017. Using a technique that is widely accepted in medical research, we determined the heritage of these defendants. Second, using census data for 404 local authorities, we analysed the relationship between GLCSE prosecutions, and the religion and heritage of each local population. We conclude that Muslims, particularly Pakistanis, dominate GLCSE prosecutions, and consider the reasons for this and some possible policy responses.

1. Introduction

Countries have responded in various ways to the concern about the global increase in the number of children and adolescent girls vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Some concentrate on displaced and lost children; while others, such as many states in the USA, address such crimes under the umbrella of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (Hodge, 2008; Jones and Florek, 2015). There is particular unease about excessive risk-taking, the use of illegal substances and the long-term impacts on sexual, reproductive and mental health (WHO, 2017, p 7). There is evidence to suggest that the effects of abuse are long-lasting and can be exacerbated by poorly conceived safeguarding policies and procedures. For example, professional reliance on the victims to pursue a case (Newsam and Ridgway, 2019), or the expectation that, in order to be heard, victims have to self-portray as innocent virgins in court proceedings (Grewal, 2012; Jones and Florek, 2015).

In the UK, abuse has been historically understood as that perpetrated against younger children in home or institutional care. Definitions have changed to differentiate child sexual abuse (CSA) from

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