



# Taken

**A study of child  
abduction in the UK**

# Taken

A study of child abduction in the UK

Geoff Newiss  
with Mary-Ann Traynor



This research is the product of a partnership between **Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT)** and the **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**.



#### About PACT

PACT is a non-profit organisation registered in both the United Kingdom and the United States. It was founded in 1999 by Lady Meyer, CBE. It is an associate of the U.S. based International Center for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC), which was co-founded by Ernie Allen and Catherine Meyer in 1998.

PACT's mission is to find answers to the tragedy of the hundreds of thousands of children who go missing or are abducted every year. PACT campaigns, undertakes research and helps to make policy, working in collaboration with the police, government and other agencies.

Further information is available at:  
[www.pact-online.org](http://www.pact-online.org)



#### About CEOP

CEOP is the UK's national law enforcement agency committed to tackling the sexual abuse of children in both the online and offline environments – with the principal aim of identifying, locating and safeguarding children and young people from harm.

CEOP acts as the national law enforcement lead for the UK on missing children issues including developing policy, advising on best practice, providing tactical and specialist operational support to police forces on missing children enquiries, providing educational materials and sources of support to children and parents. CEOP also coordinates the Child Rescue Alert system and manages the [www.missingkids.co.uk](http://www.missingkids.co.uk) appeals website.

Full information on all areas of work can be found at [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

© 2013. Parents and Abducted Children Together (PACT).

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publishers (PACT).

Parents and Abducted Children Together; PO Box 31389, London, SW11 4WY, UK  
[www.pact-online.org](http://www.pact-online.org) Tel/fax: +44 (0)20 7627 3699 Email: [support@pact-online.org](mailto:support@pact-online.org)  
Registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales. Registration No. 1081904  
PACT is a certified non-profit 501(c)3 organisation. EIN 04-3631031

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre  
33 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 2WG, UK  
[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk) Tel: +44 (0)870 000 3344 Email: [press@ceop.gov.uk](mailto:press@ceop.gov.uk)

Printed in the UK by iPrint Digital Solutions. [www.iprintdigital-solutions.co.uk](http://www.iprintdigital-solutions.co.uk)

## Acknowledgements

This research was supported by an Advisory Group of Charlie Hedges (CEOP), Wayne Jones (Home Office), and Jane Birkett (UK Missing Persons Bureau), who provided useful guidance throughout the project and important comments on the early draft of the report.

A number of staff in CEOP played an important part in collecting the data for this project. Special thanks are extended to Katherine Harding (CEOP) for her excellent contribution in this respect.

We are very grateful for the data provided by the Serious Crime Analysis Section (part of SOCA). Our particular thanks go to Meriel Kurton for supporting this part of the work.

Thank you also to Dr Bernard Gallagher (University of Huddersfield) for independently reviewing the report.

Finally, we give our appreciation to the many individuals who have contributed their ideas, thoughts and concerns on child abduction over the course of this study.

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
About PACT	1
About CEOP	1
Acknowledgements	3
Lists of Tables	4
List of Figures	4
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
Aims of the project	5
Method	5
Summary of findings	6
Overarching issues	9
Recommendations	10
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>13</b>
Background	13
Method and limitations	14
Structure of the report	17
<b>2. Existing data and literature</b>	<b>19</b>
Extent of child abduction	19
Nature of child abduction	23
<b>3. A typology based on police data</b>	<b>29</b>
Overview: relationship between victim(s) and offender(s)	30
Distinct child abduction types	34
<b>4. Child abduction resulting in serious crime</b>	<b>47</b>
Definition and limitations	48
Findings	48
<b>5. Current policy and practice issues</b>	<b>53</b>
Findings	53
<b>6. Discussion and recommendations</b>	<b>59</b>
Summary of findings	59
Overarching issues	62
Recommendations	63
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>70</b>

## List of tables

	<i>Page</i>
Table 1: Relationship between victim(s) and offender(s)	30
Table 2: Summary of distinct abduction types	35
Table 3: Victim activity at initial contact, by time of day	50
Table 4: Type of initial contact between victim(s) and offender(s)	50
Table A1: Crime type by relationship and abduction types	65
Table A2: Age of victims by relationship category	66
Table A3: Sex of victims by relationship category	66
Table A4: Ethnicity of victims by relationship category	66
Table A5: Number of cases/victims within distinct abduction types	67
Table A6: Level of injury by relationship and distinct abduction types (victims)	68
Table A7: Cases with multiple offenders	69

## List of figures

	<i>Page</i>
Figure 1: Trends in police recorded child abduction offences (England and Wales and Northern Ireland)	20
Figure 2: Child abduction by relationship between victim(s) and offender(s)	31
Figure 3: Age of victims	32
Figure 4: Sex of victims	32
Figure 5: Ethnicity of victims	33
Figure 6: Types of child abduction	36-37
Figure 7: Age and sex of victims of other attempted abductions by strangers	43
Figure 8: Age of victims	49
Figure 9: Policy, practice and other issues - summary	54-55

## Executive Summary

This study gives an account of the current *knowledge stock* on child abduction. In July 2011, the ‘*strategic and operational lead*’ on missing and abducted children was transferred to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). Understanding what is known – and not known – about child abduction should equip CEOP and its partners with a good sense of what the priorities are for protecting children from abduction. This knowledge could also contribute to establishing how best to respond when a child is abducted.

There is no single, comprehensive definition of child abduction in the UK. Different laws in different parts of the UK criminalise various acts which involve the taking of a child. This study examines different types of child abduction including;

- parental abduction (often resulting in a child being taken overseas).
- abduction by a stranger.
- abduction resulting from exploitation, revenge or financial gain.

## Aims of the project

1. To examine the number of abductions of children which occur in the UK.
2. To establish the different types of child abduction and provide information on the circumstances in which they occur.
3. To explore how data collection on child abduction can be improved so as to provide an effective measure of trends.
4. To identify any immediate policy and practice issues in response to child abduction.

### 2. Police force data

Data were collected from UK police forces on 592 cases – involving 675 victims – of *child abduction*, *kidnapping* (of children) and *abduction* (of children, an offence limited to Scotland) recorded during the financial year 2011/12. Police data are limited to what is reported to the police and what can be recorded under the different offence categories. Incidents resulting in more serious offences (such as murder and rape) are unlikely to be recorded as child abductions, and therefore would have been excluded from this analysis.

## Method

Four strands of data collection were undertaken:

### 1. Existing data and literature

Literature and data on child abduction in the UK were reviewed; some of the international literature was also included.

### 3. Serious crime data

Additional data were collected from the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS, part of the Serious Organised Crime Agency) on a sample of 29 cases involving 31 victims. These were primarily rapes involving an element of abduction. They were used

to provide an illustration of the *nature* of child abductions involving serious offences rather than an estimate of the number of such offences.

#### 4. Policy and practice

Finally, representations were taken from 15 individuals working in 13 organisations whose work was either focused on, or associated with, child abduction. The organisations spanned the government, statutory, voluntary and academic sectors.

## Summary of findings

### UK police force data

All 592 cases collected from UK police forces were categorised according to the relationship between the victim(s) and the offender(s):

- Abducted by a parent: 17% (98 cases/127 victims)
- Abducted by other family members: 2% (12 cases/13 victims)
- Abducted by someone known but not related to the victim(s): 35% (206 cases/228 victims)
- Abduction perpetrated by a stranger: 42% (247 cases/273 victims)

Three-quarters (186) of abductions by strangers were attempted abductions that did not result in the child being taken.

80% of the child abduction cases were further categorised with a type of abduction. This was based on the circumstance or motive of the offence. These are described below.

### International parental child abduction

The police data included 89 victims, in 66 cases, who were taken or kept abroad by a parent.

In contrast, Reunite (the UK charity specialising in international parental child abduction) dealt with 479 children being abducted out of the UK by a parent in 2011. The number of international parental child abductions dealt with by Reunite and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has increased substantially in recent years.

Victims of international parental child abduction were younger than victims of other types of abduction, with a mean age of five years old. Boys and girls were abducted in roughly equal numbers. Two-thirds of victims were from non-white ethnic backgrounds.

Nearly twice as many cases involved a mother rather than a father abducting a child. Regular profiles of Hague Convention cases show that the majority of abductors are the primary or joint-primary carers of the children abducted (Lowe, 2011). Some children are 'retained' abroad having initially gone overseas with the permission of the primary care giver. Many children in this study's sample of police cases were still missing at the time of data collection.

#### Policy and practice

There is still a concern that police are unsure of their role in responding to international parental child abduction. Recent multi-agency initiatives aimed at raising police awareness of the issues were welcomed by interviewees.

Demographic change is likely to see the number of international parental child abductions

increase. This will have implications for all agencies involved. It also signals the potential value of preventative measures. Whilst interviewees raised the need to examine the impact of border controls and All Ports Warnings, these measures would have little impact on the relatively high number of cases where children are retained abroad.

A greater understanding of the long term effect of abduction on children and their families (including non-abducted siblings) and of the challenges when families are reunited is emerging. Further efforts are needed to raise awareness of both the risk and impact of international parental child abduction and further services may be required to assist people affected.

### Other family-perpetrated or known-offender abduction

11 cases (14 victims) involved a parent taking their child from care, often during a supervised contact visit. In two cases children were taken abroad.

10 cases involved 11 victims, aged under 10 years old, who were taken from – or held with – their mother by the child's father, or the mother's current or ex-partner. Many involved an assault on, or threats to kill, the mother.

Five cases involved five teenage females who were abducted as a result of an abusive family relationship. Two cases (involving an uncle and a step father) were confirmed to be sexually motivated. In one case a father was suspected to be grooming his daughter. In two cases a child was held by a family member for financial gain.

In two separate cases two babies were abducted – one by grandparents and the

other by an aunt – because of a concern or an argument about the child's welfare.

In 135 cases, involving 144 children, the offender(s) had forged some kind of exploitative relationship with the victim(s) prior to the abduction taking place. Victims were mainly white, female teenagers. In most cases, they had willingly gone with or to the offender(s). 30 cases (35 victims) were confirmed to involve grooming (including two cases in which grooming was initiated online). Over one-quarter of victims had run away or been reported missing at the time of the offence. In 79 cases the offender had previously been issued with a Child Abduction Warning Notice.

In 37 cases, involving 42 victims, the offence was motivated by revenge or a dispute. In seven cases the offence was perpetrated by a stranger. Victims tended to be older, with a mean age of 15 years. Three-quarters of victims were male and a relatively high proportion were Asian. Victims sustained a higher rate of injury than other types of abduction, and they were more likely to be abducted by more than one offender.

### Abductions by a stranger

The police data included 247 cases (273 victims) where a child was abducted by a stranger. Three-quarters were attempted abductions.

These figures are a poor indicator of the actual level of child abduction by a stranger in the UK. Gallagher *et al.* (2008) indicate that at least one in 59 children will experience some form of attempted abduction by a stranger in the course of their childhood. At least one in 605 children will experience an actual abduction by a stranger.

Four attempted abductions by strangers occurred when an offender tried to deceive hospital staff, school staff or the parent themselves into releasing the child into their care. In 22 cases the offender attempted to take a young child in the presence of their parent(s) whilst in a shopping centre, supermarket, play area, other public places, or – in one case – from their home.

Five cases were perpetrated by a stranger for financial gain. Two cases involved a teenage child being held for ransom and two victims were forced into a car and robbed.

In the vast majority of attempted abductions by strangers (181 victims/164 cases) the offender acted in the absence of the child's carer. Victims had an average age of 12 years, and three-quarters were girls. Whilst most suffered no injury, nearly half the victims were grabbed, dragged or held by the offender(s) and many had to struggle to free themselves. In two-thirds of the cases the offender(s) was in, alighted from, or attempted to pull the victim into a vehicle. A small number of cases were confirmed to be part of a linked series of attempted abductions. In 95 per cent of attempted abductions by strangers it was not possible to establish a clear motive.

In 12 cases (15 victims), a stranger with a clear sexual motive succeeded in abducting a child. These children ranged from 7 to 17 years old, with nearly three-quarters being aged 13 or over. Three were boys and 12 were girls. Five suffered a sexual assault or rape including two girls who first met the offender online. The circumstances of several other completed abductions by strangers would suggest they may have been sexually motivated.

SCAS data illustrated the scenarios in which 31 victims – aged between 12 and 18 years old – were abducted and then raped or sexually assaulted (in one case no sexual offence was recorded), predominantly by strangers. 28 victims were female and three were male. Less than half of the offences involved an offender acting alone.

In the majority of cases the victim(s) initially went willingly with the offender(s) after being engaged in conversation or offered a ride in a car. The circumstances of these offences leave an important question about when a rape should also be categorised as a child abduction.

The SCAS data contained no cases of child homicide following abduction in 2011/12. Whilst there is a consensus that these crimes are very rare, no data are routinely made available (by government or other sources) to demonstrate this.

### **Policy and practice**

There is a need to understand more about the high ratio of attempted compared to completed abductions by a stranger. Their ability to protect themselves may – or may not – be influenced by efforts to promote children's awareness of dangers and measures to keep them safe. Conversely offenders may not be motivated to actually abduct children, or may be ineffective – for whatever reasons. Further research in this area would inform the development of effective prevention measures.

Programmes and materials aimed at helping children to stay safe (including when they are online) are made available from a variety of providers. However, their effectiveness

in keeping children safe from the threat of abduction appears largely untested. The extent to which children have access to such programmes is also unknown. This is also an area for further research. Recent studies have suggested that gaining a better understanding of victimisation at a local level (through listening to children themselves) can identify other practical prevention measures (e.g. safe walking routes).

This study also raised questions about the use of Child Rescue Alert in the UK. CEOP is soon to publish a new protocol clarifying expectations on the police. Further research may also inform the police response to attempted abductions, particularly how and when information is shared with the public and whether any aspects of a single – or series of – attempted abductions provide a strong indicator of an increased risk to children.

### **Extent of child abduction**

It is impossible to provide a single reliable estimate for the total number of children abducted over a given time period in the UK. Data on specific types of child abduction are held by different police, government, legal, and voluntary agencies. Not all of it is published or made routinely available. In nearly all cases, the available statistics provide only a partial account of the true number of child abductions occurring.

## **Overarching issues**

The report highlights three overarching issues:

### **Defining child abduction**

Child abduction is not well defined in the UK. Different legislation, applicable in different parts of the UK, defines different offences of *child abduction*, *kidnapping*, *abduction and child stealing/plagium*. An offence of 'child abduction', as defined by the Child Abduction Act, 1984, can only be recorded for victims under the age of 16.

There is no established definition to distinguish serious crimes (e.g. a murder or a rape) which involve abduction from those that don't. Relevant factors may be the distance and duration for which a child is taken and whether they were forced or coerced to go with an offender or went – at least initially – of their own will. Without definitions it is impossible to know the true scale of child abduction, especially as crime recording rules in most parts of the UK allow only for a single (the most serious) offence to be recorded for an incident.

### **Data and research**

No single, comprehensive source of data on child abduction exists in the UK. Different types of child abduction are served by different data sources though none are entirely comprehensive. Whilst police data captures different types of child abduction it clearly offers only a partial account of each. In part this is because not all abductions are reported to the police, but it also reflects the restrictive definitions of offences related to child abduction and the limitations of crime-recording processes. The latter, at the very least, need addressing.

This study also highlights a number of critical gaps in our knowledge about what is most effective in preventing abduction and how to respond optimally when a child is abducted (see recommendations). These knowledge gaps offer considerable opportunity for further research.

### Responsibility

CEOP has recently been allocated the *'strategic and operational lead'* for missing and abducted children. How this role complements the existing responsibilities of

various government departments (e.g. the Ministry of Justice lead role for international parental child abduction) needs to be clearly set out.

This study makes recommendations for policy development, data improvement and further research across the range of abduction types. The creation of a child abduction 'hub' may offer an effective mechanism for coordinating the activities of different organisations, delivering improvements and providing a focus on child abduction in the UK.

## Recommendations

1. A national child abduction 'hub' should be created to develop policy and provide information on child abduction for the public and professionals alike.
2. The roles of different police and government agencies involved in responding to child abduction should be clearly set out.

### The 'hub' and partner agencies should:

3. Agree a UK-wide definition of child abduction.
4. Create a means of identifying all incidents of child abduction and attempted child abduction reported to police forces.
5. Harness opportunities to collect survey data on child abduction from children and/or parents.
6. Expand research into child abduction through partnerships with e.g. universities etc.

7. Publish an annual summary of statistics on child abduction.
8. Create a publicly accessible 'one-stop-shop' for information on child abduction.

### This research has identified several specific areas for future research and policy development. The 'hub' and partner agencies should:

9. Examine the relatively high incidence of attempted abductions by a stranger compared to completed abductions and the implications this has for prevention.
10. Examine the effectiveness of existing materials and programmes for schools and parents to keep children safe from stranger abduction.
11. Establish policy on the police response to abductions, and attempted abductions, by strangers, including when and how to alert the public.

12. Evaluate the impact of Child Abduction Warning Notices.
13. Establish methods to further prevent international parental child abduction.
14. Examine the effectiveness of the police response to international parental child abduction, and make recommendations for force policy.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

---

Child abduction commands considerable public interest and media attention. Whilst abduction resulting in serious crime receives the most public attention, children can be abducted in many different circumstances, for example:

- by a parent (and in some cases taken abroad).
- by someone with whom they have formed an inappropriate relationship.
- because of a dispute.
- financial gain.
- to facilitate a sexual offence.

Only a small number of studies of child abduction have been undertaken in the UK. Data are available from different sources, but these have rarely been examined in any detail. This study presents an account of the current knowledge stock on child abduction. Understanding what is known – and not known – should give police, the government and other organisations a good sense of what the priorities are for protecting children from abduction.

### Aims of the project

1. Examine the number of abductions of children which occur in the UK.
2. Establish the different types of child abduction and provide information on the circumstances.
3. Explore how data collection can be improved to provide an effective measure of trends.
4. Identify any immediate policy and practice issues.

### Policy context

CEOP has the national '*strategic and operational lead*' for missing and abducted children (CEOP, 2011a). CEOP's stated aim is '*to work in partnership with police forces and other agencies involved with missing and abducted children to support their interventions in delivering better outcomes for the individual child, their family and the public*' (*ibid.*, p52).

UK police forces have the operational responsibility to respond to and investigate incidents of child abduction. A number of guidance documents produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) summarise the police role. These include guidance on missing persons (ACPO, 2010), child abuse and safeguarding (ACPO, 2009) and kidnap and extortion (ACPO, 2008).

The Ministry of Justice has the UK policy lead on international parental child abduction (Home Office, 2011a). The same department leads the cross-government

Child Abduction Co-ordination Group (on international parental child abduction). Most recently, CEOP has signed a Service Level Agreement with the Ministry of Justice, the Official Solicitor and the Welsh Government confirming its role in trying to locate some children abducted into the UK.

The Home Office-led cross-government strategy on missing children and adults

(Home Office, 2011a) includes activity on child abduction. Guidance from the Department for Education and Home Office (2011), and the previous Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009; and DCSF and Home Office, 2010) makes implicit reference to the role of child abduction in trafficking, child sexual exploitation and gang activity respectively.

## Method and limitations

The study involved four strands of data collection:

### Review of available literature on child abduction in the UK

Previous research papers on child abduction in the UK were reviewed, including reports from the international literature. These were identified through a search of scholarly databases using keywords related to abduction and kidnapping.

There were insufficient time and resources to conduct a full or systematic review of the literature. Exclusions were:

- studies published in a language other than English.
- the broader literature on the operation of the Hague Convention<sup>1</sup>.
- papers focusing on the abduction or kidnapping of children in the context of war and armed conflict.

Child abduction can form part of other offending behaviour (human trafficking, sexual exploitation, abuse, violence, homicide, robbery etc.) and reference to some relevant studies and papers has been made when applicable (see Chapter 2).

### Data collection from UK police forces

Data were requested from all UK police forces on offences related to child abduction (where the victim was under the age of 18) which occurred during the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. In subsequent sections this has been referred to as the 'police force sample'.

The offences related to child abduction<sup>2</sup> which were included in this analysis were:

1 The 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is an agreement between countries which aims to ensure the return of an abducted child to the country where he or she normally lives so that issues of residence (custody) and contact (access) can be decided by the courts of that country (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2011).

2 The crime category *child abduction* refers only to those offences recorded under the Child Abduction Act, 1984 (see box overleaf). The other crime categories of *kidnapping*, *abduction* and *child stealing/plagium* were included following consultation with police and stakeholders to identify other relevant offences. In the remainder of this report these specific offence categories have been italicised to distinguish them from the generic term 'child abduction'. Regrettably, the offence to take away a child in care without lawful authority (contrary to section 49 of the Children Act, 1989) was excluded from this study due to a mistake at the data collection stage.

- *child abduction*.
- *kidnapping* (where the victim was under the age of 18 at the time of the offence).
- *abduction* (where the victim was under the age of 18 at the time of the offence).
- *child stealing/plagium*.

More information on these offences is provided in the box below including the different countries of the UK in which they are applicable.

A short data collection tool was sent to police forces asking for the following data on all cases identified: victim characteristics (age, sex,

ethnicity); victim and offender relationship; motive; duration; outcome; injury; location; circumstances; how the incident ended; and how the incident was recorded by police.

Whilst the collection of data from UK police forces was only one component of the study, its limitations are substantial. It excludes:

- incidents which were not reported to the police.
- incidents reported to the police but not recorded as an offence.
- other incidents recorded as a different offence but involving an element of child abduction (e.g. a sexual offence).

### Criminal law related to child abduction

Incidents of child abduction can fall within the scope of several different pieces of legislation in the different jurisdictions of the United Kingdom (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). The main criminal legal provisions that cover incidents of child abduction are covered below.

#### Child Abduction Act, 1984

In the UK the Child Abduction Act 1984<sup>3</sup> establishes the abduction of children under the age of sixteen – by parents and other people – as a criminal offence.

#### Parental abduction

The Act makes it a criminal offence for anyone "connected with" a child under the age of 16 to "take or send" that child out of the UK without the appropriate consent." Connected with" includes parents, guardians or a person with a residence order or custody of the child. "Appropriate consent" is the consent of the mother; the father (if he has parental responsibility), the guardian or anyone with a residence order or parental responsibility, or the leave (permission) of the court. A person does not commit an offence if he or she has a residence order in respect of the child, and takes or sends the child out of the United Kingdom for less than one month.

In Scotland a crime of child abduction can only be recorded if there is a court order in place dealing with the custody of the child or if there is an order prohibiting the removal of the child from the UK.

3 The act applies in Scotland under the Child Abduction Act 1984 (Scotland) and in Northern Ireland under the Child Abduction (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Incidents in which children are sent out of the UK with the consent of the parent with whom they reside and are then kept abroad by the other parent ('wrongful retentions') are unlikely to fall within the criminal code as set out in the Child Abduction Act, 1984.

#### **Non-parental abduction**

The Act also makes it a criminal offence for "other persons" to "take or detain" a child under the age of sixteen without lawful authority or reasonable excuse. "Other persons" are people other than the child's parent, guardian or a person with parental responsibility for the child.

#### **Kidnapping** (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

The common law offence of kidnapping exists in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, and is summarised in the Home Office Counting Rules as '*an attack on, and infringement of, the personal liberty of an individual*' (Home Office, 2012a). The crime contains four elements: the taking away of one person by another; by force or fraud; without the consent of the person so taken or carried away; and without lawful excuse (Home Office, 2012a; The Law Commission, 2011). An offence of kidnapping can be recorded for both adult and child victims. The Law Commission began a consultation on kidnapping in 2011 to examine options for simplifying and improving the law, including replacing the common law with one or more offences set out in statute (The Law Commission, 2011).

#### **Abduction (Scotland)**

The common law offence of abduction exists only in Scotland and is "the carrying off or confining of a person forcibly and without lawful authority" (Scottish Law Commission, 1987). A crime of abduction can be recorded for both adults and children.

#### **Child stealing / Plagium (Scotland)**

A separate common law offence of child stealing ('plagium') exists in Scotland. Child stealing is regarded as an act of theft (as opposed to an act of assault, such as abduction) and may be committed against children below the age of puberty (under 12 years for girls and under 14 years for boys) (Scottish Law Commission, 1987). Plagium only applies to abductors without parental responsibility for the child.

#### **Take away a child in care without lawful authority**

The offence of taking away a child in care without lawful authority is contrary to section 49 of the Children Act, 1989. It is a summary offence and therefore is not included in offences reported to the Home Office or published in the annual Crime Statistics<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Whilst recorded by the police, most summary offences do not have to be reported to the Home Office and therefore do not form part of the recorded crime statistics.

Another significant limitation is that the offences of *child abduction* (under the Child Abduction Act, 1984) and *child stealing/plagium* (in Scotland) do not allow for offences against older child victims to be recorded (see box).

### **3. Data collection from the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS)**

Recognising the likely exclusion of serious offences involving child abduction from the UK police force sample, this study secured additional data from the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS, see page 47 for more details).

SCAS supplied information on a sample of serious offences (mainly rape) against children which began with the abduction of the victim during the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. The information provided was similar to that described above in the police force sample.

Staff at SCAS expressed concerns about the lack of a clear definition for when a serious crime also involves abduction, particularly when a victim may have initially gone willingly

with an offender. The absence of a definition does indeed limit our ability to quantify such incidents, a theme to which this report returns on several occasions. However, the SCAS cases do provide a useful illustration of the nature of abductions involving serious offences.

### **4. Interviews with representatives from key agencies**

Finally, this study took representations from individuals working in organisations focusing on or associated with the issue of child abduction. Invitations to participate in semi-structured interviews or to provide a written response were sent to 16 organisations from across the government, statutory, voluntary and academic sectors. Some declined to participate. Others offered written contributions usually focusing on a specific aspect of their organisation's work. In total, a response of some kind was received from 15 individuals working for 13 organisations with at least one response from each of the sectors above. The findings from this element of the study cannot claim any wider representativeness beyond that of the contributors.

## **Structure of the report**

The following chapter presents an overview of the available literature and data on child abduction. Chapter 3 sets out the findings from the analysis of the police force sample. Chapter 4 presents the SCAS data. Chapter 5 highlights the main findings from the interviews with representatives from key agencies. Chapter 6 offers a summary of the findings together with recommendations.

## 2. Existing data and literature

This chapter provides a review of previous studies on child abduction in the UK. Some of the international literature – particularly from the US – has also been included, to give a sense of the type of information available as much as the actual findings themselves. Each publication was examined to identify findings relevant to the four aims of this research study. The review did not include a deliberate assessment of the quality of literature on child abduction. However, the sections below do occasionally identify where the source of information is limited or weak.

The first section of this chapter examines existing sources of data on child abduction in the UK. The second section focuses on the nature of child abduction and draws on a greater breadth of published literature.

### Extent of child abduction

#### Crime statistics

Police recorded offences<sup>5</sup> of *child abduction* in England and Wales are published annually by the Office for National Statistics. In 2011/12 the police recorded 532 offences (Office for National Statistics (ONS) online, 2012). This compares to a peak of over 1,000 offences recorded in 2004/05 (see Figure 1). The law allows only for offences committed against victims aged under 16 years to be recorded as a *child abduction*.

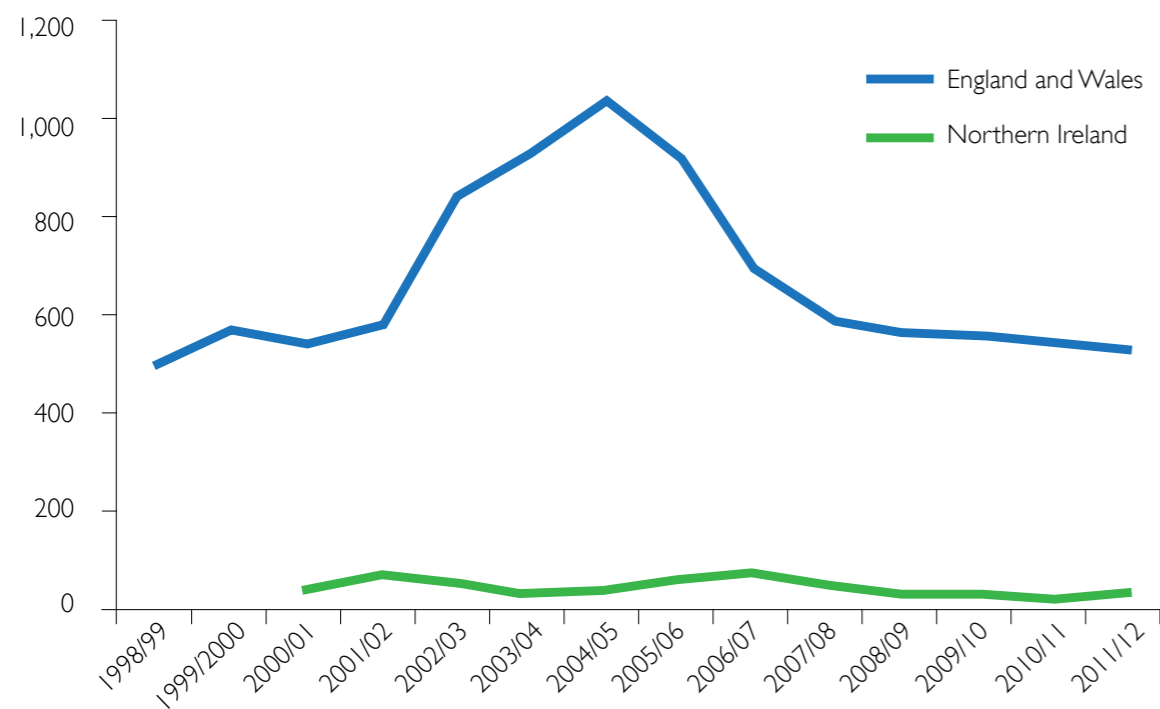
A similar trend exists in Northern Ireland with the number of *child abduction* offences recorded in 2011/12 standing at 38, an increase of 14 offences from the previous year, but still less than half the number recorded in 2006/07 (Police Service Northern Ireland, 2012).

It is not known why the number of police recorded *child abduction* offences has decreased over the last decade. Whether the decrease is the result of a real fall in the number of crimes committed, or rather is an artefact of crime recording practices, is a matter of hypothesis.

In Scotland, offences recorded under the Child Abduction Act, 1984 are combined with common law offences of *abduction* (which applies to victims of all ages, see pages 16). Therefore, it is not possible to distinguish child from adult victims of abduction in the data available from the Scottish Government. For all *abductions* the trend again is a recent decline (to 260 offences in 2010/11) compared to a peak of over 300 offences between the years 2004/05 and 2006/07.

<sup>5</sup> In each country information is published both on police recorded crime and on findings from population surveys (the British Crime Survey, the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey and the Northern Ireland Crime Survey). NB. The figure of 532 child abduction offences recorded in England and Wales in 2011/12 should not be confused with the 592 cases (involving 675 victims) used for the analysis in the next chapter. This latter were collected from 49 of the 52 UK police forces (not just England and Wales), and are a combination of offences of *child abduction*, *kidnapping* and *abduction* (see page 31).

Figure 1: Trends in police recorded child abduction offences (England and Wales and Northern Ireland)



### Definitions, perception and seriousness

A recurring theme of the international literature is the need to distinguish offences meeting the public perception of child abduction (predominantly serious offences involving a predatory offender, acting with a sexual motive, and in some cases resulting in the death of the victim) from other crimes that meet the broader legal definition of child abduction. Providing a clear account of the scale of different types of child abduction is necessary to inform public debate (Finkelhor *et al.*, 1992) and for the development of effective prevention and safety measures (Boudreaux *et al.*, 2000).

The US NISMART<sup>6</sup> surveys made a formal distinction between the broad category of 'nonfamily abduction' and more serious cases of 'stereotypical kidnappings'. The latter were defined in NISMART-2 as occurring when "a stranger or slight acquaintance perpetrates a nonfamily abduction in which the child is detained overnight, transported at least 50 miles, held for ransom, abducted with intent to keep the child permanently, or killed" (Sedlak *et al.*, 2002).

In the UK no such formal distinctions exist.

<sup>6</sup> The National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART) were undertaken in response to the mandate of the 1984 Missing Children's Assistance Act that requires the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to conduct periodic national incidence studies to determine the actual number of children reported missing and the number of missing children who are recovered for a given year. NISMART-1 provided estimates for 1988. NISMART-2 provided estimates for 1999. NISMART-3 is currently being undertaken.

The number of *child stealing/plagium* offences recorded in Scotland (for male victims under 14 years and female victims under 12 years, see page 16) is considerably lower. From 2001/2 to 2005/06 between 40 and 50 offences were recorded each year. Only three offences were recorded in 2010/11 (correspondence with Scottish Government, 25 January, 2012).

Over the last decade, between 1,500 and 3,200 offences of *kidnapping* have been recorded each year in England and Wales (ONS online, 2012), and between 50 and 100 in Northern Ireland (Police Service Northern Ireland, 2012). It is not possible to identify how many of these offences involved child victims. The latest annual report of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA, 2012) reported that the agency's Anti-Kidnap and Extortion Unit (AKEU) received 459 reports of kidnap in 2011/12, though again the proportion involving children was not disclosed.

Other sources of data indicate that police recorded crime statistics are a poor measure of the actual level of child abduction in the UK. Even abduction by a stranger is evidently not always reported to the police or recorded by them. Gallagher *et al.* (2008) carried out a survey of 2,420 school children in the North West of England in 1996/7 which showed that 41 children (1.7 per cent of the sample, or 1 in 59 children) reported a stranger tried to get them to go with them when they didn't want to at some point in their childhood.

In addition, the same authors found that four children (0.2 per cent of the sample, or 1 in 605 children) were made to go with a stranger against their wishes at some point in their childhood. Two were touched by a perpetrator and a third was touched by, and made to touch, the perpetrator and the perpetrator indecently exposed himself. When compared to police statistics, the findings of Gallagher *et al.* indicate that only a small fraction of attempted and completed child abductions must be brought to the attention of (or recorded by) the police.

### Data on international parental child abduction

Police recorded crime statistics also provide a particularly poor – and most probably skewed – reflection of parental child abduction. Plass *et al.* (1997) caution that studies which examine family abductions based only on cases reported to the police are likely to distort the nature (and seriousness<sup>7</sup>) of a 'typical' family abduction whilst under-estimating the number of such events. In the UK other data sources on parental child abduction are available.

In 2011, Reunite – the UK charity specialising in international parental child abduction – handled 512 new abduction cases involving 479 children abducted out of the UK, 189 children abducted into the UK and 16 children abducted between UK jurisdictions (Reunite, 2012).

In 2010, the International Child Abduction and Contact Unit (ICACU)<sup>8</sup> in the office of the

<sup>7</sup> Plass *et al.* (1995) highlight a number of characteristics of family child abductions in the United States (US) that significantly increase the likelihood of the incident being reported to the police, including threats to prevent all contact with the child in the future and no knowledge of the location of the child. Even so, other research has suggested that even relatively minor episodes of family abduction can have harmful effects on the children concerned (Agopian, 1984; Plass *et al.*, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> ICACU is the Central Authority in England and Wales for the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The Central Authority in Scotland is based within the Scottish Government Justice Department, and the equivalent function is provided by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service in Northern Ireland. No data on the casework of these agencies was available.

Official Solicitor and Public Trustee (part of the Ministry of Justice) handled 150 new cases involving a child being taken out of the UK to a Hague Convention country. In addition, ICACU processed 226 new applications for the return of a child being brought into the UK (Office of the Official Solicitor and Public Trustee, 2011). Lowe (2011) documents a substantial increase in the number of incoming cases to ICACU from 2003 to 2008 with a clear trend of more applications being received from EU states.

The Child Abduction Unit in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office deals with cases of international parental child abduction to, and from, non-Hague countries. In 2010/11 the Child Abduction Unit handled 161 cases of child abduction to a non-Hague country (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2011b).

Both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Reunite have reported large increases in the incidence of international parental child abduction. The number of cases dealt with by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had risen by 88 per cent in under a decade by 2012 (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2012). Reunite report a rise of 47 per cent in child abduction cases between 2001 and 2011 (*ibid.*).

#### Court data

Whilst many cases of parental child abduction are unlikely to reach court, some data is available on cases that are dealt with by the civil courts.

The Ministry of Justice publishes an annual report including the number of warrants of arrest made by the High Court in relation to child abduction. In 2010, 493 warrants of arrest were made, including Collection Orders (for the return of a child), Location Orders (for the whereabouts of a child to be discovered)

and Passport Orders (for the seizure of passports of other travel documents). In addition the High Court issued 375 warrants relating to Port Alerts (to prevent a child being wrongfully removed from the UK).

The Office of the Head of International Family Justice for England and Wales functions as a centre of expertise and a help desk for general enquiries in the field of international family law for the judiciary and practitioners. In 2011 the office dealt with 180 new cases of child abduction concerning 51 jurisdictions across the world (Office of the Head of International Family Justice for England and Wales, 2012).

The Scottish Government publishes data on the number of petitions made to the Court of Session relating to child abduction. In 2010/11, six petitions were made (The Scottish Government, 2011a).

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service publishes *Judicial Statistics* which include data on child abduction incidents. Four 'child abduction originating summonses' were laid before the High Court in 2010. 11 'final orders' for the recovery of an abducted child were made under The Children (Northern Ireland) Order, 1995 (Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service, 2010).

#### Extent of child abduction

It is impossible to provide a single reliable estimate for the total number of children abducted over a given time period in the UK. Data on specific types of child abduction are held by different police, government, legal, and voluntary agencies. Not all of it is published or made routinely available. In nearly all cases, the available statistics provide only a partial account of the true number of child abductions occurring.

## Nature of child abduction

This section summarises the literature on the nature of child abduction. Much of the literature, particularly from the US, makes a distinction between family and non-family abduction and that same dichotomy is used below. Even within these two groups, there is still considerable variation in the circumstances in which abductions are committed.

#### Abduction by a parent or family member

Newiss and Fairbrother (2004) found that 23 per cent of *child abductions* recorded by police in England and Wales in 2002/03 were perpetrated by a parent of the victim. An additional four per cent of victims were abducted by another family member.

Victims of parental child abduction had an average age of six years compared to 10 years for victims of abductions by strangers and 12 years for victims of abduction by a person known but not related to the victim (*ibid.*). Roughly equal numbers were male and female. A relatively high proportion of victims (just under half in Newiss and Fairbrother's study) were from non-white ethnic groups. Similar findings have been reported in studies in the US (Boudreaux *et al.*, 2000; Daniels and Brennan, 2009) and in Canada (Kiedrowski *et al.*, 1994; Dalley, 2009).

Hegar and Greif (1994) reported that the rate of international parental child abduction was dramatically higher for parents of interracial, ethnic and cross-cultural marriages than for other marriages in the US. The authors summarise a range of literature which indicates that relationships between partners from different national or ethnic backgrounds may be particularly vulnerable to stresses that might lead to the international abduction of a child.

There is little doubt that familial child abduction principally arises from a breakdown

in the relationship between the parents of a child (Greif and Hegar, 1993; Plass, 1998; Hammer *et al.*, 2002). NISMART-2 findings indicate that only 4 per cent of family abducted children were living with both parents at the time of abduction (Hammer *et al.*, 2002). Divorce, separation, disputes over custody and broader cultural differences to bringing up children are all common factors in familial child abductions (Plass *et al.*, 1997; Boudreaux *et al.*, 2000; Lowenstein, 2002). Many abductions occur before a custody order has been made (Dalley, 2009; Redoglia, 2002). In some instances, abductions may occur to remove a child from an abusing or violent parent (Weiner 2000; Lowenstein, 2002; Hoff, 2007; Mitchell-Miller *et al.*, 2008).

Lowe (2011) reports that the vast majority of parental abductors (70 per cent globally) are mothers. In the UK, 40 per cent of abductors are the primary carer, 30 per cent the joint primary carer and 30 per cent the non-primary carer of the abducted child(ren) (Lowe, 2008). Primary or joint primary carer mothers account for two-thirds of all abductors (*ibid.*) The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2011b) report that many abductions occur during school holidays when a child is not returned following a visit to the parent's home country (so-called 'wrongful retentions').

Reunite has commissioned a number of research studies throughout the last decade, including projects on the outcomes for

children returned following an abduction (Reunite Research Unit, 2003); the effects of international child abduction on the abducting and left-behind parents as well as the children involved (Freeman, 2006); and most recently the effectiveness of mediation in international parental child abduction cases (Buck, 2012).

### Non-family abduction

Abductions by non-family perpetrators are diverse in nature. Boudreaux *et al.* (2000) cite sexual gratification, financial gain, retribution, the desire to possess a child and the desire to kill as motivations for non-family abductions in the US.

Erikson and Friendship (2002) found that 82 per cent of 149 offenders convicted of child abduction offences in England and Wales between 1993 and 1995, were non-family abductors. 60 per cent of all child abductions were sexually motivated.

Finkelhor *et al.* (2002), using findings from NISMART-2, reported that two-thirds of victims of non-family abductions in the US were girls, reflecting the frequency of sexual assault as the motive. 80 per cent of victims were over 12 years old, and nearly 60 per cent were between 15 and 17 years old. The majority of victims (53%) were abducted by someone known to the child, including friends or long-term acquaintances, neighbours, persons of authority and caretakers or babysitters. The perpetrator was a stranger in just over one-third of cases.

### Abduction by a stranger

Newiss and Fairbrother (2004) found that victims of attempted and completed abductions by a stranger in England and Wales had a mean age of 10 years. In the US, Finkelhor *et al.* (2002) found that 58 per cent of victims of 'stereotypical kidnapping' (the

more serious stranger-perpetrated offences, see page 20) were aged 12 years or more (a similar finding was reported in Finkelhor and Ormrod's (2000) analysis of juvenile kidnappings reported to the police).

The survey carried out by Gallagher *et al.* (2008) of school children in North-West England found no significant difference between the number of boys and girls abducted by a stranger. However, other studies indicate that girls are more likely to be abducted by a stranger than boys (Newiss and Fairbrother, 2004; Finkelhor *et al.*, 2002; Finkelhor and Ormrod, 2000; Mitchell-Miller *et al.*, 2008).

Gallagher *et al.* (2008) found a lower rate of abduction for children from minority ethnic groups. Newiss and Fairbrother (2004) found that over 90 per cent of victims of attempted abduction were white, but one-quarter of the children who were actually abducted came from minority ethnic groups.

Gallagher *et al.* (2008) reported that nearly all victims of attempted or actual abduction were approached by the offender when outdoors with many being on the street, in a park, or in a shop. Nearly three-quarters were with other children or adults at the time of the offence. The motive for stranger-perpetrated offences, particularly attempted abductions, is often difficult to determine with certainty. However, a large proportion are suspected to be sexually motivated (*ibid.*; Newiss and Fairbrother, 2004; Boudreaux *et al.*, 1999).

### Child abduction and homicide

Only a small proportion of all child abductions result in homicide. Findings from NISMART-2 suggest that there were 115 stereotypical kidnappings (see page 20) reported to police in 1997 in the US (this compares to over

58,000 victims of nonfamily abductions). 40 per cent of the victims of stereotypical kidnapping were killed (Finkelhor *et al.*, 2002).

Hanfland *et al.* (1997) reported that teenage girls (aged 13 – 17) were most at risk of murder following abduction, followed by younger girls aged between 1 and 12 years, then younger boys and teenage boys. However, Asdigian *et al.* (1995) reported that victims of stereotypical kidnapping in which the victim was killed were more likely to be preteen children. The findings from several US studies would suggest that child abduction-homicide victims are disproportionately likely to be from minority ethnic groups (Hotelling and Finkelhor, 1990; Brown *et al.*, 2006).

Sexual gratification appears to be the most common motive behind child abduction-homicide offences in the US (Hanfland *et al.*, 1997). Brown *et al.* (2006) found that three-quarters of victims of child abduction-homicide were killed within three hours of being abducted.

Unfortunately there is no comparable data on child abduction-homicide in the UK.

In England and Wales information on homicide recorded by police forces is published each year<sup>9</sup>. In 2010/11 there were 56 victims of homicide under the age of 16 years in England and Wales. Just over three-quarters of victims were acquainted with the suspect, with most (64%) being killed by a parent or step-parent. In six cases (11% of under-16 killings) the victim was known to have been killed by a stranger. In seven cases (13%) no suspect had been identified

(Osborne, 2012). However, no information is available on the number of children killed following an abduction.

Numerous studies have examined media reporting of homicides both in the UK and overseas. For example, Peelo *et al.* (2004) studied the reporting of over 2,500 homicides in England and Wales in three national newspapers over a five year period and found that sexually motivated homicides and those involving young children attracted a disproportionate amount of media coverage compared to their numbers in the overall homicide population. Four of 13 'mega homicides' (homicides which attracted the highest levels of media coverage – identified from reports in *The Times* over a 23 year period) involved the abduction and murder of child victims (Soothill *et al.*, 2004).

The impact of media reporting on rare but tragic cases of child abduction and murder has led to a growing debate about fear and the perception of risk in shaping modern parenting and childhood (for example, Furedi, 2001; Pain, 2006; Gill, 2007; Slovic, 2000). A number of studies propose that the imbalance between actual risk and perceived risk can have serious consequences for the social, psychological and physical development of children and the wider community (Stokes, 2009). Some commentators have seen evidence of child abduction forming part of a 'moral panic', creating increasingly 'paranoid parents' (Furedi, 2001). More recent accounts have criticised this generalisation and have advocated a child-centred understanding of risk within the local geographical and social environment (Pain, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Figures on the number of homicides are published annually by the Scottish Government and by the Police Service Northern Ireland, but no further information to explain the age of victims or relationship between victims and offenders is routinely made available.

These studies have important policy implications for the development of education programmes (Boudreaux *et al.*, 2000) and other practical interventions, for example, safe walking routes (*ibid.*; Deakin, 2006).

### Infant abduction

This study found no research on non-family infant abductions (abductions of children under one year old) in the UK. However, findings are available from US research. Burgess *et al.* (2008) examined 247 non-family infant abductions reported to the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) from 1983 to 2006. Nearly half the victims were abducted from hospitals and other healthcare settings and, whilst 95 per cent were returned, in 12 cases the victim was still missing at the time of writing. Nearly one in five cases involved the use of violence and/or a weapon, including 22 cases in which the mother was killed and two cases in which both parents were killed.

### Kidnap for ransom

This study found no research specifically on the kidnap of children for ransom in the UK. In the US, Finkelhor *et al.*, (2002), reporting NISMART-2 findings, found that 4 per cent of all (58,200) non-family abducted children and 5 per cent of all (115) victims of stereotypical kidnapping were held for ransom.

### Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is characterised by an unequal relationship between the victim(s) and offender(s) in which the physical, economical

and emotional vulnerability of the former are used – often along with violence, coercion and intimidation – by the latter for a range of sexual activities (DCSF, 2009; Scott and Skidmore, 2006). Exploitation can occur in the context of inappropriate relationships (often between a sole offender who is significantly older than the victim); grooming and coercion from ‘boyfriends’ or peers (including in gangs); and organised networks of offenders in which victims can be transported – in some cases forcibly – long distances to be abused (Barnardo’s, 2011; Jago *et al.*, 2011; Paskell, 2013).

Not all victims of exploitation will either perceive themselves, or be perceived by others, to have been abducted. However, the overlap between abduction and exploitation is becoming evident.

Newiss and Fairbrother’s (2004) study of police recorded offences of child abduction in England and Wales in 2002/03 found that 77 cases (10 per cent of all cases) involved what was loosely defined as grooming or an exploitative relationship. Pearce’s (2002) study of 55 young women (aged 13 to 18) at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation and/or prostitution<sup>10</sup>, found that 16 had been abducted, 15 by men they referred to as ‘boyfriends’ at the time. CEOP’s thematic assessment of child sexual exploitation (CEOP, 2011b) found that some perpetrators of grooming<sup>11</sup> had previous convictions for child abduction amongst other offences. Swann and Balding (2001) reported that some victims of sexual exploitation may be

<sup>10</sup> This is the language used in Pearce’s (2002) report.

<sup>11</sup> CEOP (2011b) defined ‘localised grooming’ as “a form of sexual exploitation ... where children have been groomed and sexually exploited by an offender, having initially met in a location outside their home, usually in a public place (such as a park, cinema, on the street or at a friend’s house). Offenders often act in concert, establishing a relationship with a child or children before sexually exploiting them. Some victims of ‘street grooming’ may believe that the offender is in fact an older ‘boyfriend’, introducing peers to the offender group who may also be sexually exploited. Abuse may occur at a number of locations within a local area and on several occasions.” (p5).

kidnapped to prevent them giving evidence at court.

Newiss and Fairbrother (2004) found that four offences of child abduction involved contact initiated over the internet. More recent studies indicate the use of mobile and internet technology, including social networking sites, is an increasingly common method of grooming people for sexual exploitation (Jago *et al.*, 2011; Paskell, 2013).

The serving of Child Abduction Warning Notices<sup>12</sup> is now an established police tactic for the disruption of grooming and exploitative offending behaviour (CEOP, 2011b; Jago *et al.*, 2011). Over a six month period in 2010/11, Lancashire Constabulary identified 575 victims and 254 perpetrators of child sexual exploitation resulting in the issue of 90 Child Abduction Warning Notices, 18 other orders, and 116 arrests (CEOP, 2011b). The Office of the Children’s Commissioner (2012) has asked the Government to consider extending the use of Child Abduction Warning Notices to children up to the age of 18 (rather than up to the age of 16 as defined under the Child Abduction Act, 1984) and to allow them to be served without parental consent where necessary.

The sexual exploitation of young people, particularly girls, through involvement in gangs is also becoming increasingly well documented. Firmin (2010), using interviews with girls and women directly affected

by gangs, describes how girls may fulfil, or be coerced into, a variety of sexual roles within (and between) gangs in exchange for protection, safety, status and drugs. In other cases girls recounted situations in which they were forcibly held and expected to engage in sex with one or more gang member. In some cases girls were kidnapped and/or raped as a punishment or warning (Firmin, 2010; Firmin 2011). Most recently, the interim report of the Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (Berelowitz *et al.*, 2012) reports evidence of children being abducted for periods of time and kept with limited access to food, water and washing facilities.

The risk to male gang members of serious violence, including abduction, arising from disputes, retaliation and territorial matters is also high (for an overview see DCSF and Home Office, 2010).

### Trafficking

The definition of human trafficking under the Palermo Protocol<sup>13</sup> makes explicit reference to the use of abduction as a method of trafficking, though more commonly children are manipulated and coerced into exploitation (Department for Education and Home Office, 2011). Varying degrees of evidence of forced, coerced or manipulated movement of young people has been reported in trafficking for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, labour and criminal activity (Beddoe, 2007; Dowling *et al.*, 2007; CEOP, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> For more information on Child Abduction Warning Notices, see footnote 24, page 38

<sup>13</sup> Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol To Prevent, Suppress And Punish Trafficking In Persons, Especially Women And Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime to the UN Convention (2000) (ratified by the UK on 6 February 2006) defines trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat of or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”

### 3. A typology based on police data

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of police recorded crime in the UK. All UK police forces were invited to submit details on offences in the following categories which were recorded during the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012:

- *child abduction*.
- *kidnapping* (where the victim was under the age of 18 at the time of the offence).
- *abduction* (where the victim was under the age of 18 at the time of the offence), and
- *child stealing/plagium*<sup>14</sup>.

These specific offences have been grouped together and referred to as 'child abduction'<sup>15</sup> except where stated.

A total of 675 crimes (victims) were used for the analysis<sup>16</sup>. Sometimes more than one child was abducted in a single case. As a result, the 675 victims were abducted in a total of 592 cases. The findings below switch between analysis based on victims and on cases, depending on what is most appropriate<sup>17</sup>.

The first section gives an overview of the cases and victims based on the relationship

between the victim and the offender. The second section presents a number of abduction types, some of which include cases from different relationship categories. A number of case studies are provided. The overlap between cases according to their relationship category and their inclusion in an abduction type is represented visually in Figure 6 on pages 36-37.

<sup>14</sup> The offences of *abduction* and *child stealing/plagium* exist only in Scotland. Scottish police forces disclosed no offences of *child stealing/plagium* during the 2011/12 period.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 1 provides the rationale behind grouping these crime types together to form a single category of 'child abduction'. Some of the following sections report the specific offences recorded by police for different child abduction types.

<sup>16</sup> 49 of the 52 police forces in the UK submitted data (including nil returns) for this study. In addition to the 675 offences used in the analysis, a further 122 incidents were excluded because they did not result in the recording of one of the crimes specified in the criteria. For example, in some cases police forces sent information on a missing person enquiry or for other incidents which did not go on to be recorded as one of the specific offences required.

<sup>17</sup> For example, analysis of victim characteristics (e.g. their age, sex and ethnicity and any injury sustained) is based on counts of victims. However, analysis of – for example – the motive, circumstances and duration of incidents is based on cases, to avoid double counting where there is more than one victim per case.

## Overview: relationship between victim(s) and offender(s)

Table I shows the number and proportion of victims and cases according to the following relationship categories:

- **Parent:** offender was the child's natural, adopted, step, or foster parent.
- **Other family member:** offender was a relative of the child, including uncle, aunt, grandparent etc.
- **Other known:** offender was a friend, boy/girlfriend, mother's friend or ex-partner, acquaintance, colleague, associate, neighbour, or was simply known by sight.
- **Stranger:** offender was not known or recognised.

Abductions by a stranger accounted for the single largest category of all abductions (42 per cent of all cases). However, in 186 cases, the offender failed to actually abduct the victim(s) and the case was an attempted abduction<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, three-quarters of stranger abductions were actually attempted abductions.

In just over a third of cases, the victim(s) knew the offender(s) whilst not being related to them ('other known'). 17 per cent of cases involved a parent or parents abducting their child(ren), and another 2 per cent of cases involved other family members abducting a child.

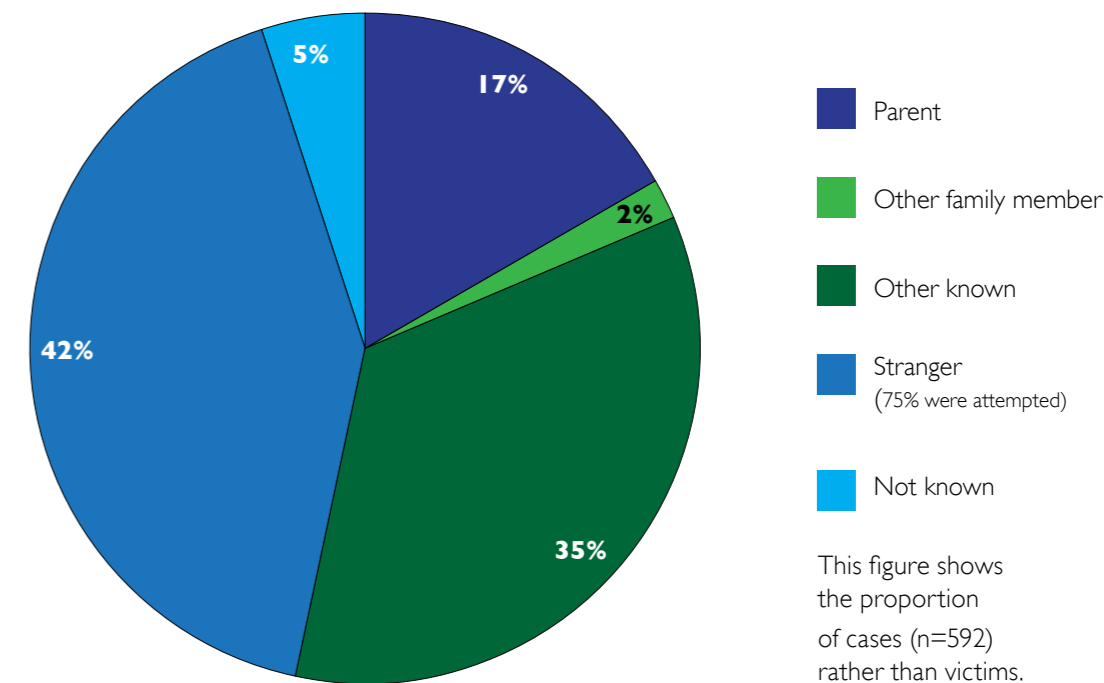
Table I: Relationship between victim(s) and offender(s)

Relationship	Victims		Cases	
	n=	%	n=	%
Stranger	273	40	247	42
Other known	228	34	206	35
Parent	127	19	98	17
Other family member	13	2	12	2
Not known	34	5	29	5
All	675	100	592	100

Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>18</sup> Whilst the majority of abductions attempted by strangers are described in more detail in the section 'Other attempted abductions by strangers', some offences were of the types '(Attempted) abduction with parent present', '(Attempted) abduction by deception' and 'Revenge or dispute'.

Figure 2: Child abduction by relationship between victim(s) and offender(s)



### Crime type

Table A1 in the Appendix shows the specific offence recorded and the relationship between the victim and the offender. Nearly three-quarters were *child abduction* offences. Nearly one-quarter were recorded as *kidnappings*, with 15 crimes (2 per cent) recorded as *abduction* offences (in Scotland).

All but seven (94 per cent) abductions by a parent were recorded as a *child abduction* offence. Just over three-quarters of abductions committed by an offender known (but not related) to the victim were recorded as a *child abduction*. However, nearly 30 per cent of offences perpetrated by a stranger were recorded as *kidnapping* offences.

### Age of victims

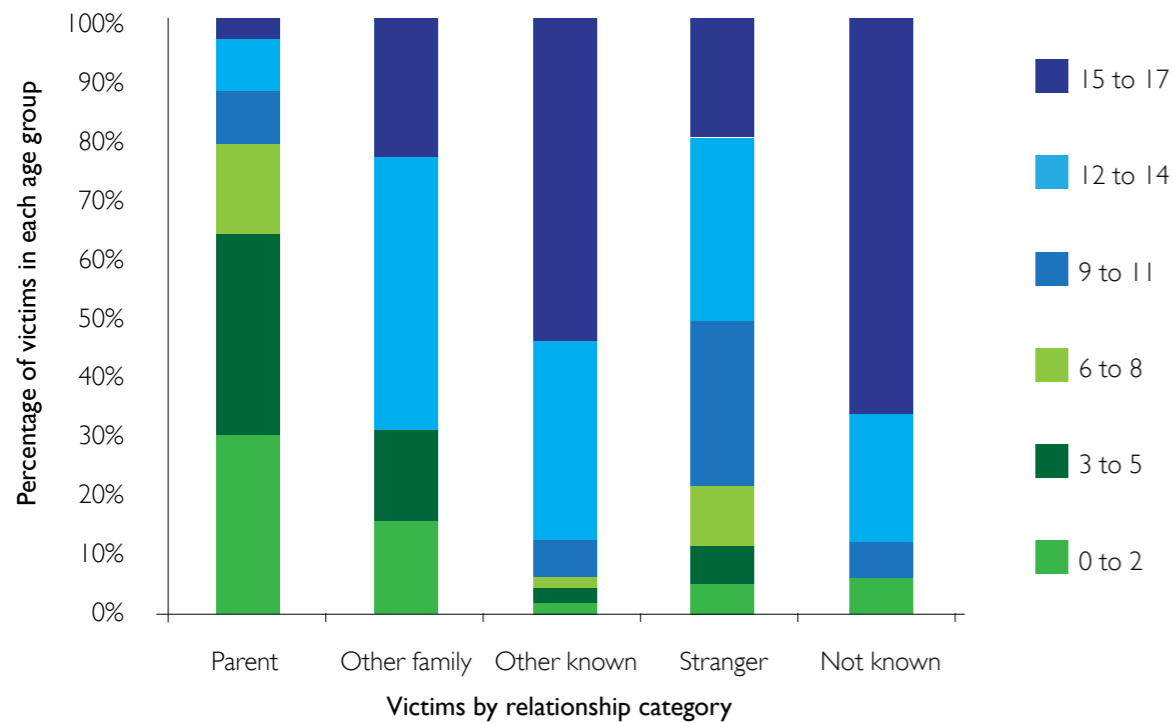
The victims ranged in age from 0 to 17 years with the exception of one 18 year-old, who was included because she was subject to an attempted abduction along with another younger victim.

Figure 3 (page 32), shows the age profile of victims by each relationship category. Table A2 in the Appendix shows the mean (with the standard deviation<sup>19</sup>), median and mode age of victims in each of the relationship categories.

Across all relationship categories the mean age of victims was 11 years old (sd=5). Victims of parental abduction tended to be younger with a mean age of just five years (sd=4). Victims of abductions by other family

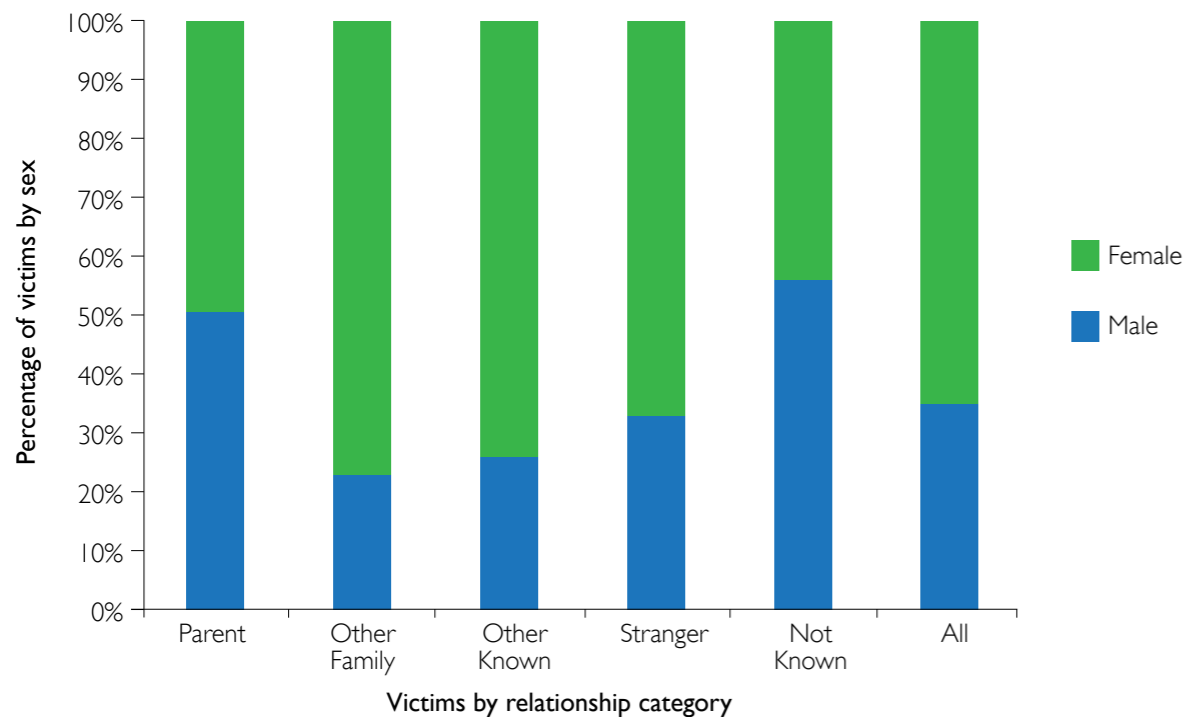
<sup>19</sup> The standard deviation (abbreviated to 'sd' in tables) has been shown in some of the following sections. Standard deviation is a useful way to demonstrate the variation of all values from the mean average. A low standard deviation means that most of the values are grouped closely around the mean average. A high standard deviation means that the values are spread over a large range from the mean average.

Figure 3: Age of victims



This chart excludes five victims where the age of the victim was unknown (two abducted by a parent, two abducted by a stranger; and one in which the relationship between the victim and the offender was unknown). In addition, one victim aged 18 years old (who was abducted by a stranger) is excluded.

Figure 4: Sex of victims



This chart excludes 12 victims where the sex of the victim was not known.

members and strangers had a mean age of 11 years (sd of six and four years respectively). Victims of known but not related offenders had a higher average age of 14 years (sd=3).

**Sex of victims**

Figure 4 shows the proportion of males and females in each relationship category, excluding those cases where the sex of the victim was not known or recorded (the same numerical data is presented in Table A3 in the Appendix).

Across all relationship categories, one-third of victims were male and two-thirds female. The same proportion was true of abductions by a stranger. Victims of parental abduction were more evenly divided with 49 per cent

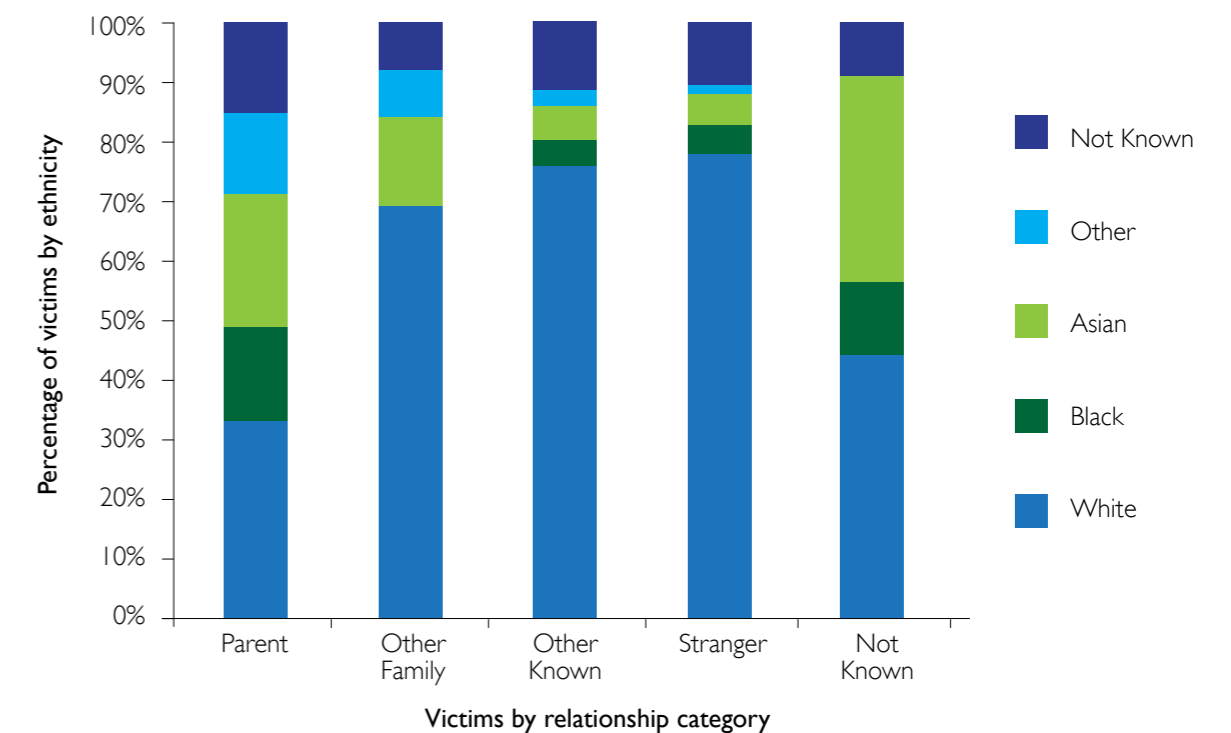
females, 47 per cent males and 4 per cent not known. In the other family member and other known categories three quarters of victims were females.

**Ethnicity of victims**

Figure 5, shows the proportion of children in each relationship category according to the ethnicity code recorded by police (the same numerical data is presented in Table A4 in the Appendix).

Across all relationship categories two-thirds of victims were described as white. Seven per cent were black, 11 per cent Asian, four per cent were of other ethnicity, and 11 per cent not known. Victims of parental abduction were markedly different, with

Figure 5: Ethnicity of victims



just one-third described as white. Over three-quarters of the victims of offenders known but not related to them, or of strangers, were classified as white<sup>20</sup>.

The following sections describe cases which could be grouped into distinct types of abduction incidents.

## Distinct child abduction types

80 per cent of cases could be categorised into an abduction type. The number of cases (and victims) in each type is summarised in Table 2, and further information on the number of cases by both abduction type and the relationship category is available in Table A5 of the Appendix. In 20 per cent of cases insufficient information was available to allocate the cases an abduction type<sup>21</sup>.

### International parental child abduction

Of the 98 cases of parental child abduction (involving 127 victims), 66 cases (involving 89 children) resulted in the children being taken abroad<sup>22</sup>.

72 per cent of these children were aged between 0 and 6 years old. The mean age was 5 (sd=4, see Table A2 in the Appendix). 40 boys and 44 girls were abducted abroad by a parent (in five cases the sex of the victim was not known).

The ethnicity of children abducted abroad by a parent was very different from other types of abduction. Just over one-third of victims (excluding 12 children whose ethnicity was not recorded) were white (n=27). Children from non-white ethnic backgrounds

accounted for two-thirds of victims whose ethnicity was recorded, with roughly equal numbers from black (n=18), Asian (n=17) and other (n=15) backgrounds.

Children were abducted overseas by their mother in 31 cases and by their father in 18 cases. In 17 cases (involving 20 children) it was not clear whether the mother or father had abducted the children from the information provided.

In 28 cases (72 per cent of abductions where the duration of the incident was known) the victim(s) was still missing and had not been returned to the UK at the time of data collection. In another 27 cases it was not clear how long the incident had lasted or whether the child(ren) had been returned.

20 Making comparisons between these findings and the broader ethnic profile of the UK is difficult because data on the latter a) employ different codes (the 16+1 classification) and b) are not available for the whole of the UK by age. However, in very general terms, it appears that victims are disproportionately likely to come from minority ethnic groups. Data from ONS (online) indicates that 84 per cent of 0 to 19 year-olds in England and Wales were from a white ethnic group (using mid-2009 population estimates) compared to 76 per cent of the full sample of child abduction victims (when victims whose ethnicity is not known are excluded). Eight per cent of child abduction victims were from a black ethnic group compared to 3 per cent in the England and Wales population, and 12 per cent of victims were Asian compared to 7 per cent of the national population.

21 NB: Only a limited amount of information was collected from police forces, and therefore not all cases could be allocated an abduction type. Also, in some of the sections information on victims, offenders or offences was not available in all cases. This does not mean to say that individual police forces don't have this information. A more likely explanation is that, for whatever reason, they did not include it in their data return for this research study.

22 This excludes two cases in which two children (in each case) were abducted by both parents and taken abroad in breach of an interim care order. These cases have been included in the section on 'parental abductions from care'.

Table 2: Summary of distinct abduction types

Abduction type	Victims	Cases
Other attempted abductions by strangers	181	164
Exploitative relationships	144	135
International parental child abduction	89	66
Revenge or dispute	42	37
(Attempted) abduction with parent present	22	22
Completed abductions by strangers (sexual motive)	15	12
Parental abduction from care	14	11
Domestic disputes	11	10
Financial gain	10	9
Familial abuse	5	5
(Attempted) abduction by deception (stranger)	4	4
Concern for welfare	2	2

Whilst information on the circumstances of the abductions was not always available, in at least three cases the child(ren) had been 'retained' abroad. In each case the children were taken by their father after their mother had consented for them to go abroad. In a separate case a mother took her children back to her country of origin after alleging domestic violence by her husband<sup>23</sup>.

All but one of the international parental child abduction cases was recorded as a *child abduction* offence. The remaining case was recorded as a *kidnapping* offence (see Table A1 in the Appendix).

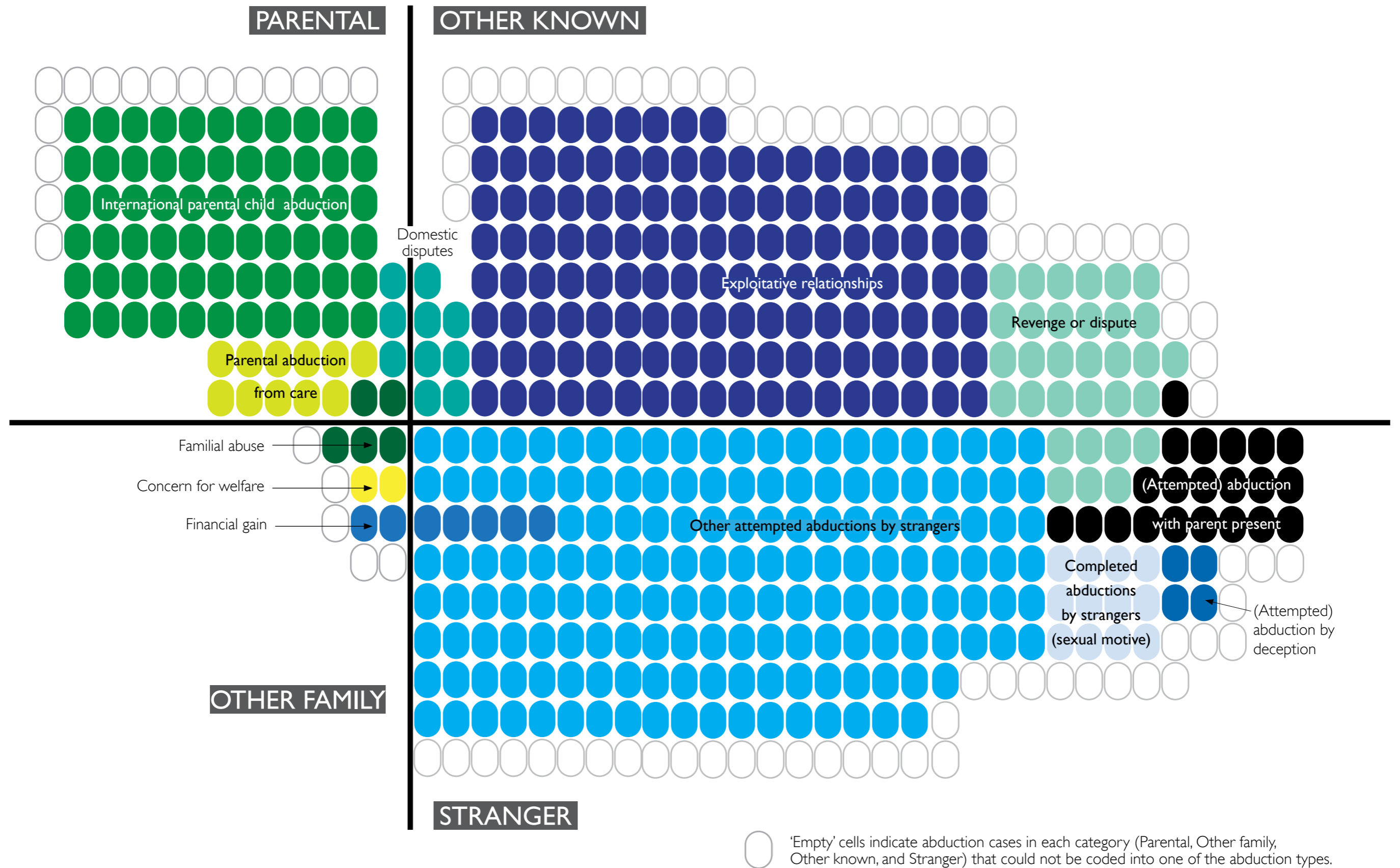
### Parental abduction from care

In 11 cases involving 14 children a parent or parents removed their child(ren) in breach of a care order. These children ranged in age from 1 to 14 years old; six were boys and eight were girls; five were white, four Asian, and the ethnicity of five children was not recorded.

Mothers abducted their children in four cases, fathers in two cases, and in five cases children were abducted by both parents. Some children were taken from their care home and others were removed from the care of social workers or other professionals

23 Other cases may also have involved domestic violence and other motivating factors. However, this study did not collect sufficiently detailed information on offences to document the prevalence of these factors.

Figure 6: Types of child abduction



during a contact visit. Two cases arose from older children running away from their care home to visit a parent who, in both cases, had previously been served with a Child Abduction Warning Notice<sup>24</sup>. In two cases children were taken abroad.

Police recorded 11 offences of child abduction and three offences of kidnapping in these cases (Table A1, Appendix).

### Domestic disputes

In 10 cases, involving 11 children, the victim(s) was taken from their mother, or held against their will, as a result of a 'domestic'<sup>25</sup> dispute. In three cases the offender was the children's father. The remaining offences were committed by the mother's ex-partner (n=6) or current partner (n=1).

The victims were aged between 0 and 9 years-old. Five were boys and six were girls. Seven children were white, one black, one of other ethnicity, and for two victims the ethnicity was not known.

Whilst none of the victims were believed to be physically injured, these incidents were often of a serious nature. In six cases the mother of the child was assaulted. These incidents involved the mother being punched, pushed, having her hair pulled,

having things thrown at her, being sexually assaulted and – in one case – an attempt to strangle her. In two cases, the offender was armed; one with a knife and one with a knife and a hammer. Several cases involved the offender making threats to kill, and all involved a verbal altercation.

Five offences of *child abduction*, four offences of *kidnapping*, and two offences of *abduction* (Scotland) were recorded by police for the abductions arising from a domestic dispute.

#### Case study: domestic dispute

In breach of his bail conditions a man attended the address of his ex-partner, assaulted her and took her six-year-old child who was playing outside. Police later found the child with a relative of the offender and returned him to his mother.

### Familial abuse

In five cases an offence of *child abduction* was recorded as a result of the victim being abused by a family member. All five victims were white, teenage girls.

Two offences were confirmed to be of a sexual nature. In one case a 14-year-old was described as having a 'sexual relationship'<sup>26</sup> with her

24 A Child Abduction Warning Notice can be used by police to disrupt the activities of an individual who repeatedly associates with a young person (under the age of 16 if living at home, or under the age of 18 if living in the care of a local authority). In many cases the children involved will have repeatedly gone missing from home or care, and may have formed relationships which leave them vulnerable to exploitation. The Child Abduction Warning Notice identifies the child/young person and confirms to the suspect that s/he has no permission to associate with or to contact or communicate with the child. If the suspect continues to do so, they may be arrested and prosecuted for an offence under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984 or Section 49 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1989, or for any other criminal offence committed in relation to that child (CEOP, 2011c). Other cases in which a Child Abduction Warning Notice was issued are within the 'Exploitative relationship' and 'Abusive family relationship' types. Other cases may also have involved domestic violence and other motivating factors. However, this study did not collect sufficiently detailed information on offences to document the prevalence of these factors.

25 This was the terminology most frequently used in the police description of these cases.

26 This phrase – which was contained within the brief police description of the offence – appears to do little justice to the abusive nature of the relationship.

uncle who had previously been given a Child Abduction Warning Notice. In the second case a 15-year-old girl was found at her step father's address despite him too being issued with a Child Abduction Warning Notice.

Three other victims were all reported missing to police (one from a care home) and were found in the company of their father, step-grandfather and uncle. In one case relatives reported to police that they suspected the victim's father was grooming his daughter. The other two offenders had both been issued with a Child Abduction Warning Notice to prevent contact with the victims.

### Concern for welfare

In two cases children were abducted by relatives because of an apparent concern for their welfare. In one case a baby boy was taken from his mother by his grandparents following an argument and physical confrontation, but he was returned shortly afterwards. In a second case, an aunt failed to return a baby to her parents at an arranged time, apparently because of concern that the parents were not looking after the child properly.

### Exploitative relationships

In 135 cases, involving 144 children, the offender(s) had forged some kind of exploitative relationship with the victim(s) prior to the abduction taking place.

As a result, in many cases the victim(s) appeared to have gone willingly with the offender(s)<sup>27</sup>.

27 In cases arising from exploitative relationships, the relationship between the victim(s) and the offender(s) was 'other known'. Some offences which involved a relative abducting a child also contained information about grooming. These have been included in the 'Familial abuse' type. Cases where a victim(s) was groomed online and then abducted at the first meeting with the offender were included in the 'stranger' category.

28 The data collection tool sent to police forces defined grooming as "both online and localised (on-street) grooming where the offender has befriended and conditioned the child to exert influence over them and prepare them for a different action such as sexual exploitation, criminality or abduction".

The victims ranged in age from 9- to 17-years-old, with a mean age of 14 years (sd=1). Three-quarters of the victims were aged either 14 or 15 years. Nearly nine out of 10 were female (n=127). Over 90 per cent were white (n=121), five victims were black, one Asian, three were of other ethnicity, and for the remainder (n=14) their ethnicity was not known.

The following list describes the incidence of several factors present within the abductions arising from exploitative relationships. These incidence figures are likely to be considerable underestimates as they are based only on the cases where information was available to confirm the presence of each factor:

- At least 41 victims (in 38 cases) had run away or been reported missing at the time of the abduction.
- At least 17 victims (in 17 cases) were known to have been in care at the time of the offence.
- In 30 cases (involving 35 victims) the police indicated that the offence involved grooming<sup>28</sup>.
- The relationship between the victim and offender had started online in at least two cases.
- In at least 79 cases (involving 80 victims) the offender had been issued with a Child Abduction Warning Notice prior to the offence.

- In 26 cases (involving 26 victims) the motive for the offence was described as sexual. In one case an offender was charged with several rape offences in addition to child abduction. This excludes cases where the victim and offender were described as being in a 'relationship' or the offender was described as the victim's boyfriend.
- In several cases the victim(s) had been given alcohol and/or drugs by the offender(s). In other cases the victim was found by police hidden in the offender's home.
- In three cases the victims (one 15-year-old and two 14-year-old girls) had 'run away' with their boyfriend, travelling outside the police force area in which they were

#### Case studies: exploitative relationships

A 14-year-old girl had been reported missing by her foster carer several times in one month, and she had been found in the company of a man with whom she had formed a short term relationship. After several incidents the man was given a Child Abduction Warning Notice. The victim went missing soon after and was found with the offender again. He was arrested.

A 15-year-old girl had on several occasions not returned back to her family home at the expected time after staying with her boyfriend who had given her alcohol. Her boyfriend was suspected to be grooming her for sexual purposes. He was arrested.

#### Other abductions where the offender was known to the victim

In addition to exploitative relationships, other children were also abducted by people who were known to them but not family members<sup>29</sup>.

Four cases were confirmed to be sexually motivated. In two separate cases, two teenage girls were abducted by the father of a friend. One was detained and sexually touched during a party. The other girl was driven outside the police force area where she was normally resident by the offender to a house where she was kept for several days. No other information was available on the other two cases which were sexually motivated.

In other cases, the motive for the offence was not known. In one case, a youth worker took several young boys on trips that were not authorised by the youth club, leaving their parents unaware of their whereabouts. In another case, a three-year-old girl was taken by a neighbour on several occasions and found in his flat or in the communal grounds. In a different case, a neighbour let three young boys into his car and took them to the shops without their parent's permission. Two young girls were taken by a local youth from the park where they were playing to various places within the locality before leaving them in another park.

Several other cases involved girls being taken or detained by ex-boyfriends. In two cases teenage males (one of Asian and one of black ethnic origin) were forced into a car and assaulted. The purpose of the assault was to stop the victim continuing a relationship with a member of the offender's family.

<sup>29</sup> As well as the cases described here, other victims of abduction by someone known to them (but not related) are included in the sections 'Revenge or dispute' and '(Attempted) abduction with parent present'.

normally resident, and had stayed away for more than one week.

- In one case, a 15-year-old Asian male had been trafficked into the UK for labour exploitation. Following his arrest he was placed into local authority care from where he was removed by offenders.

Abductions arising in the context of an exploitative relationship resulted in police recording 137 offences of *child abduction* and seven offences of *kidnapping*.

#### Revenge or dispute

In 37 cases, involving 42 victims, the offence appeared to be motivated by revenge or a dispute<sup>30</sup>.

Children in these cases tended to be older than other victims, with an average (mean) age of 15 years (sd=2) and the mode (the single most common age) being 17 years (11 victims). Three-quarters of the victims of a revenge or dispute abduction were males. A relatively high proportion of victims were Asian (10 of the victims in eight of the cases).

Victims of a revenge or dispute abduction were more likely to be injured than in other types of child abduction. Over 60 per cent of victims sustained minor injuries (20 of the 32 victims where information on injuries was available). This compares to one in ten of the victims sustaining an injury (ranging from minor to serious and sexual) in the full sample of cases (see Table A6 in the Appendix).

30 per cent of revenge or dispute abductions were perpetrated by multiple offenders (see Table A7 in the Appendix). In 25 cases the

offender(s) was known to the victim. In seven cases the offender was a stranger to the victim, and in the other five cases the relationship between the victim and the offender was not known.

Two cases were attempted abductions. In 27 cases the victim(s) was abducted for less than 24 hours. In two cases the victim was held for between one and two days. In the remaining cases the duration of the incident was not known.

In over half the cases (19) the victims were abducted from in or around their home address. Two were abducted from nearby their school and others from a variety of locations, including a restaurant, outside a gym, in a car park, outside a library, in a park, or in a friend's or the offender's home address.

30 offences of *kidnapping*, eight offences of *child abduction* and four offences of *abduction* (Scotland) were recorded in these cases (see Table A1 in the Appendix)<sup>31</sup>.

#### Case studies: revenge or dispute

A 17-year-old boy was returning home when a car pulled up next to him. The four occupants dragged him inside the car and assaulted and threatened him before letting him go. It is believed the incident was caused because of a drugs debt.

A 13-year-old boy was forced into a car and driven around the area by the offender in an attempt to identify the victim's friends who the offender thought had vandalised his property.

<sup>30</sup> Other cases involving revenge or a dispute may have been omitted from this analysis because insufficient information was available to identify them.

<sup>31</sup> NB: an offence is recorded by police for each victim.

### Financial gain

In nine cases (involving 10 victims) the abduction appeared to be financially motivated<sup>32</sup>. Eight offences were recorded as a *kidnapping*, one as *child abduction* and one as *abduction* (in Scotland) (see Table A1 in the Appendix). Five cases were perpetrated by multiple offenders (see Table A7 in the Appendix).

In three cases the victim was kidnapped for ransom. In each case the victim was a teenage male of non-white ethnic background. In one case the victim was taken by his uncle. Each of the three victims experienced no physical injury.

Two cases (one involving two victims) appeared to be robberies. Each case involved multiple offenders using a vehicle to abduct the victims who were all in their teenage years.

### (Attempted) abduction with parent present

In 22 cases (involving 22 victims) an offender took, or attempted to take, a child in the close presence of their parent(s) or other carer. In 10 cases the victim was under the age of three, and in 11 cases the victim was aged between three and six years old (in one case the age of the victim was not known).

20 cases involved a perpetrator who was a stranger, one who was a neighbour, and in one case the relationship between the victim and the offender was not known.

Two children were removed from their home address. In one case a neighbour entered the victim's home, assaulted the mother, and then left with the victim, before the mother regained the child. In the other case, a person whose relationship to the

victim was not known removed the child from their home address while their mother was upstairs but was stopped nearby.

Four cases involved an attempt to take a child from a shopping centre, including the toilet of a shopping centre. Five offences were committed when the child and their parent or carer were on the street. Other cases involved an attempt to take children from their parent in a takeaway restaurant, a play area, a supermarket, a GP surgery and at a bus stop.

In all cases the offender was prevented from taking the child out of the immediate area where the offence took place, either by their parent or other people nearby. 19 victims were reported to be uninjured. One child received a minor injury, and in two cases the extent of any injury was not recorded.

In at least three cases the information available indicated that the offender was either drunk or had mental health problems. In all but one case the offender acted alone.

#### Case studies: (Attempted) abduction with parent present

A three-year-old girl was picked up in a play area by a male who claimed the child was his. The child's mother blocked his exit from the play area and gained the assistance of other people nearby. The man put the child down and left. Police detained the man nearby.

Whilst in a supermarket, a mother holding her two-year-old son was approached by a man who began to pull the child towards him and tried to kiss the child. After a struggle the man left.

<sup>32</sup> Other cases may have involved a financial motive, but this was not evident from the information available.

### (Attempted) abduction by deception

In four cases a stranger attempted to take a child by deceiving either their parents or other people in authority. In one case a person tried to take a baby from a maternity ward. No other details were provided on this offence though the offender did not succeed in taking the child.

In two cases an offender attempted to take a child from their primary or pre-school. One six-year-old alerted school staff that the person was not known to them. In the other case school staff called the mother to check that she'd sent someone else to collect her three-year-old child. In the final case, a female offender, posing as a representative of social services, made an (unsuccessful) attempt to remove a child from their home under the pretext of taking the child into care.

All offences were recorded by police as *child abduction* offences (see Table A1 in the Appendix).

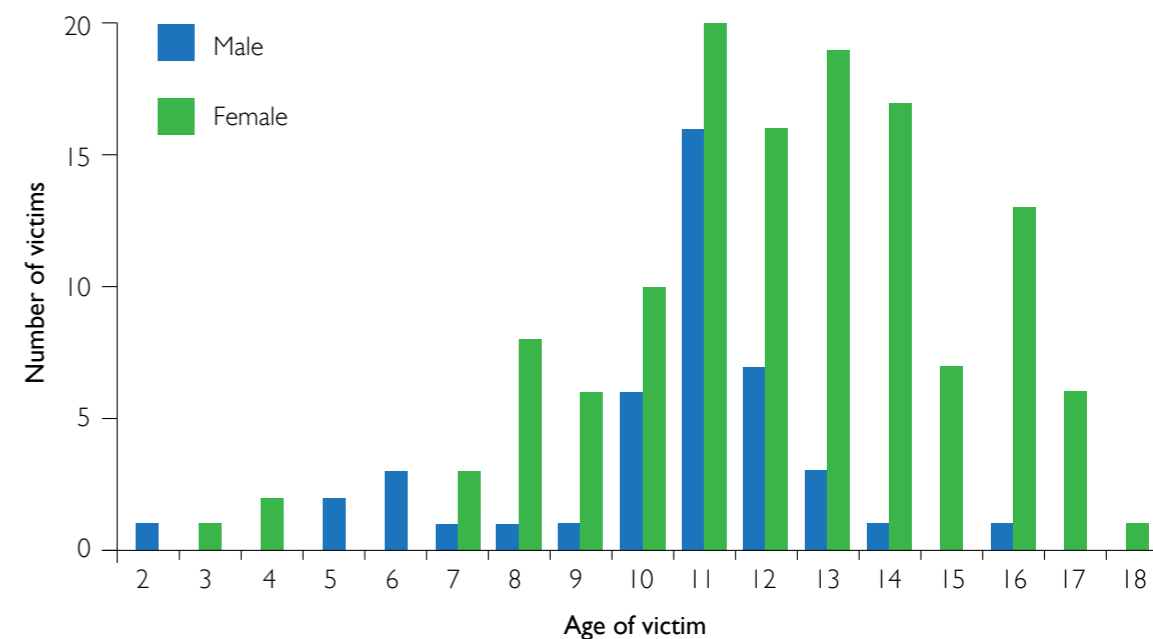
### Other attempted abductions by strangers

In addition to the attempted abductions with a parent present and the attempted abductions by deception, a further 181 children (in 164 cases) were victims of other types of attempted abductions by strangers.

These victims had an average (mean) age of 12 years (sd=3). One quarter (n=48) were boys and three quarters (n=130) were girls. In three cases the sex of the victim was not known. By teenage years, girls were substantially more likely to be victims than boys (see Figure 7).

80 per cent of victims were white, eight were black, six were Asian and two victims were

Figure 7: Age and sex of victims of other attempted abductions by strangers



This chart excludes three victims where their age or sex was not known.

of other ethnicity. In 20 cases the ethnicity of the victim was not known.

168 victims (93 per cent) suffered no injury in the incident. 11 suffered a minor injury (for example friction burns and scratches as a result of a struggle). One victim suffered a more serious injury as a result of being punched.

In nearly half these cases the offender made physical contact with the victim. In some cases this contact was negligible and the victim quickly evaded the offender. In other cases victims were grabbed or dragged and had to struggle to free themselves, in some cases by hitting, biting, scratching and kicking the offender.

In 95 per cent of cases it was not possible to establish a clear motive for the offence. In eight cases sufficient information was available to indicate a sexual motive. It is likely that considerably more of these offences were sexually motivated.

In 150 cases (91 per cent of the 164 cases,) the offender acted alone. In 14 cases more than one offender attempted to abduct a child (see Table A7 in the Appendix). In two-thirds of cases the offender was in, or alighted from, or attempted to drag the victim into a vehicle.

At the time of the offence, victims were typically in the street (25 per cent of cases), in a park, common or open space (24 per cent), in or around their home address (21 per cent), or near their school (16 per cent). Other locations included a bus stop, supermarket, service station, car park, alleyway and a leisure centre.

The information collected in three offences suggested that police were treating them as a linked series of offences. Other offences were part of a police operation implying they had been linked to other incidents.

As a result of the other attempted abductions by strangers, police recorded 132 (73 per cent) offences of *child abduction* and 49 (27 per cent) offences of *kidnapping* (Table A1, Appendix).

### Completed abductions by strangers (sexual motive)

15 children, in 12 cases, were successfully abducted by an offender with a clear sexual motive.

The victims ranged in age from 7 to 17 years, with 11 victims being between 13 and 17 years old. Three victims were boys; the rest were girls. 12 victims were white, one was black, one was of other ethnic origin and the ethnicity of one was not known.

Five of the victims suffered a sexual assault as a result of the offence (see Table A6 in the Appendix)<sup>33</sup>. Two boys suffered a sex attack after being lured back to an offender's house where they stayed the night. Three girls were raped, each in separate offences. Two had first met the perpetrator online (see text box for more details). The third was forced into a car whilst walking and was released after the offence.

Three other victims suffered minor physical injuries. In two of these cases the victim's clothing was removed. The remaining seven victims suffered no apparent physical injuries (though it

### Abduction instigated online

Seven cases involved the victim and offender first making contact online. All victims were white females (the ethnicity of one victim was not known).

In five cases, the abduction incident occurred when the victim and offender first met face-to-face. These were recorded as abductions by a stranger. The five victims were aged between 12 and 15 years old. Two victims were raped at the offender's flat despite (at least initially) taking a friend or younger relative to go with them to meet the offender. Two children managed to escape after calling the police or asking

other people to intervene. In the third case it was not clear how the incident ended.

In two other cases, 14 and 15 year old victims had initially established contact with the offender through a social networking site. They had then met up with the offender on a number of occasions prior to the abduction incident (hence they were categorised in this study as 'exploitative relationship' abductions rather than stranger-perpetrated offences). In both cases, the offender was suspected to have been grooming the child for exploitation.

is very likely that emotional or psychological trauma did result from the offences).

All offences lasted for less than 24 hours, with the exception of one case which continued for between one and two days (in two cases this information was not available). Two cases involved the victim being abducted by more than one offender, though both resulted in no physical injury.

In four cases the victim(s) was abducted from a street, in three cases the victim was in a park, common or open space, two victims were in a bus station at the time of the offence, and two were near to their home address.

As a result of these incidents police recorded eight offences of *child abduction*, six offences of *kidnapping* and one offence of *abduction* (Scotland) (see Table A1, Appendix).

### Abduction by stranger (unconfirmed sexual motive)

Though unconfirmed, the motive in several other abductions completed by strangers appeared to be sexual.

In one case a registered sex offender befriended two young children and took them back to his house, where he gave them food and let them play on a games console. They left a short time later with no apparent sexual offence having been committed.

In another case, a girl was picked up by a man she met on a social networking site and was taken back to his home. The victim called the police and she was released without any apparent physical injury. In a separate offence, a girl was dragged into bushes but was released after screaming and alerting a passer-by.

<sup>33</sup> These cases raise questions about their crime recording, as Home Office Counting Rules stipulate that when an abduction results in a more serious offence such as rape then only the more serious offence should be recorded (Home Office, 2012b).

## 4. Child abduction resulting in serious crime

The previous chapter described incidents which resulted in police recording an offence of *child abduction, kidnapping or abduction* (in Scotland). By definition, these offences – in the main<sup>34</sup> – did not go on to result in any more serious offence than the actual taking of the child<sup>35</sup>.

In an attempt to include an examination of abductions which result in more serious offences being committed against a child, this study collected data from the Serious Crime Analysis Section (see box below). This chapter presents findings from the analysis of these cases.

### SCAS data on child abduction

The Serious Crime Analysis Section is part of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)<sup>36</sup>.

SCAS has a national remit from ACPO and their Scottish counterpart (ACPOS) to carry out analytical work on behalf of forces. It conducts comparative case analysis on cases of stranger rape and serious sexual assaults, and motiveless or sexually motivated cases of murder or abduction.

Abduction is coded as an element of a serious offence when a victim is taken to a separate location that s/he did not intend to go to (or a significant attempt is made

to take the victim). However, this can include cases when a victim willingly goes with the offender (e.g. a taxi driver) but is subsequently not taken to their desired location. It can also include cases where a victim is moved only a relatively small distance in order to facilitate the intended offence, e.g. rape.

For 'abduction-only' offences (when no more serious offence is committed), SCAS only collect cases where the incident is sexually motivated and where there is no prior relationship between the victim and the offender (or the relationship is not known). Attempted abductions are not collected unless there are aggravating factors.

<sup>34</sup> The fact that eight of the *child abduction* and *kidnapping* offences resulted in a sexual assault or rape (see Table A6 in the Appendix) appears at odds with the crime recording rules of England, Wales and Northern Ireland that require police to classify a crime by its most serious component (the Principal Crime Rule, see Home Office, 2012b). The Scottish system of crime recording does allow for multiple crimes to be recorded for a single incident, and therefore the single offence of *abduction* (in Scotland) which resulted in a rape or sexual assault is more understandable. However, this study did not examine the reasons for crime recording in each case, and there may be a satisfactory explanation.

<sup>35</sup> This is not intended to understate the seriousness of the offences in the previous chapter. Rather, it reflects the lack of a more serious offence which the police felt could be recorded for each incident.

<sup>36</sup> Later in 2013 SCAS will move into the National Crime Agency.

## Definition and limitations

In the US, the NISMART definition of stereotypical kidnapping (the most serious abduction offence) requires victims to be detained overnight, transported at least 50 miles, held for ransom, killed, or abducted with the intention of being kept permanently – by a stranger or slight acquaintance (Sedlak *et al.*, 2002, see page 20).

In the UK no such guidance or policy exists. The Home Office, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Office do not require police forces to identify, count or report non-abduction offences (e.g. murder, rape and sexual assault) which begin with the abduction of a child.

The operational policy of SCAS requires a victim to be taken to a separate location that s/he did not intend to go to for a serious offence to be coded as involving abduction (see box). However, some victims may have initially gone willingly with an offender and only later been detained by them. Others may have been moved only a very small

distance (for example from a path into a bush) in order for a sexual offence to be committed. In some cases, victims may not have been detained long enough for them to be reported missing or for the police to respond when the abduction was in progress.

The following analysis is therefore based on a selection of cases that have been interpreted by police and analysts as involving an element of abduction. They are limited in number by the broader SCAS criteria that requires offences to be committed by a stranger and for the motive to be sexual or 'motiveless'. As a result, the following findings offer no firm information about the overall number of serious crimes against children that involve abduction. They are simply a selection. Likewise, the findings cannot claim any wider representativeness of all serious offences that involve child abduction. At best they are illustrative, providing examples of the types of offences that have taken place in the time period concerned.

## Findings

### SCAS data

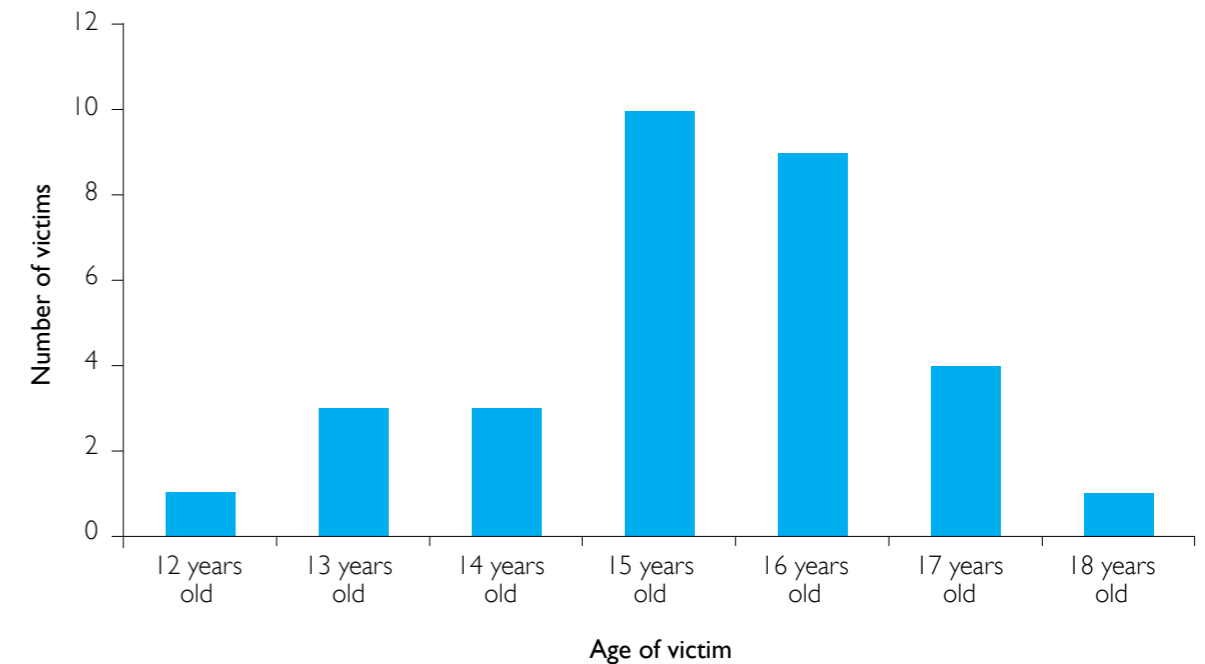
SCAS provided information on a sample of 29 cases which occurred between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012, where the victim was aged 17 or under at the time of the offence. 26 cases involved the rape of the victim(s), one attempted rape, one indecent assault, and one case was solely abduction.

### Victims

In 27 cases there was a single victim and in two cases there were two victims, giving a total of 31 victims. 28 victims were female and three were male. Victims ranged in age from 12 to 18 years old<sup>37</sup>, with more than half being 15 or 16 years old (see Figure 8).

<sup>37</sup> An 18-year-old victim was included in this analysis because she was one of a pair of victims (the other victim being younger than 18).

Figure 8: Age of victims



23 of the victims were described as 'white European', five as 'African Caribbean', two as 'Asian', and one as of 'other ethnicity'<sup>38</sup>.

### Offenders

The 29 cases involved 56 offenders. Just 14 cases involved a single offender. 10 cases involved two offenders, and five cases involved three or more offenders.

All but five of the offenders were classified as strangers to the victim (reflecting the criteria by which SCAS collects data from police forces; see box). Four offenders were known friends of the victim, and one offender had 'peripheral contact' with the victim prior to the offence.

### Circumstances

In nearly half the cases, the offender(s) first made contact with the victim(s) at night time (between 22.00 and 03.59 hours). Contact was initiated in a further eight cases between 10:00 and 15:59 hours and in six cases between 16:00 and 21.59 hours (see Table 3).

In over half the cases the victim(s) was walking alone at the time of initial contact, and in a further five cases the victim(s) was waiting or had stopped outside (see Table 3). In eight of the 14 cases in which initial contact occurred at night, the victim(s) was walking alone at the time of contact. In three cases the victim(s) went to meet the offender(s).

<sup>38</sup> These ethnicity codes do not match (and are therefore not directly comparable with) the '16+1' ONS codes which are typically used when inviting people to classify their own ethnic appearance. They also differ (though not considerably) from the ethnicity information collected from police forces, described in chapter 3. SCAS provided a selection of cases (with no indication of their possible representativeness of all abduction/serious crime offences). Therefore it is not possible to tell whether the relatively high number of black victims (and relatively low number of white victims) is indicative of a broader trend in these cases, or just an artefact of the SCAS selection.

## Initial contact

Table 4 shows the type of initial contact between the victim and the offender in the 29 SCAS cases. In three cases the victim(s) and offender(s) had arranged to meet. In 10 cases the offender(s) engaged the victim(s) in conversation, and in a further five cases the offender(s) offered the victim a ride. In another five cases at least one offender 'lured' the victim to the scene of the assault.

**Table 3: Victim activity at initial contact, by time of day**

Victim activity at the time of initial contact	Time of initial contact				Total
	Morning 04:00–09:59	Daytime 10:00–15.59	Evening 16:00– 21.59	Night 22:00–03:59	
Walking alone	1	3	3	8	15
Waiting/stopped outside		1	1	3	5
Socialising with friends		1	1	1	3
Went to meet the offender		2		1	3
Staying with the offender				1	1
Not known		1	1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>29</b>

**Table 4: Type of initial contact between victim(s) and offender(s)**

Type of initial contact	Number of cases
Offender(s) engaged victim(s) in conversation	10
Offender(s) offered victim a ride	5
Offender(s) lured victim	5
Offender(s) sneaked up on victim	3
Victim(s) and offender(s) had arranged to meet	3
Victim(s) approached offender(s)	1
Offender(s) asked for victim's assistance	1
No details	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

Both the above tables are based on cases (n=29) not victims (n=31)

## When is a rape also an abduction?

These four cases studies illustrate different offences which have been coded as rapes involving an element of abduction by SCAS. They involve different distances, and varying degrees of victim willingness to go, at least initially, with the offender(s).

### Case A

At approximately 2am a 15-year-old female was sitting on a wall outside some shops when she was approached by a male in a car. The male initiated conversation and asked the girl if she would like to sit in his car because of the cold. When in the car the girl agreed to go with the offender to buy alcohol.

The offender then enticed the female back to a co-offender's house, 1km away from the location where they first met. On arrival she became reluctant to go in but was cajoled by the offender into doing so. Once inside the victim was given more alcohol and was raped later before escaping.

### Case B

At approximately 5pm a 17-year-old female was walking down a main road when she was approached by the offender who engaged her in conversation. The male told the female he had a knife and that he was going to steal her bag before leading her along the road and into an alleyway and then into a derelict building 0.5km away from the location where they first met.

Once inside the derelict building the offender carried out a serious sexual assault and stole property from the victim. The offender left after the assault, but the victim was not able to escape from the building until the next morning.

### Case C

At approximately 6pm a 15-year-old female met her friend in a local pub where she was introduced to a group of people. After continuing to a second pub shortly afterwards, one of the men in the group tried to kiss her but she refused.

The girl left to catch her bus at 8pm but the male and a second man followed her and asked her to go with them to a house party. She refused, but the offenders walked her to the location of the party (1km away from the second pub they had visited) where she was taken to a bedroom and raped.

### Case D

At approximately 2am a 17-year-old female was walking home from her friend's house when she encountered a male on the street. He chatted with her and offered to walk her home to which she agreed. Nearing her home address (1km from where they first met) the female tried to leave the offender who then assaulted her, claimed to have a knife, and made the victim go behind some shops nearby where she was raped.

After the assault, the male insisted that the victim continue walking with him, even holding her hand as if they were a couple. When they were approached by two of the victim's friends, the offender left.

## 5. Current policy and practice issues

This chapter reports the findings from the fourth element of the study; the interviews with individuals working in the field(s) of child abduction.

A pragmatic approach was taken to this aspect of the research. Invitations to participate in semi-structured interviews or to provide written responses were sent to 16 individuals and organisations from across the statutory, government, voluntary and academic sectors. Some declined to participate in an actual interview but were happy to provide a written contribution. Others were keen to draw attention to a particular aspect of current policy or practice or to focus exclusively on an area of their specialism, e.g. data collection, research, prevention etc. In total, responses were received from 15 individuals working for 13 organisations with at least one response from each of the sectors.

The result was the collection of a relatively unstructured account of the current themes and issues that occupy the attention of people

working in the field(s) of child abduction at the time of the interviews (January to September 2012). In this sense, the findings below are a 'snapshot' rather than necessarily being long-standing or indeed long-enduring themes or issues.

The inclusion of views of a small number of contributors from a wide range of sectors certainly ensured that the material collected had a broad scope. However, the study makes no claim that the findings are representative of all individuals and organisations whose work is concerned with child abduction. Others may have different views, priorities, themes and issues. As the next chapter suggests, the creation of a 'hub' where wider views on child abduction can be circulated and distilled on an ongoing basis would be a welcome addition to the current UK policy landscape.

### Findings

Figure 9 (page 54–55) lists the main observations or questions raised by participants about the current state of policy and practice across the various types of child abduction. They include suggestions for future

research to improve policy and practice. Whilst many contributions focused on specific types of child abduction, three over-arching themes were raised repeatedly. These are outlined briefly below (see page 56).

Figure 9: Policy, practice and other issues - summary

<b>International parental child abduction</b>	
	<i>Items raised by</i>
<b>Police response:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is still a relatively low level of awareness of what action police could and should take in different types of cases.</li> <li>A recent series of police seminars – which began in April 2012, hosted by the UK Missing Persons Bureau, Reunite, CEOP, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Justice, and the Crown Prosecution Service – were effective in clarifying the role of police and should be continued.</li> <li>How effective is the police response, for example, in resolving cases, preventing abduction, and ensuring the best outcomes for children?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutory</li> <li>Government</li> <li>Voluntary</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can UK border controls be enhanced to prevent international parental child abduction?</li> <li>How effective are All Ports Warnings and the National Ports Office and National Border Targeting Centre in preventing abduction from the UK?</li> <li>What role can e-borders play in preventing international parental child abduction?</li> <li>There is an increasing need, because of demographic changes, to focus prevention efforts on families through raising awareness and giving practical help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government</li> <li>Voluntary</li> </ul>
<b>Resolving cases:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need to ensure agencies are adequately resourced to cope with (a potentially increasing) demand.</li> <li>Mediation is effective, but will not work for all families – effective judicial channels are essential.</li> <li>Greater international collaboration and development is required to ensure that all countries provide an effective response to international parental child abduction.</li> <li>Different agencies need to have good information-sharing systems in order to respond effectively to both in-coming and out-going cases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government</li> <li>Voluntary</li> </ul>
<b>Longer term support:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can families (including non-abducted siblings) be supported through their experience of international parental child abduction?</li> <li>What services are required to help families?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary</li> <li>Academic</li> </ul>
<b>Legislation:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whilst the Hague Convention recognises 'wrongful retention' as child abduction, the criminal law in the UK does not and this can present difficulties in resolving cases.</li> <li>Research might examine the advantages and disadvantages of criminalisation of international parental child abduction, drawing on the experience of different countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary</li> <li>Academic</li> </ul>
<b>Data and further research:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All existing data sources are limited as measures of the overall scale of international parental child abduction.</li> <li>Some left-behind parents will never report an international parental child abduction to any agency (voluntary or statutory). Whilst agencies hold different data, the cost/benefit of improving or coordinating data should be carefully considered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutory</li> <li>Government</li> <li>Voluntary</li> <li>Academic</li> </ul>

<b>Non family abduction</b>	
	<i>Items raised by</i>
<b>Prevention:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the current best practice in educating young people about the risk of child abduction and helping them stay safe?</li> <li>What prevention programmes are currently delivered, what is their focus, how and by whom are they delivered, and are all children receiving the information they need?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary</li> <li>Academic</li> </ul>
<b>Police response:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are different views on the efficacy of Child Rescue Alert; these range from the desire to see the scheme used in a wider range of scenarios where a child may be at risk to the view that CRA should be focused primarily on the exchange of international alerts.</li> <li>There is a need to ensure that Child Rescue Alert is fully effective in preventing harm to abducted (and potentially other endangered) children.</li> <li>There is a need for further data collection and analysis on child abduction to inform police investigative strategies.</li> <li>There is a need for research to develop guidance on the release of information to the public following attempted abductions.</li> <li>Child Abduction Warning Notices are increasingly used to disrupt exploitative relationships which may result in child sexual exploitation. An evaluation would provide a timely review of the wider implications of their use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary</li> <li>Academic</li> <li>Statutory</li> </ul>
<b>Multi-agency response:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some abductions are first brought to the attention of police (and other agencies) as a missing person or other incident, and procedures for identifying abductions at the earliest opportunity need to be optimised.</li> <li>The period of time during which an abducted child remains missing can attract enormous levels of media interest. Work is needed to understand the effects on police investigations of appeals for information being made via print, broadcast and online media, by police and other agencies, and increasingly by family members and friends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutory</li> <li>Voluntary</li> </ul>
<b>Data and definitions:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To produce accurate measures of police recorded child abduction will require a clear definition and 'counting rules' governing the inclusion of both serious and less serious offences that may involve an abduction component.</li> <li>It may be necessary for police to introduce a 'marker' to identify any recordable offence as a child abduction related offence.</li> <li>The potential of advancements for collecting data from police forces (for example via the Home Office Data Hub – see Home Office, 2011b) should be explored as a means of providing improved police data on child abduction.</li> <li>A definition of child abduction needs to be agreed. This should not be constrained by existing legal categories or recording practices. It should consider the elements necessary for an incident to qualify as an abduction (e.g. consent, distance, duration, detention etc.) and also the potential for young people themselves to contribute to the development of a definition.</li> <li>Child abduction occurs in a diverse range of circumstances. Some incidents are likely to come to the attention of non-police agencies, for example, youth workers may be told about abductions by gang members. A multi-source approach is needed if future data collection on child abduction is to be comprehensive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statutory</li> <li>Government</li> <li>Voluntary</li> <li>Academic</li> </ul>

### Who ‘owns’ policy on child abduction?

The question ‘*who “owns” policy on child abduction in the UK?*’ was asked by a number of respondents. Two specific areas of confusion were highlighted. First, does policy responsibility for international parental child abduction lie with the Ministry of Justice or with CEOP? Second, who has responsibility for ensuring that children (and parents) receive the right prevention advice on staying safe from non-family abductors, particularly strangers?

Several respondents suggested that the new role of CEOP in providing the national ‘*strategic and operational lead*’ for missing and abducted children needs clarification and demarcation from the role of government departments.

### Definitions

Many interviewees highlighted the confusion that arises with having no clear definition of child abduction in the UK. Respondents from all sectors could give examples of cases that have not, or would not, meet the legal definition of a *child abduction* or *kidnapping* offence.

Respondents from the voluntary sector were keen to highlight cases where the victims themselves may not identify with the label of being abducted (for example, in some child sexual exploitation and gang-related cases), in contrast to the perception of individuals and agencies working to help them. A definition (or definitions) also needs to deal with the overlap between very serious offences and child abduction (*‘when is a rape solely a rape, and when is it also an abduction?’*).

### Data and research

The inadequacy of police recorded crime data as a measure of the scale or type of child abduction was raised by almost every respondent. Several interviewees suggested that a system for identifying all offences recorded by police involving abduction (not just those meeting the legal categories of *child abduction* and *kidnapping*) should be implemented. Exploring the feasibility of including questions on child abduction in crime surveys (asking either parents/carers or young people themselves) was also recommended.

Some interviewees were concerned by the potential gap between what the ‘person on the street’ would consider to be child abduction and the account provided by police crime statistics. The relatively high number of *child abduction* offences combined with the exclusion of serious crimes involving abduction from crime statistics creates confusion, and it also has the potential to inflate public concern.

Comprehensive data need to be collected and reported in a manner that provides transparency. Several interviewees suggested that new systems for collating data from police forces may provide new opportunities for collecting more reliable, comprehensive information on child abduction.

Finally, as Figure 9 shows, interviewees provided a substantial list of topics for further research. These suggestions included studies of the police and multi-agency response to different types of child abduction and examinations – possibly evaluations – of various prevention strategies.

The next and final chapter provides a summary and discussion of the findings of the study and presents its recommendations.

## 6. Discussion and recommendations

This final chapter offers a discussion and summary of the findings of this study and gives its recommendations.

The study set out to establish the existing 'knowledge stock' on child abduction. The intention was to identify any immediate policy and practice implications and any steps that would further our understanding of the issues.

The literature review confirmed that very few studies have previously been undertaken specifically on child abduction in the UK. The international literature, particularly from the US, provides additional findings and also highlights opportunities for methodological and conceptual development.

Whilst police data has important limitations, this study analysed 592 cases (involving 675

victims) of *child abduction, kidnapping, and abduction* (an offence limited to Scotland) recorded by police in 2011/12. This provided an illustration of the types of circumstances in which children are abducted. This was supplemented with data from the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) concerning 29 cases. These cases involved 31 child victims, the majority of whom were raped following an abduction. Finally, 15 individuals working in 13 organisations from across the government, statutory, voluntary and academic sectors provided their views on current policy and practice issues.

### Summary of findings

#### **International parental child abduction**

This research identified 98 cases (17 per cent of the total) involving 127 victims of parental child abduction recorded by UK police forces in 2011/12. 89 victims (in 66 cases) were taken or kept abroad. In contrast, Reunite (the UK charity specialising in international parental child abduction) alone dealt with 479 children being abducted out of the UK by a parent in 2011. The number of international parental child abductions dealt with by Reunite and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has increased substantially in recent years.

In common with previous research, this study found that victims of international parental child abduction were younger than victims of other types of abduction, with a mean age of five years old. Boys and girls were abducted in roughly equal numbers. Two-thirds of victims were from non-white ethnic backgrounds.

Nearly twice as many cases involved a mother rather than a father abducting a child. Regular profiles of Hague Convention cases show that the majority of abductors are the primary or joint-primary carers of the children abducted (Lowe, 2011). Some

children are 'retained' abroad having initially gone overseas with the permission of the primary care giver. Many children in this study's sample of police cases were still missing at the time of data collection.

### **Policy and practice**

There is still a concern that police are unsure of their role in responding to international parental child abduction. Recent multi-agency initiatives aimed at raising police awareness of the issues were welcomed by interviewees.

Demographic change is likely to see the number of international parental child abductions increase. This will have implications for all agencies involved. It also signals the potential value of preventative measures. Whilst interviewees raised the need to examine the impact of border controls and All Ports Warnings, these measures would have little impact on the relatively high number of cases where children are retained abroad.

A greater understanding of the long term effect of abduction on children and their families (including non-abducted siblings) and of the challenges when families are reunited is emerging. Further efforts are needed to raise awareness of both the risk and impacts of international parental child abduction and further services may be required to assist people affected.

### **Other family-perpetrated or known-offender abduction**

Police data collected for this study found that 14 victims (in 11 cases) involved a parent taking their child from care, often during a supervised contact visit. In two cases children were taken abroad.

A further 10 cases involved 11 victims, aged under 10 years old, who were taken from – or held with – their mother by the child's father, or the mother's current or ex-partner. Many involved an assault on, or threats to kill, the mother.

Five cases involved five teenage females who were abducted as a result of an abusive family relationship. Two cases (involving an uncle and a step father) were confirmed to be sexually motivated. In one case a father was suspected to be grooming his daughter. In two cases a child was held by a family member for financial gain.

In two separate cases two babies were abducted – one by grandparents and the other by an aunt – because of a concern or an argument about the child's welfare.

In 135 cases, involving 144 children, the offender(s) had forged an exploitative relationship with the victim(s) prior to the abduction taking place. Victims were mainly white, female teenagers. In most cases, they had willingly gone with or to the offender(s). 30 cases (35 victims) were confirmed to involve grooming (including two cases in which grooming was initiated online). Over one-quarter of victims had run away or been reported missing at the time of the offence. In 79 cases the offender had previously been issued with a Child Abduction Warning Notice.

In 37 cases, involving 42 victims, the offence was motivated by revenge or a dispute. Victims tended to be older, with a mean age of 15 years. Three-quarters of victims were male and a relatively high proportion were Asian. Victims sustained a higher rate of injury than other types of abduction, and they were more likely to be abducted by

more than one offender. In seven cases the offence was perpetrated by a stranger.

### **Abduction by a stranger**

Abductions by a stranger accounted for 42 per cent of all cases in the police data sample (273 victims from 247 cases). Three-quarters were attempted abductions.

These figures are a poor indicator of the actual level of child abduction by a stranger in the UK. Gallagher *et al.* (2008) indicate that at least one in 59 children will experience some form of attempted abduction by a stranger in the course of their childhood. At least one in 605 children will experience an actual abduction by a stranger.

Four attempted abductions by strangers occurred when an offender tried to deceive hospital staff, school staff or the parent themselves into releasing the child into their care. In 22 cases the offender (a stranger with the exception of one who was a neighbour) attempted to take a young child in the presence of their parent(s) whilst in a shopping centre, supermarket, play area, other public places, or – in one case – from their home.

Five cases were perpetrated by a stranger for financial gain. Two cases involved a teenage child being held for ransom and two victims were forced into a car and robbed.

In the vast majority of attempted abductions by strangers (perpetrated against 181 victims, in 164 cases) the offender acted in the absence of the child's carer. Victims had an average age of 12 years, and three-quarters were girls. Whilst most suffered no injury, nearly half the victims were grabbed, dragged or held by the offender(s) and many had to struggle to free themselves.

In two-thirds of the cases the offender(s) was in, alighted from, or attempted to pull the victim into a vehicle. A small number of cases were confirmed to be part of a linked series of attempted abductions. In 95 per cent of attempted abductions by strangers it was not possible to establish a clear motive.

In 12 cases (involving 15 victims) from the police force sample, a stranger with a clear sexual motive succeeded in abducting a child. These children ranged from 7 to 17 years old, with nearly three-quarters being aged 13 or over. Three were boys and 12 were girls. Five suffered a sexual assault or rape including two girls who first met the offender online. The circumstances of several other completed abductions by strangers would suggest they may have been sexually motivated.

SCAS data illustrated the scenarios in which 31 victims – aged between 12 and 18 years old – were abducted and then raped, or sexually assaulted (in one case no sexual offence was recorded) predominantly by strangers. 28 victims were female and three were male. Less than half of the offences involved an offender acting alone.

In the majority of cases the victim(s) initially went willingly with the offender(s) after being engaged in conversation or offered a ride in a car. The circumstances of these offences leave an important question about when a rape should also be categorised as a child abduction, and when it is solely a rape.

The SCAS data contained no cases of child homicide following abduction in 2011/12. Whilst there is a consensus that these crimes are very rare, no data are routinely made available (by government or other sources) to demonstrate this.

### Policy and practice

There is a need to understand more about the high ratio of attempted compared to completed abductions by a stranger. Children may be effective at protecting themselves. Their ability to protect themselves may – or may not – be influenced by efforts to promote children’s awareness of dangers and measures to keep them safe. Conversely offenders may not be motivated to actually abduct children, or may be ineffective – for whatever reasons. Further research in this area would help to inform the development of effective prevention measures.

Programmes and materials aimed at helping children to stay safe (including when they are online) are made available from a variety of providers. However, their effectiveness in keeping children safe from the threat of

abduction appears largely untested. The extent to which children have access to such programmes is also unknown. This is also an area for further research. Recent studies have suggested that gaining a better understanding of victimisation at a local level (through listening to children themselves) can identify other practical prevention measures (e.g. safe walking routes).

This study also raised questions about the use of Child Rescue Alert in the UK. CEOP is soon to publish a new protocol clarifying expectations on the police. Further research may also inform the police response to attempted abductions, particularly how and when information is shared with the public, and whether any aspects of a single – or series of – attempted abductions provide a strong indicator of an increased risk to children.

## Overarching issues

The report highlights three overarching issues:

### Defining child abduction

Child abduction is not well defined in the UK. Different legislation, applicable in different parts of the UK, defines different offences of *child abduction*, *kidnapping*, *abduction* and *child stealing/plagium*. An offence of ‘child abduction’, as defined by the Child Abduction Act, 1984, can only be recorded for victims under the age of 16.

There is no established definition to distinguish serious crimes (e.g. a murder or a rape) which involve abduction from those that don’t. Relevant factors may be the distance, and duration for which, a child

is taken and whether they were forced or coerced to go with an offender, or went – at least initially – of their own will. Without definitions it is impossible to know the true scale of child abduction, especially as crime recording rules in most parts of the UK allow only for a single (the most serious) offence to be recorded for an incident.

### Data and research

No single, comprehensive source of data on child abduction exists in the UK. Different types of child abduction are served by different data sources though none are

entirely comprehensive. Whilst police data captures different types of child abduction it clearly offers only a partial account of each. In part this is because not all abductions are reported to the police, but it also reflects the restrictive definitions of offences relating to child abduction, and the limitations of crime recording processes. The latter, at the very least, need addressing.

This study also highlights a number of critical gaps in our knowledge about what is most effective in preventing abduction and how to respond optimally when a child is abducted (see recommendations). These knowledge gaps offer considerable opportunity for further research.

### Responsibility

CEOP has recently been allocated the ‘*strategic and operational lead*’ for missing and abducted children. How this role complements the existing responsibilities of various government departments (e.g. the Ministry of Justice lead role for international parental child abduction) needs to be clearly set out.

This study makes recommendations for policy development, data improvement and further research across the range of abduction types. The creation of a child abduction ‘hub’ may offer an effective mechanism for coordinating the activities of different organisations, delivering improvements and providing a focus on the child abduction in the UK.

## Recommendations

1. A national child abduction ‘hub’ should be created to develop policy and provide information on child abduction for the public and professionals alike.
2. The roles of different police and government agencies involved in responding to child abduction should be clearly set out.

### The ‘hub’ and partner agencies should:

3. Agree a UK-wide definition of child abduction.
4. Create a means of identifying all incidents of child abduction and attempted child abduction reported to police forces.
5. Harness opportunities to collect survey data on child abduction from children and/or parents.
6. Expand research into child abduction through partnerships with e.g. universities etc.
7. Publish an annual summary of statistics on child abduction.
8. Create a publicly accessible ‘one-stop-shop’ for information on child abduction.

This research has identified several specific areas for future research and policy development. The ‘hub’ and partner agencies should:

9. Examine the relatively high incidence of attempted abductions by a stranger compared to completed abductions and the implications this has for prevention.
10. Examine the effectiveness of existing materials and programmes for schools and parents to keep children safe from stranger abduction.
11. Establish policy on the police response to abductions, and attempted abductions, by strangers, including when and how to alert the public.
12. Evaluate the impact of Child Abduction Warning Notices.
13. Establish methods to further prevent international parental child abduction.
14. Examine the effectiveness of the police response to international parental child abduction, and make recommendations for force policy.

## Appendix

Table A1: Crime type by relationship and abduction types

Relationship	Crime type recorded by police			All
	Child abduction	Kidnapping	Abduction (Scotland)	
Parent	120	7	0	127
Other family member	7	3	3	13
Other known	176	47	5	228
Stranger	186	80	7	273
Not known	12	22	0	34
<b>All</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>675</b>
Distinct abduction types				
International parental child abduction	88	1	0	89
Parental abduction from care	11	3	0	14
Domestic disputes	5	4	2	11
Familial abuse	5	0	0	5
Concern for welfare	2	0	0	2
Exploitative relationships	137	7	0	144
Revenge or dispute	8	30	4	42
Financial gain	1	8	1	10
(Attempted) abduction with parent present	16	5	1	22
(Attempted) abduction by deception (stranger)	4	0	0	4
Other attempted abductions by strangers	132	49	0	181
Completed abductions by strangers (sexual motive)	8	6	1	15
Cases not included in a distinct type	84	46	6	136
<b>All</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>675</b>

This table shows the number of victims rather than cases.

Table A2: Age of victims by relationship category

Relationship	Range	Mean	Median	Mode	N=
Parent	0 to 17	5 (sd=4)	4	1 (n=18)	125
Other family	0 to 17	11 (sd=6)	14	14 (n=4)	13
Other known	0 to 17	14 (sd=3)	15	15 (n=80)	228
Stranger	0 to 18	11 (sd=4)	12	11 (n=41)	271
Stranger attempt*	0 to 18	11 (sd=4)	11	11 (n=36)	202
Not known	0 to 17	14 (sd=4)	15	17 (n=9)	33
<b>All</b>	<b>0 to 18</b>	<b>11 (sd=5)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15 (n=106)</b>	<b>670</b>

This analysis excludes five victims where the age of the victim was unknown (two abducted by a parent, two abducted by a stranger, and one in which the relationship between the victim and the offender was unknown).

sd = standard deviation.

\* 'Stranger attempt' includes strangers who attempted an abduction in the 'Attempted abduction with parent present', 'Attempted abduction by deception' and 'Other attempted abductions by strangers' types.

Table A3: Sex of victims by relationship category

Relationship	Male	Female	Not known	N=
Parent	62	60	5	127
Other family member	3	10		13
Other known	59	169		228
Stranger	89	179	5	273
Not known	18	14	2	34
<b>All</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>675</b>

Table A4: Ethnicity of victims by relationship category

Relationship	White	Black	Asian	Other	Not known	Total
Parent	42	20	29	17	19	127
Other family	9		2	1	1	13
Other known	174	10	13	6	25	228
Stranger	213	13	15	4	28	273
Not known	15	4	12		3	34
<b>All</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>675</b>

Table A5: Number of cases/victims within distinct abduction types

Distinct abduction types	Parent		Other family		Other known		Stranger		Not known		All	
	V	C	V	C	V	C	V	C	V	C	V	C
International parental child abduction	89	66									89	66
Parental abduction from care	14	11									14	11
Domestic disputes	3	3			8	7					11	10
Familial abuse	2	2	3	3					5	5	5	5
Concern for welfare			2	2					2	2	2	2
Exploitative relationships					144	135			144	135	144	135
Revenge or dispute					29	25	8	7	5	5	42	37
Financial gain							5	5	3	2	10	9
(Attempted) abduction with parent present					1	1	20	20	1	1	22	22
(Attempted) abduction by deception (stranger)							4	4			4	4
Other attempted abductions by strangers					181	164	181	164	181	164	181	164
Completed abductions by strangers (sexual motive)							15	12			15	12
<b>All abduction types</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>477</b>
<b>All victims/cases</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>592</b>
<b>Percentage of all cases/victims included in a type</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>81</b>

Table A6: Level of injury by relationship and distinct abduction types (victims)

Relationship	Level of injury					All
	Serious	Sexual assault/rape	Minor	None	Not known	
Parent	1	0	0	99	27	127
Other family member	0	0	1	11	1	13
Other known	1	4	28	166	29	228
Stranger	2	5	19	232	15	273
Not known	2	0	6	18	8	34
<b>All</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>675</b>
Distinct abduction types						
International parental abduction	0	0	0	65	24	89
Parental abduction from care	1	0	0	11	2	14
Domestic disputes	0	0	0	9	2	11
Familial abuse	0	0	0	5	0	5
Concern for welfare	0	0	1	1	0	2
Exploitative relationships	0	3	3	122	16	144
Revenge or dispute	0	0	20	12	10	42
Financial gain	0	0	1	7	2	10
(Attempted) abduction with parent present	0	0	1	19	2	22
(Attempted) abduction by deception (stranger)	0	0	0	4	0	4
Other attempted abductions by strangers	1	0	11	168	1	181
Completed abductions by strangers (sexual motive)	0	5	3	7	0	15
Cases not included in a distinct type	4	1	14	96	21	136
<b>All</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>675</b>

Note: 'serious' injury was defined as an injury requiring hospital treatment; 'sexual assault/rape' was recorded *instead* of 'serious' or 'minor' injury where it occurred; 'minor' injury was defined as an injury not requiring hospital treatment. In four cases victims received a serious injury but were not included within a distinct abduction type. This is because there was insufficient information to determine the abduction type.

Table A7: Cases with multiple offenders

Relationship	Multiple offenders		
	Yes	No or not known	All
Parent	6	92	98
Other family member	3	9	12
Other known	22	184	206
Stranger	31	216	247
Not known	8	21	29
<b>All</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>592</b>
Distinct abduction types			
International parental child abduction	0	66	66
Parental abduction from care	4	7	11
Domestic incidents	0	10	10
Familial abuse	0	5	5
Concern for welfare	1	1	2
Exploitative relationships	9	126	135
Revenge or dispute	11	26	37
Financial gain	5	4	9
(Attempted) abduction with parent present	1	21	22
(Attempted) abduction by deception (stranger)	0	4	4
Other attempted abductions by strangers	14	150	164
Completed abductions by strangers (sexual motive)	2	10	12
Cases not included in a distinct type	23	92	115
<b>All</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>592</b>

## References

- Agopian, M.W. (1984). "The impact on children of abduction by parents". *Child Welfare* **63**(6), 511-519.
- Asdigian, N.L., Finkelhor, D. and Hotaling, G. (1995). "Varieties of nonfamily abduction of children and adolescents". *Criminal Justice and Behavior* **22**, 215-232.
- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (2008). *Practice Advice on the Management of Kidnap and Extortion Incidents*. London: NPIA.
- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (2009). *Guidance on Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children*. London: NPIA.
- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (2010). *Guidance on the management, recording and investigation of missing persons*. Second Edition. London: NPIA.
- AuCoin, K. (2005). *Children and Youth as Victims of Violent Crime*. Juristat: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 25(1).
- Barnardo's (2011). *Puppet on a string: The urgent need to cut children free from sexual exploitation*. Barking: Barnardo's.
- Beddoe, C. (2007). *Missing Out. A Study of Child Trafficking in the North-West, North-East and West Midlands*. London: ECPAT UK.
- Berelowitz, S., Firmin, C., Edwards, G. and Gulyurtlu, S. (2012) "**I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world**". The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, Interim Report. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.
- Boudreaux, M., Lord, W. and Dutra, R. (1999). "Child abduction: Age-based analyses of offender, victim, and offence characteristics in 550 cases of alleged child disappearance". *Journal of Forensic Sciences* **44**, 539-553.
- Boudreaux, M., Lord, W. and Etter, S. (2000). "Child abduction: An overview of current and historical perspectives". *Child Maltreatment* **5**, 63-71.
- Brown, K., Keppel, R., Weis, J. and Skeen, M. (2006). *Investigative Case Management for Missing Children Homicides: Report II*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Buck, T. (2012). *An evaluation of the long-term effectiveness of mediation in cases of international parental child abduction*. Leicester: Reunite.

- Burgess, A., Carr, K., Nahirny, C. and Rabun, J. (2008). "Nonfamily infant abductions 1983 - 2006: A comparison of cases from 1983 - 1992 with those from 1993 - 2006". *The American Journal of Nursing* **108**, 32-38.
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2010). *Strategic Threat Assessment Child Trafficking in the UK*. London: CEOP
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2011a). *Scoping Report on Missing and Abducted Children*. London: CEOP.
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2011b). *Out of Mind, Out of Sight. Breaking down the barriers to understanding child sexual exploitation*. CEOP thematic assessment. London: CEOP.
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2011c). *Procedure for Investigation & Safeguarding of Young Persons via Child Abduction Warnings*. London: CEOP.
- Dalley, M. (2009). *Missing Children Reference Report*. National Missing Children Services, National Police Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- Daniels, S. and Brennan, M. (2009). *Missing children: kidnapped and abducted children and resources available to parents and the community*. University of Florida (document FCS2256). Accessed online 16 June 2012: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy867>.
- Deakin, J. (2006). "Dangerous People, Dangerous Places: The Nature and Location of Young People's Victimization and Fear." *Children and Society* **20**, 376-390.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009). *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation – supplementary guidance to working together to safeguard children*. London: HM Government.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families and Home Office (2010). *Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity*. London: HM Government.
- Department for Education and Home Office (2011). *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked - Practice guidance*. London: HM Government.
- Dowling, S., Moreton, K. and Wright, L. (2007). *Trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation: a literature review*. Home Office Online Report 10/07. London: Home Office.
- Erikson, M. and Friendship, C. (2002). "A typology of child abduction events" *Legal and Criminological Psychology* **7**, 115-120.
- Finkelhor, D., Hammer, H. and Sedlak, A. (2002). *Nonfamily abducted children: national estimates and characteristics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G. and Sedlak, A. (1992). "The abduction of children by strangers and nonfamily members: estimating the incidence using multiple methods." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* **7**, 226-243.

Finkelhor, D. & Ormrod, R. (2000). *Kidnapping of juveniles: patterns from NIBRS*. Juvenile Justice Bulletin. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Firmin, C. (2010). *Female Voice in Violence Project. A study into the impact of serious youth and gang violence on women and girls*. London: Race on the Agenda.

Firmin, C. (2011). *This is it. This is my life... Female Voice in Violence Final Report: On the impact of serious youth violence and criminal gangs on women and girls across the country*. London: Race on the Agenda.

Fitzgerald, J. and People, J. (2006). "Victims of abduction: patterns and case studies". *Crime and Justice Bulletin* **94**, 1-16.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2011a). *International parental child abduction*. London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2011b). *Campaign launched to help tackle international parental child abduction*. Press release: 28 June 2011.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2012). *Parental child abduction is a worldwide problem*. Press release: 12 December 2012.

Freeman, M. (2006) for the Reunite Research Unit. *International Child Abduction: The Effects*. Leicester: Reunite.

Furedi, F. (2001). *Paranoid Parenting: How Anxiety Prevents us from Being Good Parents*. London: Allen Lane.

Gallagher, B., Bradford, M. and Pease, K. (2008). "Attempted and completed incidents of stranger-perpetrated child sexual abuse and abduction." *Child Abuse & Neglect* **32**, 517-528.

Gill, T. (2007). *No Fear. Growing up in a risk averse society*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Greif, G.L., and Hegar, R.L. (1993). *When parents kidnap: The families behind the headlines*. New York: Free Press.

Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D. and Sedlak, A.J. (2002). *Children Abducted by Family Members: National Estimates and Characteristics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Hanfland, K.A., Keppel, R.D. and Weis, J.G. (1997) *Cases management for missing children homicide investigations*. Olympia, WA: Attorney General of Washington.

Hegar, R.L. and Greif, G.L. (1994) "Parental abduction of children from interracial and cross-cultural marriages". *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* **25**(1), 135-142.

Hoff, P. (2007). "UU" UCAPA: understanding and using UCAPA to prevent child abduction. *Family Law Quarterly* **41**, 2-17.

Home Office (2011a). *Missing children and adults. A cross government strategy*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2011b). *User Guide to Home Office Crime Statistics*. London: Home Office.

Home Office (2012a). *Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime: Other Offences*. Accessed online 11 September 2012: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/counting-rules/count-other?view=Binary>.

Home Office (2012b). *Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime; General Rules* (see section D). Accessed online 11 September 2012: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/counting-rules/count-general?view=Binary>.

Hotaling, G. and Finkelhor, D. (1990). "Estimating the number of stranger-abduction homicides of children. A review of available evidence." *Journal of Criminal Justice* **18**, 385-399.

Jago, S. with Arocha, L., Brodie, I., Melrose, M., Pearce, J. and Warrington, C. (2011). *What's going on to Safeguard Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation?* Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Kiedrowski, J., Jayewardene, C. and Dalley, M. (1994). *Parental Abduction of Children: An Overview and Profile of the Abductor*. Missing Children's Registry, National Police Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Liu, J., Francis, B., and Soothill, K. (2008). "Kidnapping offenders: their risk of escalation to repeat offending and other serious crime." *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology* **19**(2), 164-179.

Lowe, N. (2008). *A statistical analysis of applications made in 2003 under the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction Part II – National Reports*. International Child Abduction Database (INCADAT) online. Accessed online 24 September 2012: [http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/abd\\_pd03ef2007.pdf](http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/abd_pd03ef2007.pdf).

Lowe, N. (2011) *A statistical analysis of applications made in 2008 under the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction Part III – National Reports*. International Child Abduction Database (INCADAT) online. Accessed online 25 September 2012: <http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/abduct2011pd08c.pdf>.

Lowenstein, L.F. (2002). "Parental child abduction: a literature review". *Police Journal* **75**(3), 234-244.

Ministry of Justice (2011). *Judicial and Court Statistics 2010*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Mitchell-Miller, J., Kurlycheck, M., Hansen, J. and Wilson, K. (2008). "Examining child abduction by offender type patterns." *Justice Quarterly* **25**, 521-543.

Newiss, G. and Fairbrother, L. (2004). *Child abduction: understanding police recorded crime statistics*. Findings paper 225. London: Home Office.

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service (2010). *Judicial Statistics*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service

Office of the Head of International Family Justice for England and Wales (2012). *Annual Report 1st January – 31st December 2011*. London: Judiciary of England and Wales.

Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012). *Briefing for the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education, on the emerging findings of the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, with a special focus on children in care*. July 2012. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Office of the Official Solicitor and Public Trustee (2011). *Annual Report 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011*. London: Office of the Official Solicitor and Public Trustee.

Office for National Statistics online (2012). *Crime statistics: Appendix tables 2011-12 - Crime in England and Wales, Quarterly First Release to March 2012*. Accessed online 10 October 2012: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-265883>.

Osborne, S. "Homicide" in Smith, K. (ed), Osborne, S., Lau, I. and Britton, A. (2012). *Homicides, Firearms Offences and Intimate Violence 2010/11. Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/12. London: Home Office.

Pain, R. (2006). "Paranoid parenting? Rematerializing risk and fear for children" *Social & Cultural Geography* **7**( 2), 221-243.

Parents and Abducted Children Together (2005). *Every Five Minutes: A Review of the Available Data on Missing Children in the UK*. London: PACT.

Paskell (2013). *The tangled web: How child sexual exploitation is becoming more complex*. Barking: Barnardo's.

Pearce J, with Williams M, Galvin C. (2002). *'It's Someone Taking a Part of You': A study of young women and sexual exploitation*. London: National Children's Bureau.

Peelo, M. , Francis, B., Pearson, J. , Soothill, K., and Ackerley, E. (2004). "Newspaper reporting and the public construction of homicide". *British Journal of Criminology* **44**(2), 256-275.

Plass, P.S. (1998). "A typology of family abduction events". *Child Maltreatment*, **3**(3), 244-250.

Plass, P.S., Finkelhor, D. and Hotaling, G.T. (1995). "Police Response to Family Abduction Episodes". *Crime and Delinquency* **41**(2), 205-218.

Plass, P.S., Finkelhor, D. and Hotaling, G.T. (1996). "Family abduction outcomes: Factors associated with duration and emotional trauma to children". *Youth and Society* **28**(1), 109-130.

Plass, P.S., Finkelhor, D. and Hotaling, G.T. (1997). "Risk Factors for Family Abduction: Demographic and Family Interaction Characteristics". *Journal of Family Violence* **12**(3), 333-348.

Police Service Northern Ireland (2012). *Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2011/12*. Belfast: Police Service Northern Ireland.

Redoglia, E. (2002). "Children abduction in case of separation and divorce". *Psicologia e Giustizia* **3**, 1-14.

Reunite Research Unit (2003). *The Outcomes for Children Returned Following an Abduction*. Leicester: Reunite.

Reunite (2012) *Reunite sees a sharp increase in the number of children parentally abducted*. Press release: 19 January 2012.

Scott, S and Skidmore, P (2006) *Reducing the Risk – Barnardo's support for sexually exploited young people: A two-year evaluation*. Barking: Barnardo's.

Scottish Law Commission (1987). *Child Abduction*. Cm64. Edinburgh: Scottish Law Commission.

Sedlak, A., Finkelhor, D., Hammer, H. & Schultz, D. (2002). *National estimates of missing children: an overview*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Serious Organised Crime Agency (2012). *Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12*. London: The Stationery Office.

Slovic, P. (2000). *The Perception of Risk*. London: Earthscan.

Soothill, K. , Francis, B. , and Liu, J. (2008). "Does serious offending lead to homicide?: exploring the interrelationships and sequencing of serious crime". *British Journal of Criminology* **48**(4), 522-537.

Soothill, K. L. , Francis, B. J., and Ackerley, E. (2007). "Kidnapping: a criminal profile of persons convicted 1979-2001". *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* **25**(1), 69-84.

Soothill, K., Peelo, M.T., Pearson, J. and Francis, B. (2004). "The reporting trajectories of top homicide cases in the media: a case study of The Times". *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* **43**(1), 1-14.

Stokes, M.A. (2009). "Stranger Danger: Child Protection and Parental Fears in the Risk Society". *Amsterdam Social Science* **1**(3):6-24.

Swann, S and Balding, V (2001). *Safeguarding Children involved in Prostitution: Guidance Review*. London: Department of Health.

The Law Commission (2011). *Simplification of Criminal Law: Kidnapping*. Consultation Paper No.200. London: The Law Commission.

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (2010). *Judicial Statistics*. Belfast: The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

The Scottish Government (2011a). *Civil Judicial Statistics Scotland, 2010-11*. Statistical Bulletin: 25 October 2011. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government (2012). *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2011-12*. Statistical Bulletin, Crime and Justice Series. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

Weiner, M.H. (2000). "International Child Abduction and the Escape from Domestic Violence". *Fordham Law Review* **69**(2), 593-706.

