

Satanist Ritual Abuse of Children

*A Submission
in response to the
Office of the Children's Commissioner
Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in
Gangs and Groups (CSEGG)*

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THIS SUBMISSION

This submission has been prepared in response to the Call for Evidence by the Office of the Children's Commissioner in Phase 1 of the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG)

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THE MARANATHA COMMUNITY

The Maranatha Community is a movement of several thousand Christians, active in different denominations of the Church throughout the UK. Its membership includes a substantial number of people involved in the health and caring professions, a variety of forms of social work and the legal and teaching professions in addition to a wide range of voluntary work.

Since its formation 30 years ago, the Maranatha Community has been deeply involved in work amongst children and young people, people with drug and alcohol problems and large numbers of people in need of all kinds. The Maranatha Community report 'What on Earth Are We Doing to Our Children' was presented in the House of Lords at a consultation opened by the Lord Chancellor in 1995. It led to a debate in the House of Commons and many subsequent initiatives for children. The Community has taken the initiative in a broad range of projects contributing to the health of the nation and has held numerous Parliamentary Consultations on a variety of topics. It arranged the first National Conference on Child Abuse in 1997 and was a founder member of the National Child Abuse Monitoring Unit.

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PREFACE

This paper is presented with great concern for all those children who are at risk.

1. Introduction

Three recent reports conducted by ROTA (Race on The Agenda), CEOP (Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre) and the University of Bedfordshire have pointed to the use and abuse of significant numbers of vulnerable children by gangs and groups, usually for sexual exploitation. This is not a new phenomenon but the reports have helpfully highlighted that this alarming situation warrants careful and thorough investigation and attention.

The Children's Commissioner has called for evidence to be submitted of known situations of victimisation and abuse. However, the collection of evidence of this type is made difficult by the nature of the problem which, by definition, is deliberately covert. The abuse of victims is often not disclosed by the individual until adulthood - usually because of threat-induced fear - and, in the case of satanist ritual abuse, mind control and programming techniques are used to specifically detach the victims from conscious memory of the events which have taken place.

This submission sets out details of a particular form of child sexual abuse by groups involved in ritualistic abuse which, in the UK, is most often associated with satanist practice. This form of abuse is a specific entity which is intentionally sadistic and which involves the worst forms of abuse, including torture, mind control, forced participation in criminal acts and abuse and harm of others, in addition to horrific forms of sexual exploitation. Survivors (not all survive) from this form of abuse usually do not present themselves until young adulthood when fragmented memories of past events start to emerge. Since the 1990's these individuals have become recognised as a specific group of patients, known as "Ritual Abuse Survivors", by the psychiatric therapeutic services and there is considerable well-documented evidence for the existence and continued practice of this form of abuse. The Maranatha Community has been involved in responding to requests for help from a number of survivors of Satanist ritual abuse over many years.

2. Scale of the Problem

The scale of victimisation and abuse by gangs and groups is unknown, mainly for the reasons stated above. The National Missing Persons Bureau has reported that approximately 200,000 people go missing each year. It is well known that within groups engaged in ritual abuse activity, births of babies are often not registered, therefore an estimation of the numbers involved is extremely difficult to obtain.

Some idea of the scale of the problem could be gained by an assessment of the numbers of adults who seek help at a later date, but many of these individuals are not recognised due to the lack of awareness by conventional services.

3. The Nature of Satanist Ritual Abuse

Satanist ritual abuse may be defined as an extreme, sadistic form of abuse of children and non-consenting adults. It is methodical, systematic sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse, which often includes mind control, torture and highly illegal and immoral activities, including murder, child pornography and prostitution. The abuse takes place in the context of a supposed religious ideology which, in the west, is often satanist in origin.

What differentiates satanist ritual abuse from other forms of abuse is that ritual abuse trauma is orchestrated deliberately and systematically by a perpetrator group with the aim of creating a dissociative mental state that can be manipulated by the perpetrator group in such a way that mind control of the victim is established.

4. Networks

Satanist ritual perpetrator groups are composed of individuals who often have professional jobs in the police, legal and social services and local authority. Satanist groups also frequently include members who are freemasons. There is deliberate intent to have members in different spheres of influence in order to maximise the security of the group and to gain social respectability for individual participating members.

Many groups have extensions of their own member networks to those in other parts of the nation, and even other nations, which increases their capacity to control their victims .

5. Victim Profile

A significant proportion of the children who suffer Satanist ritual abuse are born into intergenerationally-involved families and the abuse begins at birth.

It is also established that satanist ritual perpetrator groups prey on vulnerable children, such as those placed in 'care', and vulnerable adults, especially those with learning difficulties, outside of their group in order to use them for ritualistic purposes.

6. Effects on Victims

The consequences of satanist ritual abuse are severe, affecting every part of the victim's life, often for the rest of their lifetime. Victims suffer a multiplicity of problems, including various forms of mental illness and behavioural problems as well as a wide range of physical morbidities.

There is a natural protective amnesic effect associated with extreme forms of abuse, but also, in the case of satanist ritual abuse, there is 'programmed' amnesia, which means that victims are often unaware that they have been abused until memories start to emerge in early adulthood.

Survivors of satanist ritual abuse are often frequent users of health services. However, because their health problems are related to abuse rather than primary pathology they are often referred for numerous investigations and consultations which do not produce a clear diagnosis. For this reason, they have often been labelled as having psycho-somatic illness (which, strictly speaking, is true but this diagnosis is regarded negatively by health care professionals with usually no offer of treatment) or, worse, attention-seeking or manipulative behaviour. Although the health sequelae of sexual abuse are becoming more widely recognised there is very little experience or knowledge of the specific problems associated with satanist ritual abuse amongst health care professionals. This often leaves survivors with negative 'labels' and without appropriate support or treatment.

Inducement of fear is central to satanist ritual abuse and this is used to maintain control of victims. Mind control techniques, together with threats make it difficult for survivors of this kind of abuse to break free from the group. Many have had to change their identity, cutting all ties to family and friends in order to make a fresh start. Most therapists would maintain that it is virtually impossible for victims to be completely restored to full mental health and many survivors remain in therapy for many years.

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is a condition almost exclusively resulting from satanist ritual abuse. It is a psychological system of spontaneously created defences against overwhelming trauma or, in other words, a natural self-protection mechanism which takes place in a child exposed to recurrent extreme traumatic events. It has also been recognised that perpetrators of satanic ritual abuse use elaborate and cruel techniques of inducing DID in order to gain control over their victims. Therapists have developed ways of 'neutralising' this form of control but the treatment is lengthy and also in of itself traumatic.

Perhaps one of the most damaging consequences of satanic ritual abuse for the victim is that when memories begin to emerge, and they gain the courage to disclose these, they are not believed or, worse, are labelled as having an overactive imagination or as being a liar. This is often promoted and used by perpetrator groups to ensure their own protection.

7. The Law

There have been a significant number of successful convictions in the UK courts of people who have engaged in satanist ritual abuse (see below). Given the high standards of evidence required by the British criminal justice system to secure such convictions, it is clear that satanist ritual abuse is a real problem in the UK. However, for every successful conviction against UK satanist ritual abusers there are almost certainly many more who are never investigated. This is sometimes due to police indifference or lack of competence in investigating such crimes, or due to influence exercised by the abusers over some of the police.

To date, the UK authorities have not engaged seriously in developing a more robust and effective way to deal with the subject of satanist ritual abuse with the result that very few police forces have knowledge and experience of this serious and horrific crime - which is primarily targeted against children - and are therefore often unaware of the necessary lines of enquiry which should take place.

It is also recognised that in some cases, the ritual element of abuse has been dropped where it is not deemed to be central to securing a conviction. The reason for this is often cited as being the desire not to "worry" the jury with the distressing details related to rituals. This denies the far greater seriousness of ritual abuse and the need for this to be reflected in sentencing.

Similarly, there is often inadequate provision made for the protection of the victim and other witnesses. Many thousands of 'normal' prosecutions in UK fail each year because of intimidation of witnesses. In the case of satanist ritual abuse the situation is considerably worse with threat of harm or death to the individual as well as family members and friends.

The nature of satanist ritual abuse means that witnesses already feel degraded and ashamed. This, together with a fear of not being believed when describing details of ritual events, means that they are easily intimidated by the cold environment of police interviews and courtroom cross examination. There has been considerable improvement in this aspect over recent years but there is still widespread ignorance and inexperience of satanist ritual abuse in the police and legal systems.

Victims of satanist ritual abuse often report forced involvement in criminal activity ranging from mutilation and killing of animals, bestiality, induced abortion and many more horrific acts to desecration of graveyards. For this reason they are often reluctant to participate in legal proceedings for fear of exposing themselves to criminal charges.

UK law does allow immunity for certain classes of person. Firstly there is an irrebuttable presumption that a child under the age of 10 cannot commit a crime. Secondly Section 71 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act

2005 allows the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to issue an "immunity notice" blocking criminal proceedings from being pursued against any person. The test is whether the prosecutor thinks it is appropriate to offer the person immunity in a specific case for the purpose of the investigation or prosecution. This power is reserved to the CPS and other prosecuting bodies, but not the police. Thorough and sensitive consideration, in advance, by the CPS of the appropriateness of immunity for victims in cases of satanist ritual abuse would be likely to increase the effectiveness of evidence gathering and testimony in court.

The nature of the groups which are conducting the satanist ritual abuse of children in the UK is similar in many ways to that of other organised criminal networks such as the Mafia. As is often the case in dealing with such organised criminal organisations, the granting of immunity may have to be seriously considered for key prosecution witnesses as the only way to obtain enough evidence to secure a conviction against the perpetrators.

Satanist groups in the UK which ritually abuse children and young people are often also engaged in other types of criminal activity such as the production and distribution of child pornography. Failure by the authorities to more robustly crack down on such abusive groups leaves them free not only to sexually abuse children and young people but also to conduct other criminal activities.

Over the years there have been several successful prosecutions and convictions of satanist ritual abusers in the UK. Below are just a few of several UK cases where satanist ritual abusers were successfully prosecuted and convicted:

i) In March 2011 four adults belonging to a satanist coven were convicted at Swansea Crown Court for sex offences against children and young adults. The satanist ritual abuse perpetrated by the defendants occurred not only in Kidwelly, Wales, where their coven was based, but also in some other parts of the country.

ii) On 9th November 1982 four adults were convicted in Telford, Shropshire, for a series of sexual and other serious offences against children which also involved satanist rituals. One of the defendants carved an inverted cross on one child's abdomen and branded her genitals with a red-hot altar knife.

iii) On 23rd July 1987 a man was convicted at the Central Criminal Court in London for the sexual abuse of 15 girls and boys. He assaulted his victims on an altar dedicated to Satan and forced them to abuse each other. The rituals were performed with a pentagram drawn on the floor in blood.

iv) On 8 August 1990 Reginald Harris was convicted at Worcester Crown Court and sentenced to two and half years in prison after admitting to two specimen charges of unlawful sexual intercourse with a 15 year old girl and her younger sister. The Court heard that he had used satanist rituals to

frighten and dominate the children. Harris told his victims he was a satanist high priest. The children were terrified into submission by Harris's satanist practices. The Court also heard how he had drawn up a satanist "coven contract of marriage" to the older girl.

v) On 3rd July 1992 a 57 year old satanist was sentenced at Liverpool Crown Court to 12 years in prison for sexually abusing his niece. The Court heard how he had raped his victim two or three times per week between the ages of 10 and 12. The Court also heard details of a "black magic room" where the abuser kept an altar and ritual equipment. When the child was 12 she became pregnant as a result of the abuse and was required by her uncle to give birth in the "black magic room". Evidence was also clearly provided at the trial that the victim was terrified by her uncle's satanist rituals.

8. Summary

The existence of groups involved in satanist ritual abuse is established in the UK and involves the use of children in systematic abuse and exploitation of the worst possible kind.

The nature of the abuse and the deliberate and sophisticated mind-controlling techniques used by perpetrator groups means that victims do not present themselves, and indeed are often unaware of the abuse themselves, until early adulthood.

Several specialist therapeutic and support groupings have emerged over the past 20 years to help the survivors of this type of extreme abuse and should be asked to help with the 'Call for Evidence'.

9. Conclusion

There is a need for an urgent, thorough and pro-active consideration of the nature and extent of satanist ritual abuse of children, including a review of court cases, police and legal procedure, and meetings with victims.