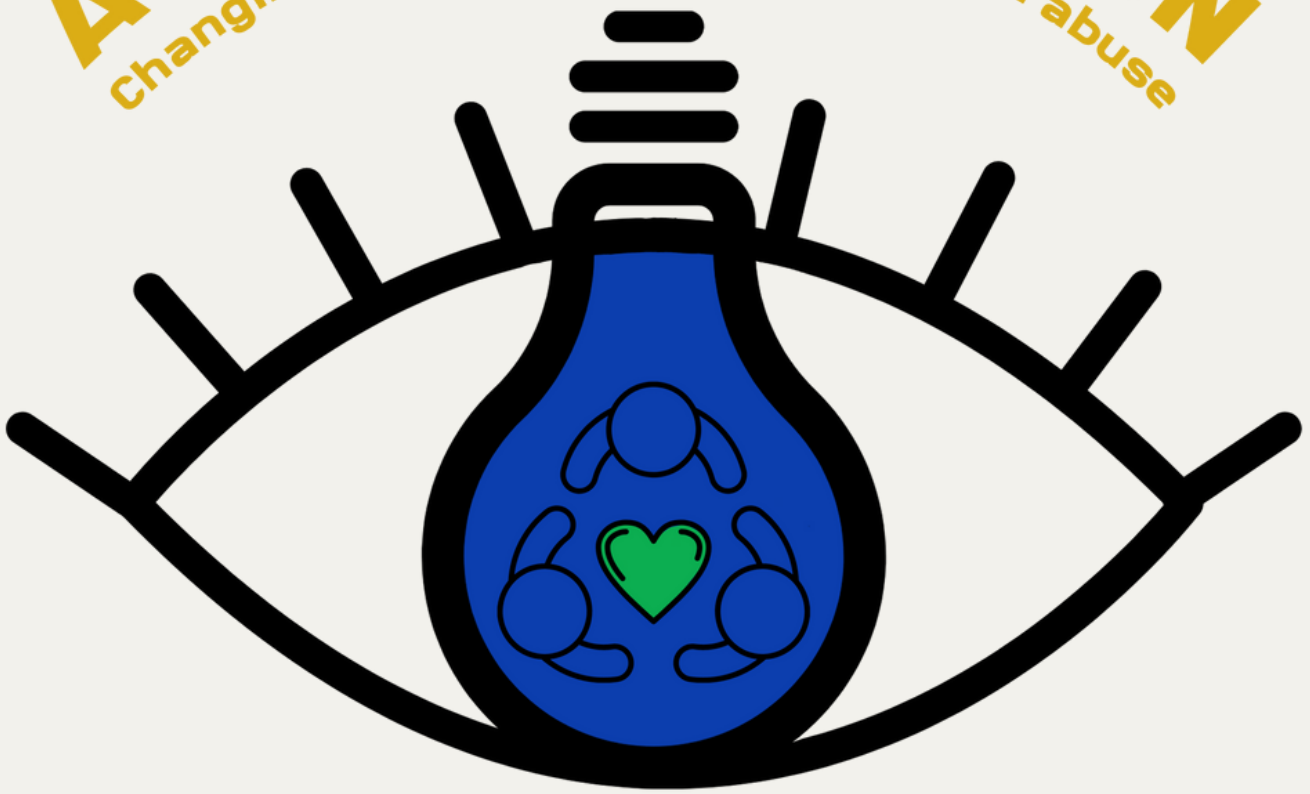


Supported by:



# A DIFFERENT VISION

changing our approach to child sexual abuse



# What is A Different Vision?

A Different Vision is the result of a two-year endeavour to **tailor support for victims** and their families – and gain a better understanding of **how victims can be better protected** by public services.



**Cleveland Child Sexual Abuse Transformation Project** was one of six initiatives funded by the **Home Office** in 2020, following a successful bid by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland.

The Transformation Project consisted of a group of **five specialist organisations** delivering services to children, young people and parents/carers who have been affected by child sex abuse. They also **delivered training for professionals** responsible for supporting child victims of sexual abuse and their families.

## Timeline - how did we get here?

### May 2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announces the launch of a new Child Sexual Abuse Support Services Transformation fund

### June 2020

The new fund opens. There is an eight-week deadline for applications. A working group is established, led by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

### June - August 2020

The working group meets on a number of occasions to discuss ideas and opportunities for a collaborative bid. A bid is submitted in August 2020.

### May 2022

With the project officially at an end, partners come together for an event to celebrate its progress.

### October 2020 - March 2022

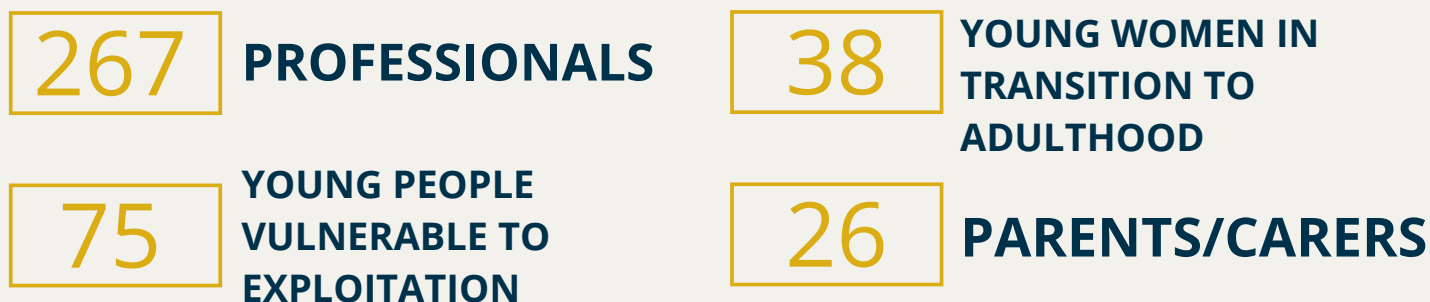
The project begins delivery as soon as possible! It's not long before it's making a real impact for vulnerable people.

### October 2020

Cleveland OPCC is informed the partnership bid was successful - with really positive feedback from Government!

# Supporting victims, their families and the professionals who work with them

Since 2020, **over 400 people have benefitted** from the Cleveland Child Sexual Abuse Transformation Project. This includes:



Five of Cleveland's existing agencies developed four **bespoke programmes** tailored for victims of child sexual abuse and their families:



As well as these specialist programmes, the Project had **a number of other key successes:**

- Creation of an expert strategic group on sexual violence
- Positive impact on police culture and practice
- Further strengthening and developing inter-organisational relationships
- Further strengthening and developing organisational competency and sustainability

# The picture of child sexual abuse in Cleveland: research findings

In addition to the delivery of a number of innovative delivery programmes, the Child Sexual Abuse Transformation Project also involved **a significant research element.**

Conducted by Christopher Hartworth from Barefoot Research, the research **examined the current levels of child sexual abuse reported** in Cleveland and how these **reports were handled by services.**



## Other key findings:

- Cleveland has a **high number of victims/survivors, high levels of under-reporting** and **low detection** rates;
- There is a **good understanding and awareness of services/processes** amongst specialist services/children's workforce in key agencies;
- The main reported weakness in the current system was the **risk of losing sight of the young person in the process** of reporting the crime and becoming too focused on the process
- **Difficulties with strategic integration:** the Transformation Project experienced difficulties in working with senior strategic statutory professionals in Teesside.
- There has been a **strong demand for training** provided through the project, which has led to an increase in expertise of local services and has demonstrated a latent need.

# Listening to victims/survivors – what do they tell us?

Christopher's research included an **examination of the circumstances** of some of the people using the specialist support services commissioned by the project. He also looked to **understand what they wanted to see from the services** there to protect them.



**Siobhan regularly self-harms and attempts suicide. She is 16 years old and lives in Stockton.**

She had been sexually abused by her mum's boyfriends and also by someone else she met online. After a breakdown in a previous stable foster home, she had no choice but to return to her mother's address - which was considered unsafe.



**Rachel is 16 years old and had been sexually abused by her grandfather.**

Unfortunately there were some people in her family who did not believe her, and she felt invalidated and frightened of rejection. She currently lives in Stockton with both parents who do believe and support her.

The following comments have been made by young female victims/survivors about the quality of the service they received from **A Way Out** and the reasons why it is effective:

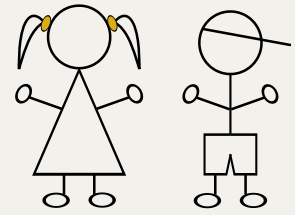
*"I've tried pushing you away a few times, but I've realised it's not going to work as you just keep coming back **no matter how difficult I'm being.**"*

*I feel like you have time for me something that other professionals in my life don't have ... **It's just nice to have someone to talk to who gets it.**"*

*"Even if I talk about the same thing over and over again, you never get sick of me like my friends and family do. You just continue to listen and provide support for **as long as it takes.**"*

# What victims/survivors want from services

Christopher's research found a number of common themes in the testimonies of victims about **how they wanted to be treated by services**.



## What children want....

1

### **We want and need services**

Both specialist and universal ones which provide a welcoming space and where we can meet people who understand what we have been through.

2

### **Show us you care**

This means having a compassionate attitude and also demonstrating it in other ways, like keeping us informed and noticing and meeting our needs.

3

### **We need time**

We can be anxious that we will not be believed or may be rejected or turned away and trusting professionals, recovering – it all takes time.

4

### **Treat us with respect and give us choices**

We think respect is linked to choices, so where possible give us a choice of everyday things, like where to meet, what food and drink and who will be present.

5

### **Offer us opportunities**

We are more than victims, with talents and abilities that can be developed. Give us creative ways to develop as people like drama, music and art and poetry.

6

### **Give us a voice**

Letting others know how we feel can be very therapeutic for us and it is bad for us to feel silenced and invisible. We know that our voice makes changes.

7

### **Don't discriminate and think before you speak**

We feel it if there is any discrimination relating to age, gender, sexuality, culture, neighbourhoods where we live - even feeling judged for being sexually abused. Be careful how you use language in how you talk and what you write.

8

### **Keep to the same person**

It can be traumatic for us to continually have to repeat the same story over and over again to each new person you see and it's difficult to develop trust when you don't see the same person.

9

### **Stay hopeful things can change**

It may take a while, but stick with us and keep us hoping and doing.



# Our call to public services

PCC Steve Turner and agencies involved in the project



There is a **need for a systematic change** in how authorities on Teesside ready themselves and respond to child sex abuse. This includes how data is collected, how children are listened to and reports taken, how support is offered and how support is provided.

There is an advantage on Teesside in the form of the **expertise which exists in the specialist organisations**, a number of which were involved in this project. The broad recommendation is therefore for a review of current systems with a view toward system change, involving the specialist agencies as leading experts.

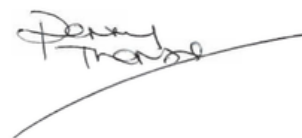
In relation to other more specific recommendations made by this evaluation, we make the following:

- Maintain and continue **strategic group meetings**; the stakeholders of the transformation project represent the key set of expertise on the side and in the absence of other strategic mechanisms, we recommend that **the sexual violence group continues meeting**, at least once a quarter;
- Ensure **referrals into the SARC are captured** as a mandatory tick box for all sexual violence reports on police systems;
- All police officers and trainees **receive trauma informed training** on an ongoing basis.

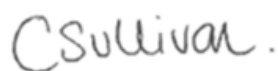
# Join our pledge to enhance support available for victims/survivors of child sexual abuse.



**Steve Turner**  
Cleveland Police and  
Crime Commissioner



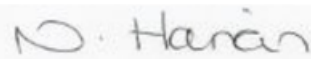
**Penny Thomas**  
The Halo Project



**Clare Sullivan**  
Barnardo's



**Kay Nicolson**  
A Way Out



**Nicky Harkin**  
Arch Teesside



**Richinda Taylor**  
EVA Women's Aid

