

13 August 2017

MEDIA STATEMENT

Newcastle Upon Tyne - Grooming Convictions

We at MWNUK are deeply angered to hear of the ordeals that many young girls have faced in Newcastle Upon Tyne, at the hands of 17 men and 1 woman. There is so much to discuss in trying to understand why and how these hidden crimes took place and continued spreading.

In order to stop this violence happening to anyone else we must all be brave, honest and vigilant, and put the victims at the heart of our efforts to eradicate this crime.

We must also remember:

- **Abuse happens in every community, in every city, in every part of the world**
In 2013, MWNUK published a report called "Unheard Voices: Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Young Women" which revealed how Asian girls were also being sexually exploited across the UK. The victims of sexual exploitation are often between the ages of 13 and 25 years old, and are targeted precisely because they are vulnerable. In our research, a third of the victims had suffered sexual abuse when they were younger.
- **There are many profiles of abusers and those targeted**
Our report showed that many victims are targeted by offenders from their own communities, who have greater access to their social circles. Perpetrators were Asian, White and of mixed heritage. And many other reports have shown the existence of CSE in other communities. Therefore, we must not limit our focus on only one type of perpetrator-victim model, as this will inevitably mean we miss many others.
- **We know that there is huge underreporting of these crimes**
Our report highlighted that Asian girls faced additional barriers to reporting, namely that because offenders were from their own communities, the offenders manipulated cultural norms to prevent them from reporting their abuse.
- **More resource is needed to investigate these crimes, and to provide ongoing support for survivors**
It is clear that there is massive strain on the police and other public sector services. More investment is needed if we are to adequately support women and girls.

Executive Director, Faeza Vaid said:

"The shock, disgust and anger we feel having heard about these crimes must act as a further catalyst for us to unite to eradicate this crime across the country. More awareness raising of this issue is needed, and girls must be supported and believed, but communities too must not let even one perpetrator feel that his or her actions will be tolerated. We should not be giving 'character references' to those who are clearly perpetrators, and we should not let any incident swept under the carpet. The impact of sexual exploitation is lifelong on its victims, and on the next generation."

Key to tackling gender-based abuse in all its forms is challenging misogynist attitudes in our communities and in society as a whole. Do not be a bystander, find out how to spot the signs of abuse in young women and girls, find out how you can help, and make a difference.

Below are our resources on Child Sexual Exploitation:

- Research Report: http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/go_files/resources/UnheardVoices.pdf
- Information Booklet: http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/go_files/factsheets/942798-Unheard%20Voices%20Leaflet_WEB.pdf
- Awareness-raising Video: Jasmin's Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exsyUrfvQMc&feature=youtu.be>
- Awareness-raising Video: What Kind of Man Do You Want to Be?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9OvxH_WRPY

If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual exploitation, PLEASE do not suffer in silence. Contact someone, like the Police or a helpline. The MWN Helpline is open Monday- Friday 10am-4pm- you can call on 0800 999 5786 or email info@mwnhelpline.co.uk

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2. The research report conducted by MWNUK, Unheard Voices: Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Young Women can be found here: <http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/resourcesDetail.php?id=97> It has been downloaded more than 3000 times

3. About Muslim Women's Network UK: MWNUK is the only national Muslim women's organisation in Britain. It is an independent network of women across the UK that shares knowledge, connects the voices, and promotes the needs of diverse Muslim women. The website address for MWNUK is: www.mwnuk.co.uk