

# It Doesn't Happen Here - Perceptions of CSE in a Rural County

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# *“It doesn’t happen here”*

## Perspectives on CSE in rural areas

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# Outline of presentation

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- The rural reality and CSE
- Parallels with domestic violence in rural settings – exploring some transferable messages
- Research in progress

# Rural Social Work is not Recognised

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Hackney is where **it is at!**

or

Rotherham/Derby/Oxford/Rochdale...

# The Rural Reality

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# CSE: a reality across urban and rural settings?

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Det. Chief Supt. Andrew Murray, Thames Valley:

*“We have proved that if you look for this you will find it, we have found it not just in our large urban areas but in areas of Thames Valley you would consider as picturesque market towns”*

(Sky News 2015)

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Far from being idyllic, 'real life' problems, such as domestic violence, are as common in rural areas as anywhere else. Ducks might quack, sheep might baah, but the grass isn't always greener.

(Carter, 2003, p. 229)

# The Rural Reality?

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- Isolation
  - Poverty
  - Drug use
  - Mental Health problems
  - Domestic Violence
  - CSE
- ... plus a few chocolate box cottages!  
(Cheers and Pugh 2010; Unwin 2014)

# Anecdotal Evidence that Sparked the Research Project...

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Teacher at a rural secondary school noticed a pattern of a 15 year old girl being picked up from school by an taxi yet she only lived 5 minutes walk away.....

# Understanding of CSE in rural areas

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- Closest knowledge we have is from the field of Domestic Violence (DV) and Rurality
- Are there messages we can learn from this (limited) literature base on Domestic violence in rural settings that could be applied to rural CSE?

# 'Scream As Loud As You Want - No One's Going To Hear You'

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## Messages from DV in Rural Areas

- Personal /geographic isolation
- Lack of services (more costly to provide)
- Accessibility of support groups
- Greater stigma
- Easier to control e.g. take car keys away
- Professionals may have personal links
- More conservative culture
- Professional Isolation

(Stalford, Baker & Beveridge, 2003, Pugh et al. 2007)

# Fear of Visibility?

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Paradoxically, while both adults and children who have experienced domestic violence in rural areas are in many cases invisible to service providers and policy makers, they often fear being highly visible in their local community.

(Stalford, Baker & Beveridge, 2003, p. 81)

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**Can you think of any more  
parallels between DV and  
CSE in rural areas?**

# Eastman et al., (2007)

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- Patriarchal values regarding **gender roles and family solidarity** are more evident in rural communities than in urban communities
- This 'hegemony of tradition' is maintained by informal systems and roles

# Alder (1996)

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- Rural communities often **resist external services and interventions** because of a value-base that believes in self-dependence and perseverance

# Violence Against Women in Rural and Urban Areas

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- Rural women perceive that violence against women happens more in urban areas.
- Over 70% of respondents (urban and rural women) said that violence against women is not openly discussed in their communities.
- Over a quarter of rural women and a fifth of urban women focused on the behaviour of female victims of violence and abuse, rather than on the actions of perpetrators.
- Rural and urban women are equally as likely to experience violence and abuse.

(McCarry, M. & Williamson, E. 2009)

# Fears of Consequences

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- ‘Social work will be told and they will come and take the weans away’ (Women’s Aid Worker, Area B).
- GP - survivors often will not disclose abuse to service providers as they are frightened their children will be taken into care.

(Scobie 2009)

# Views from Scotland's Rural Workers

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- “If you live in (city) you could maybe disclose domestic abuse and your neighbour might never know, but in smaller areas, in smaller towns if you disclose it, it could be the talk of the village and that can be a lot for women and young people to deal with” (Women’s Aid Worker, Area A).
- ‘A lot of women are living in villages and if they walk out of the house with a black eye they are highly visible, visible to the whole village almost, if they walk into a local shop or post office someone is bound to see them. Again there’s the whole thing about women being quite ashamed to go out and not wanting others to know what is happening to them’ (Women’s Aid Worker, Area B).

(from Scobie 2009 p.47)

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# **What might be the messages from Rural Domestic Violence that Resonate with the Dynamics of Rural CSE?**

# Additional Challenges of CSE in Rural areas

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## **‘It doesn’t happen here’**

- Where to go for services/alternative accommodation
- Stigma/ lack of anonymity (consultations/ groups)
- Acultural to admit bad stuff goes on (professionals and young people)
- Young people’s lure of ‘the big city’ – takeaways / nightclubs/ bling
- Media image of predominantly Asian men perpetrators of CSE

# Research Project to date in a Rural County

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- Slow to get Research Permission
- Political anxiety/ professional defensiveness?
- Keen 'inside' Research Ally 'who you know'
- 2012 - no identified CSE cases
- 2015 - 80 CSE cases
- System used is standard Safeguarding System – parents/carers excluded as potential allies

# Data from Case Reviews

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To be presented on 19<sup>th</sup> March....

# Next Steps: Interview with Parents / Carers

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- **Had you ever tried to raise your concerns about possible sexual risks to your child with anybody before professional agencies became involved with your family?**
- **Who did you first approach about your concerns and why?**
- **When did you first become aware that professionals were concerned your child might be at risk?**
- **Can you tell us what you understood these concerns were?**
- **What agencies were involved?**
- **What difference did these agencies make to better ensuring the safety of your child?**
- **Were you involved in the planning to reduce the risks to your child?**
- **Do you have any suggestions regarding how families in similar situations might be better helped in the future?**

# Next Steps

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- Make policy and practice recommendations
- Write up the research

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Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation



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