

Bullfinch abuse scandal Serious Case Review – what went wrong

The [trial of the worst gang](#) apprehended in this investigation so I went straight to their website for coverage of the release of the SCR this morning. That is, the Serious Case Review by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board investigating why men have been able to groom and sexually exploit girls in Oxfordshire

As the reporters said at 10.00 am “The main report is 114 pages and we are still reading through it.”

The review finds a similar catalogue of neglect and refusal by the police and Oxfordshire Council to take the girls and their parents seriously that we read of in Rotherham. What is unusual is that the author of the report Alan Bedford of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, does not believe that the failings were motivated by fear of accusations of racism. However the Telegraph says that

The report also urges the Government to carry out research into why there is a particular problem with child sexual exploitation within the Muslim or Pakistani community in Britain.

and

[“As has been found](#) wherever this type of organised group abuse has been uncovered, the perpetrators have been mainly from an Asian heritage, with some from Africa or south-east European countries, and with a mainly Muslim culture. The association of group-based child sexual exploitation with mainly Pakistani heritage [men] is undeniable and prevention will need both national understanding.

communication and debate, but also work with faith groups at a local level.”

Thames Valley Police has referred itself to the Independent Police Complaints Commission over the Bullfinch report and its failings. But no one in any senior position in the police force of the council has resigned or been disciplined. Or not yet. The report says it was due to the work and persistence of junior staff that the abuse was eventually addressed.

Both police and council accept they fell short; both bodies claim that lessons have been learned and procedures improved.

The police were accused of adopting tunnel vision, where investigations prior to Bullfinch looked at incidents separately, “and not join the dots to other reports to the police”.

Reports of the girls going missing – which happened on more than 400 occasions – were not always dealt with properly, including one police call operator not recognising one report needed an urgent response even after a parent said their daughter was being “held against her will by Asian males”.

One young woman told the review team: “I turned up at the police station at two or three am, blood all over me, soaked through my trousers to the crotch. They dismissed me as being naughty, a nuisance. I was bruised and bloody.” .. As the serious case review notes, ‘One does not need training in CSE to know that a 12-year-old sleeping with a 25-year-old is not right, or that you don’t come back drunk, bruised, half naked and bleeding from seeing your ‘friends’.”

Police and social services were accused of not believing the girls or taking their families’ complaints seriously enough.

Mr Bedford wrote: "They saw staff as not taking concerns seriously enough, not believing the girls, not picking up the hints that they were giving about their abuse and not being inquisitive enough about what was happening to them."

One manager is described in the report as telling a parent their daughter was "streetwise and loves it."

The Telegraph reports something that I have said myself for a very long time.

"The Serious Case Review ... emphasises: "The law around consent was not properly understood and the reviewer finds confusion related to a national culture where children are sexualised at an ever younger age and deemed able to consent to, say, contraception long before they are legally able to have sex.

"A professional tolerance to knowing young teenagers were having sex seems with adults seems to have developed. . . In the tension between inaction to be non-judgmental and action to prevent harm because an activity is wrong or inappropriate, the latter should be the overriding principle with children.

"There needs to be a rethink of national guidance regarding sexually active children to ensure that well-intentioned policies to support the vulnerable young do not inadvertently add to a climate that facilitates exploitation."

And that goes back to a general motive to