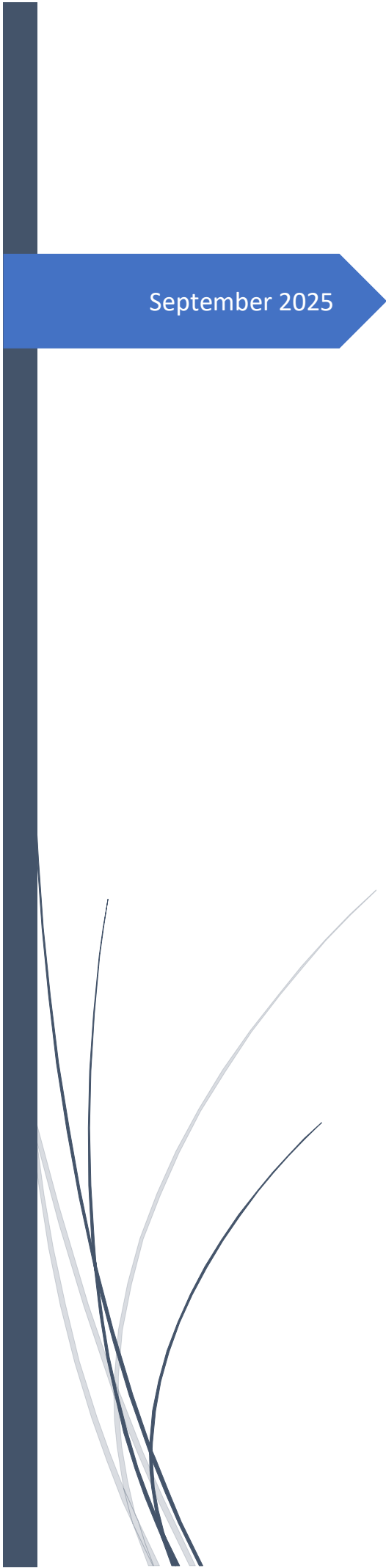


A thick dark blue vertical bar runs down the left side of the page. A blue arrow-shaped banner points to the right from this bar, containing the date 'September 2025'. In the bottom left corner, there are several thin, curved lines in dark blue and light grey, resembling stylized grass or reeds.

September 2025

An independent,
safeguarding case
review, on behalf
of the ECB and
the Cricket
Regulator.

Ray Galloway

BLUE LIGHT INVESTIGATIONS & TRAINING LTD

CONTENTS PAGE

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Executive Summary	2-5
Introduction	6
Methodology & Contributors To The review	6-8
Terms of Reference	8-9
Independent Review Author	9
The Abuser	9-10
The Safeguarding Context and Initial Suspension	10-13
Communication of MS Suspension Decision	13-15
Initial Conviction	15-16
How MS Operated	16-19
The Victims and The Abuse	19-23
County Involvement	23-26
The Clubs	26-29
Club Culture	29-33
The key factors that prevented MS being brought to justice earlier	33-34
A lack of safeguarding related awareness	34
Selection and Appointment	34-35
Witness Confidence	35-36
Lack of Peer Scrutiny and Challenge	36-38
Victim Inhibition	38-39
A Missed Learning Opportunity	39-41
Issue Specific Conclusions	41-42
Main Conclusions	43-44
Review Recommendations	44-45
Glossary of Terms	46
Glossary of Abbreviations	47

WARNING This Report contains accounts of child sexual abuse which some readers may find upsetting. Those who have given accounts of child sexual abuse are not identified in the Report. The identities of those who have given accounts are protected by law. It is a criminal offence pursuant to the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 to publish the identity of those who have given accounts of sexual abuse.

Executive Summary

This independent safeguarding review relates to the case of Michael Strange (MS), now aged 65 years, who was a recreational cricket player and coach in the Gateshead area of the north east of England until his initial arrest, in 2005. The allegation made against him related to the sexual abuse of a boy that he coached. He was also a coach for the county talent pathway.

Whilst that initial allegation of sexual abuse was not pursued to prosecution at the time, the credibility and integrity of the complaint was recognised by both Northumbria Police and the ECB national safeguarding unit. As a result, MS was suspended from involvement in any cricket related activity by the governing body. Subsequent revelations with regard to the abuse perpetrated by MS in a cricketing context would render that decision to be both sound and well-judged, although it was one that was not communicated as effectively as it might have been at the time, the detail of which is explored in the review.

It was seven years later, in 2012, after further allegations had been made to the Northumbria Police that a prosecution was pursued to completion, and MS was convicted of eight counts of sexual abuse of pubescent boys, all having occurred approximately a decade earlier. All of the allegations related to incidents which occurred in a cricketing context. He was sent to prison for six years.

In the intervening years, since that initial conviction, multiple further allegations have been made against MS for which he has been convicted on a further five occasions. In total he has been convicted of 34 separate offences of Indecent Assault, Rape and Gross Indecency with boys, involving a total of ten separate victims, relating to incidents that occurred between 1993 and 2004.

An accumulation of the prison sentences handed down to MS amounts to a total of 24 years and 10 months, and it is the view of the investigating officers that his true body of offending actually amounts to hundreds of incidents of abuse. However, despite the extensive media coverage of the case over a period that has, intermittently, extended for over a decade, neither the county nor the clubs at which he was a player and coach, have used the case as a basis upon which to reflect on their respective safeguarding practices and procedures.

As a person who had a significant profile within the cricket community of the north east, MS had a good reputation as a capable youth coach, both at the cricket clubs at which he was also a prominent player and as part of the coaching cadre that ran the county talent pathway. It was primarily in his coaching role that he perpetrated his abuse, using his access to the boys that he coached to cultivate opportunities for himself, although, as a player, he also engaged in behaviour that was wholly inappropriate and, at times, abusive.

The evidence gathered in the review revealed that he was a charismatic and capable orator and he encouraged personal ambition, albeit with a malevolent intent. He groomed boys and their parents, leading them to believe that his role in the county talent pathway was influential in terms of their prospects of progression into the county youth squads. He encouraged the perception that he was well connected and that he was the person to impress if the young players wanted to fulfil their ambitions.

MS would regularly go out of his way to offer practical support to parents and young players for example by donating expensive kit, providing coaching clinics and, most relevantly, frequently offering to convey boys to and from training and matches in his own car. What appeared to be generous and helpful gestures for which many parents were very grateful, often had a hidden motivation. This was particularly with regard to the lifts in his car that he offered, as it was in his vehicle that MS perpetrated much of his abuse.

The two cricket clubs at which MS played and coached during the period that he was abusing, both fully embraced the independent review, helping the author to achieve an informed understanding of the culture of the clubs at the relevant time. In addition, the known behaviour of MS at the two clubs was also explored, all within the recognised context that the profile of safeguarding at the time that MS was offending was not as prominent as it is today, a fact that the review author is keen to acknowledge.

The relevant Cricket Foundation, fully engaged with the independent review, providing access to relevant coaches and managers in addition to facilitating interviews and document review. It was clear that MS used his involvement in the county talent pathway as a key component of his grooming of boys and their parents, in addition to which, evidence was gleaned in the review that he acted abusively when managing county youth squads who were participating in cricket festivals in other parts of the country.

An overall evaluation of the evidence gathered during the review, and via the various police investigations, revealed a distinction between the older players that had played with MS and those younger players that had previously been coached by him, as youth players. It was the latter category that were more aware of his propensity to frequently share pornographic material, to touch young players intimately and to engage in conversations and questions with them that were both inappropriate and intrusive.

MS was fully involved with youth coaching at both clubs, and it was primarily, although not exclusively, via this role that he became well known by a significant number of players as a person who had access to pornographic material, such as magazines and DVDs that he was more than happy to distribute.

This, unsurprisingly for teenage boys, was often seen in a positive light by the younger players but his distribution of the pornographic material often came with a consequence because, after providing a DVD or video to a young player, MS would subsequently question them, often tenaciously and intrusively, about the aspects of the material that they may have enjoyed and about the intimacies of their own personal relationships.

Such was the quantity of material that he distributed, even once covertly placing a magazine into the kitbag of the club professional that was only found when the player arrived home, it is difficult to conclude that it was not known more widely in both clubs at which he played and coached. Often, during breaks in play, MS would produce pornographic playing cards to be used by the players. Pornography was a part of his identity, yet this was not recognised as an issue of concern by his peers.

MS spent a lot of time with the younger players at both clubs, even when not engaged in coaching. Whilst at one club he arranged sleepovers at his house, video analysis of coaching sessions, again at his house, and would regularly hang around in the changing room, just in his towel. He played golf with individual players before taking them to his home and he joined in social gatherings, away from the cricket clubs, again with the younger players.

The behaviour of MS was not recognised, at either club, as potentially constituting a safeguarding matter. This resulted in a lack of challenge to him from his peers, although there was no evidence gathered during the review that that lack of peer challenge contributed to any inhibition experienced by his young victims in terms of any lack of confidence in coming forward to report his abusive behaviour. The inhibition of the victims was more connected to the shame that they felt.

Whilst neither club had well developed safeguarding structures at the time, they did have well respected individuals that would, in the view of the review author, have embraced any report of abuse or a safeguarding concern. However, notwithstanding the acknowledged context that safeguarding awareness was not as developed as it is today, the evident lack of recognition in the clubs and at the county that the behaviour of MS represented a safeguarding risk was identified as a primary issue of concern during the review. This was particularly so when his role of coaching young players was taken into account.

Whilst the only person responsible for the behaviour of MS is the man himself, the threshold at which his behaviour should have, by any reasonable benchmark, attracted further scrutiny and challenge had been reached, yet there is no evidence that, other than a challenge by the club professional at one club at which he played and coached, it ever happened.

Despite that relative lack of safeguarding awareness, there was also no evidence found in the review to suggest that the culture in both clubs directly contributed to the abuse that was perpetrated, nor that the abuse was ever known or even suspected. Additionally, no evidence was identified that suggested, had any victim disclosed an abusive experience, that it would not have been embraced or supported.

In terms of the county coaching network, MS' access came about due to the fact that one of his sons played for a county youth team and, because he was a qualified and well-respected coach who was willing to volunteer his time, MS was welcomed. He became the lead contact for the county talent pathway coaching sessions that were held in Gateshead and he would participate in the selection process that would decide which boys progressed to the county squads. All this added credibility to his claims that he was able to influence the potential progression of young players.

Clear evidence was gathered during the review, and previously via the police investigations, that, on occasion, MS acted abusively when coaching for the county. He also abused during coaching sessions that he arranged and undertook alone, using the facilities of local schools. These were sessions which were not known about, nor supported, by the County or his fellow coaches.

The review also identified a retrospective lack of recognition, on behalf of the clubs and the county, in that, even when many details of the abuse perpetrated by MS were in the public domain, they still did not recognise the opportunity to learn from what had happened, nor their responsibilities with regard to the victims and their potential need for support. No evidence was found that safeguarding policies and procedures had been the subject of internal review, nor any consideration being given to reach out to the victims.

Overall, the fact that the behaviour of Strange was not recognised as being worthy of scrutiny and challenge and the fact that, following his multiple convictions, the case was not identified by the clubs or the county as being a potential learning opportunity, form the primary basis for the review conclusions and recommendations. It is surprising that the case of MS was not the catalyst for an internal review of policies and procedures by the clubs and the county.

End of Executive Summary

Introduction

1. This independent safeguarding review was commissioned by the ECB and the Cricket Regulator, the latter being the body responsible for monitoring compliance with the game's regulations. The primary objective of the review was to consider the case of cricket coach and player, Michael Strange (MS), to better understand the context of his behaviour and to identify any safeguarding gaps that allowed him to sustain his offending behaviour over such a prolonged period.
2. The review will seek to avoid falling into the trap of applying modern day safeguarding standards and expectations to a period in which the concept of safeguarding was only in its early stages of introduction and development and was not the key component of organisational governance that it is today. Notwithstanding that caveat, in light of the fact that so many young boys were grievously abused by MS, all within the environment of recreational cricket, a critical eye has been cast over his behaviour, including that which extended beyond his offending, and how it was viewed and addressed, if at all, by those with whom he played and coached.
3. The evidential picture that emerges from the review is of a man who was immersed in cricket, at club and county level, and largely enjoyed a positive reputation with his peers. However, despite that fact, he regularly and openly engaged in behaviour towards junior players that could hardly have been more obviously predatory. Yet, such was his ability to convince people of his influence as a coach, and the generosity of his intentions, that his malevolence was never recognised until the first of his victims found the confidence and courage to come forward. It is to their immense credit that they did, as without them having done so, MS would not have been brought to justice as he was.
4. In terms of this review, whilst the ECB had originally been aware of, and positively involved in, the case in 2005, the commissioning of an independent review came about only when the Cricket Regulator subsequently became aware of the case in 2022 and recognised the potential learning opportunities that it provided, with the catalyst being the media coverage that the case attracted. Prior to that point the various allegations of abuse made against MS, made over a period of almost two decades and all relating to cricket, were not recognised by the police as a safeguarding matter that would benefit from being brought, albeit retrospectively, to the attention of the relevant bodies involved in the governance of recreational cricket to allow lessons to be learned. It is an objective of this review to rectify that oversight.

Methodology & Contributors To The Review

5. The primary source of evidence for the review was gathered in the form of the personal interview of victims of MS, those who played and/or coached with him and, also, those who were coached by him as junior players. In addition, those now actively involved in the safeguarding of recreational cricket, at both the local, county and national level have also actively contributed and added value to the review.

6. Relevant documentation such as minutes, correspondence, publicity material, photographs and personal records were made available to the author, as was the assistance of the relevant County Safeguarding Officer and the Gateshead LADO who facilitated contact with safeguarding leads at schools where MS held his courses.
7. The review author is grateful to the relevant County Cricket Foundation and the members of the various cricket clubs whose members have had varying degrees of relevant involvement with MS during the years that he played and coached.
8. The fact that members and administrators of the clubs and county involved positively embraced the review and invested their trust in the author, often making themselves available for interview in their own home or workplace, has been a necessary and significant force for good in terms of adding value to the review and ensuring its credibility and thoroughness. In addition, the courage and trust demonstrated by those victims of MS who chose to take part in the review or allow the details of their experience to be confidentially shared with the author, has been fundamental to a true understanding of MS's offending, its context and how he was perceived by others, being secured. Their continued anonymity has been respected.
9. Acknowledgement must also go to Northumbria Police, in particular the various investigating officers who have dealt with MS and his victims. Their confidential sharing of information with regard to their respective cases and the relevant context further informed the understanding of how MS operated and the impact his offending had on his victims.
10. A key feature of the evidence provided to the review is the clear distinction between the senior players that played and coached with MS and those that were coached by him, as juniors, and went on to play with him, as senior players. It is that latter group that provided the primary evidence of his inappropriate proclivity to touch juniors intimately, sharing of pornographic material, intrusive and inappropriate comments and his ability to cultivate opportunities for himself to perpetrate abuse.
11. Indeed, when one considers the extent of the behaviour so regularly demonstrated by MS, it was something of a surprise to hear the responses of many of the senior players, with whom he played and coached, to the occasion when he was convicted. They spoke of being respectively amazed, devastated and surprised when the conviction received media coverage, yet that perspective was completely at odds with many former junior players that MS had coached, who were not surprised at all. It was that same media coverage that served to embolden other victims to come forward to the police which, in turn, served to further inform the understanding of his offending.
12. To ensure the anonymity of the victims and witnesses, where the content of their testimony may be considered to be sensitive, detail that may lead to their identification has not been included. Some personal quotes are used, when it is considered appropriate to do so within the context of the relevant point being made, but the quotes are not personally attributed to ensure the anonymity of the person being quoted.

13. MS, himself, was afforded the opportunity to contribute to the review but chose not to do so. Not only was he informed in writing by the ECB and the Cricket Regulator, but the review author also spoke to him, via telephone, in his cell at HMP Northumberland and explained the potential value of him providing his own perspective. But, he was resolute that he did not wish to participate.

Terms of Reference

14. Having considered the gravity and extent of the MS case, the ECB and the Cricket Regulator took the decision to conduct a review to better understand the context of the offending behaviour and, to that end, an independent external reviewer was appointed. A reference group was formulated to help facilitate and oversee the review and to ensure that the terms of reference were being adhered to.
15. The primary focus of the review was to identify the key factors that enabled MS to perpetrate, and sustain, his abuse over a significant period of time. It was also agreed that the review would include any contextual issues that were considered by the reviewer to be relevant such as the prevailing safeguarding culture and structures at the time. It was further agreed that the review would consider any opportunities to prevent the abuse that may have been missed.
16. Whilst acknowledging the passage of time and the improvements in safeguarding practice in the intervening period the review also addressed current safeguarding practices within the specific cricket organisations involved to ensure that any identified enabling factors are no longer present.
17. The review was also given the authority to make recommendations for improvements to safeguarding practice. The following requirements effectively represented the Terms of Reference for the independent review, which was asked to determine:
18. **A clear picture of MS's involvement within cricket including the identification of any roles within recreational clubs, county cricket and any other cricket organisation. This will include an exploration of any actual or perceived positions of interest held by him.**
19. **The specific recruitment and training undertaken with MS across any of his roles.**
20. **How MS created opportunities to abuse children and the extent to which this could have been identified as contrary to any policy and practice guidance in place at the time and now.**
21. **The prevailing safeguarding culture and formal structures at the time that MS was perpetrating his abuse.**
22. **Whether any opportunities were missed to identify and stop MS's offending behaviour prior to his suspension from cricket in 2005.**

23. **Whether those abused by MS reported it to anyone in the club or other cricket organisation at the time of the abuse and, if they did not, the factors that influenced their decision.**
24. **Whether any of the contributors who remain involved in cricket have confidence in safeguarding systems currently in place in their respective organisations.**
25. **What lessons can be learned by the ECB, the Cricket Regulator and/or any specific club or organisation arising out of the review and to make recommendations, as appropriate.**

The Independent Review Author

26. The review author is a completely independent professional investigator and reviewer. He has no professional or personal association with the ECB or the Cricket Regulator other than the fact that he has previously been commissioned to undertake a safeguarding review, on behalf of the ECB, in 2023/4.
27. He worked for more than thirty years as a police officer in Merseyside and North Yorkshire and is a fully accredited Senior Investigating Officer, his last role being Head of Serious and Organised Crime. He has significant experience of investigating offences that involve sexual abuse and safeguarding related matters.
28. Since leaving the police service he has undertaken a broad range of independent reviews and learning reviews for organisations such as the Church of England, the NHS and commercial organisations. He directed the independent investigations, commissioned by the Department of Health, into the activities of Jimmy Savile, initially in Leeds and subsequently across the UK.
29. He co-authored the public Savile report. He directed the NHS Savile Legacy Unit, which was responsible for quality assuring all NHS related allegations into abuse by Savile around the UK. He has chaired and authored several Domestic Homicide Reviews.

The Abuser

30. Michael Strange (MS) is a native of the north east and he turned 65 years of age in January 2025. As a character he is something of an enigma as he was, at once, both a capable sportsman and yet a prolific abuser of children. In terms of cricket, in addition to his contribution as a player, he also developed an interest in coaching, becoming qualified to Level 2 standard. Over time his involvement grew to include a regular involvement in youth coaching at both club and county level.
31. MS was a well-known figure within the cricketing community of the north east and, until his criminal conviction became public knowledge, he was well respected as both a coach and a player. He never struggled for invitations to be part of coaching groups, including for the county talent pathway.

32. He played and coached at several cricket clubs in the area and during his playing career he was known as a capable opening batsman. On a personal level he was married and had four children, at least two of whom also played cricket, including sometimes for the teams that he coached. He was a compelling and persuasive orator with a great enthusiasm for the game, always ready to talk about cricket. He is often described by those who knew him as a big man, sturdily built and something of a larger-than-life character.
33. The abusive behaviour perpetrated by MS is a classic example of a breach of trust within a safeguarding context and it is that fact that most tangibly upsets many of his victims and their parents. They had invested their trust in him, channelling their hopes and aspirations through him, having received his personal assurance that he would look after them or, in the case of the parents, their aspiring sons (his known victims were all boys) to make sure that their talent and cricketing potential was maximised. Instead, he cynically betrayed that trust by taking advantage of the time that he had alone with the boys to perpetrate his abuse.
34. Such was the gravity and volume of his offending that the impact upon the victims has been both sustained and profound but that is not a fact that he appears ready to recognise and acknowledge. It is a recurring feature of his police interviews and subsequent appearances at court that MS does not express any remorse for his actions at all, a fact that has drawn comment from at least three of the judges that have, respectively, presided over his case.
35. Victims have come forward, intermittently, over a period of almost 20 years with the publicity relating to any given one of the six prosecutions that have been pursued, often proving to be the catalyst for further allegations to be made. It is an unpalatable fact that the true scale of his offending may never, definitively, be known but, thanks to the courage of those victims that have come forward and shared their experiences, positive learning can be achieved, helping to secure a safer environment in which to play recreational cricket going forward.

The Safeguarding Context and Initial Suspension

36. It was in 2003, following the introduction of the ECB 'Safe Hands' strategy, which consisted of policies and procedures dedicated to enabling children to participate in all areas of cricket safely, that the relevant Cricket Board appointed what was known then as the County Child Welfare Officer (CCWO).
37. Following the introduction by the governing body of the national strategy, an experienced umpire in the county was identified who, due to his professional background, was considered to possess the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil the new role. The person in question was approached and the voluntary role of CCWO was proposed to him, and he duly accepted.

38. The new CCWO was sent on a one-day course, run by the ECB at Edgbaston. From that point on, supported by relevant literature and advice provided by the governing body, the CCWO became the face of safeguarding for recreational cricket in the county. To that end, he began a programme of meetings with the 98 clubs in the county to inform and educate them about the principles of safeguarding, with a particular emphasis on the safety of children. It was a role that he fulfilled for the best part of the next two decades.
39. The principle of safeguarding was new in the world of recreational cricket at the time and it is fair to say that it was not enthusiastically embraced by all of the clubs, with some being particularly resistant to the required introduction of the role of a Club Welfare Officer (CWO). A significant number of clubs did not recognise the need for the role and viewed it as an imposition by an external body, albeit the national governing body of their sport.
40. It was in May 2005 that the CCWO first became aware that an allegation of abuse had been made against MS who, at that time, was a coach at a local club. The allegation had been made by a man that had previously been coached, as a youth, by MS and it related to an incident just over a decade earlier. By the time that the CCWO became aware, MS had already been arrested and interviewed about the allegation, which he firmly denied, and he had been granted bail.
41. As a result of the allegation, and the role of the alleged perpetrator, a multi-agency meeting was convened by Gateshead Council, in accordance with the Child Protection guidelines that existed at the time, as there was the clear potential that other children could be at risk. Whilst the CCWO was not invited to that initial meeting, he had already been advised of the allegation by Northumbria Police in May 2005.
42. In turn, the CCWO had informed the national governing body, the ECB, who promptly wrote to MS advising him that, as the allegation pertained to a Child Protection matter, he was to be immediately suspended from any and all cricketing activities, pending the outcome of the police investigation.
43. At the multi-agency meeting, which took place in July 2005, the opinion was expressed by the investigating officer that, based on the enquiries that had been made to that point, it was believed likely that a further allegation, from a separate victim, would be forthcoming. That belief turned out to be ill founded at the time. A further multi-agency meeting was convened, in September 2005, and on this occasion the CCWO was in attendance.
44. By this time the allegation against MS had been withdrawn and, whilst the CCWO confirmed to the meeting that MS had initially withdrawn from his positions at his club, concern was expressed that he could return to those positions due to the withdrawal of the complaint. That concern was underpinned by the fact that initial enquiries by the police had identified that MS was alleged to have taken juniors to a room, in the clubhouse of his club at the time, and shown them pornographic videos.

45. The CCWO also pointed out that MS, despite having temporarily stood back from his coaching position at his club, was still attending matches as a spectator. Further correspondence from the time, dated October 2005, reveals that the Club Welfare Officer at the club in question, together with a person who is referred to as the 'Coaching Rep', had also made representations to the CCWO that the suspension of MS be lifted, considering the formal withdrawal of the complaint. The CCWO resisted those representations because he believed that police concerns remained with regard to the potential for MS to still represent a safeguarding concern, notwithstanding the decision of the complainant not to pursue the prosecution at that time.
46. The CCWO conveyed those sustaining concerns to the ECB, which prompted a formal request in October 2005 from the ECB Child Protection Manager to Gateshead Council. It was the solicitor for the council who had suggested that consideration be given to an application for MS to be placed upon the Protection of Children Act (POCA) register. As a means of applying for such a registration, the ECB letter asked for further details of the allegation to be disclosed and to definitively and formally establish whether the Northumbria Police considered the allegation to be genuine and whether MS represented a risk to children.
47. This clarification was right and prudent for the ECB to pursue, especially as earlier that same month the multi-agency group had again met and had decided that, following a visit of a social worker to the home address of MS, together with conversations with him and his wife, no risk assessment was required regarding his own children. Therefore, the situation prevailed in which a serious, and apparently credible, allegation of abuse had been made against MS, who had promptly been suspended from all cricketing activities.
48. However, that allegation had been withdrawn by the complainant and, with no risk assessment deemed necessary regarding his own children, there was some ambiguity as to the extent of any broader safeguarding risk that may prevail, especially as representations were also being made for MS to be allowed to resume his coaching role.
49. Clarity about any risk that MS represented was required and it was appropriately and expeditiously sought by the governing body. In the meantime, any such prevailing risk was effectively managed as MS was formally advised by the ECB, in a personal letter sent to him, that his suspension would remain in place, pending the conclusion of their own investigations.
50. The clarity that was requested by the ECB was provided by Northumbria Police in March 2006, albeit the reason as to why it took 5 months for the force to respond to the ECB is not clear. In the police response, the necessary details of the allegation were laid out, thus providing the basis for the ECB to successfully pursue a POCA application.

51. It was the belief of the investigators that the evidence provided by the complainant, together with information provided by other witnesses, provided sufficient grounds for them to consider MS to pose a risk to children in his role as a cricket coach. That clarification led to the prompt decision by the ECB to refer the case of MS to the ECB Referral Management Group (RMG), the formal forum in which all matters of Child Protection and Welfare were considered. The outcome of the considerations undertaken by the RMG in late April 2006 was that MS should be permanently disqualified from all cricketing activities under the auspices of the ECB. MS was advised of the decision, in writing, the same day.

Communication of MS Suspension Decision

52. The review encountered some difficulty in establishing, with any degree of certainty, who was informed by the ECB of the suspension of MS in 2006. Whilst it is clear that the County CWO was aware and advised his manager, other than a recollection from the CCWO that he spoke to somebody at the relevant club, no specific detail was available. Hence, it is not absolutely clear who else, if anyone, was advised of the suspension decision by the ECB. Even the County Academy Coach at the time only found out about the suspension of MS from a journalist. Up to that point he believed that MS had just faded from the county coaching scene as his son was no longer part of the county system.
53. Whilst the then Club Welfare Officer at the relevant club has no recollection of being informed of the suspension, on the balance of probabilities, it is likely that he did know as the minutes of the multi-agency meeting at the time make reference to representations that were made by the club for MS to be allowed to return to his coaching role at the club when the initial prosecution was not pursued. Another witness also recalls speaking with him on the matter at the time.
54. There is no evidence that any of the relevant cricket clubs were formally informed of the suspension although it did, via word of mouth and circumstance, become common knowledge within the cricketing community of the north east over time. Whilst MS, when formally advised of the decision, did not appeal against his suspension the fact of its imposition was still not widely known. However, a number of incidents occurred in and around local cricket clubs, over subsequent weeks, that led to it becoming much more common knowledge.
55. For example, there was a notable incident where an angry and agitated man stormed into the clubhouse of one club at which MS was coaching and playing, shouting and demanding to know the whereabouts of MS, making threats to his physical wellbeing and asking why the club was, in his words, 'protecting a paedophile'. This resulted in the club steward contacting one of the players and asking him to warn MS of the incident. When the player did so, he remembers being struck by how quickly MS brought the call to an end, once informed of the fact that he was being sought by an angry man.

56. On another occasion, in that same general period, a player from an opposing team walked into the busy clubhouse of the same club on a Friday night, after the playing of a cup tie, and declared loudly that 'I hear your coach is a paedophile', before going on to assert that he had been banned. This caused some of the home club players to become angry and challenge the opposition player, with the situation becoming agitated and fractious.
57. The club players had no knowledge at all of the suspension at the time and they were instinctively seeking to protect their coach against what they considered to be a slur. The opposition player in question, who was a scorer for one of the county teams, was clearly better informed at the time than the members of the very club at which MS coached and played. Not surprisingly, that fact caused considerable tension and upset in the clubhouse that evening.
58. The broader perspective is that MS had suddenly withdrawn from his involvement at the club, where he had been a regular and notable presence, and that sudden absence had not been fully explained, other than a suggestion that he may have a back injury. Nothing about the suspension had been formally disclosed by the club to its members but, as it transpired, there was one further incident that served to make the suspension of MS common knowledge.
59. That occasion came when the CCWO, who was also a reputed and regular umpire in the area, was officiating a match in which MS's club were playing away from home, when he noticed MS walking around the boundary. The umpire who, in effect, then temporarily adopted his county safeguarding role, stopped play and shouted to MS that he should not be at the match, even as a spectator, and that he should leave the ground immediately, which he did.
60. It is a reasonable expectation that this highly unusual incident will have been disseminated widely by the 22 players and the other spectators. So, taking into account the fact that the cricketing community of the north east is relatively small, word will have travelled fast.
61. What is certain is that the suspension of MS became a common subject of conversation in and around cricket clubs across the region, but what is also certain is that the basis of that suspension was largely not recognised as being credible. This, ill informed, doubt was being fed by the fact that MS and his family were claiming that the person who had made the allegation against him was a disaffected former junior player that had been overlooked by him for selection to the county age group squad.
62. The result was a situation of ambiguity in which speculation, claim and counter claim reigned. This, from a safeguarding perspective, created an environment of ignorance in which clear, informed and rationalised information was not communicated.

63. This, in turn, potentially prevented informed, safeguarding related, decisions from being taken. It created a void that MS could have taken advantage of, had he sought to, and in effect, he did because the CCWO, in his role as an umpire, again caught him breaching his suspension at his club when he saw him walk around the field and then enter the clubhouse before coming out with a pint of beer.
64. When the CCWO consulted with the club members present about what he had seen, it became apparent that MS often called into the club in this way. So, the members were advised of his suspension and MS was prevented from entering the club thereafter. It is clear that the management of the suspension was piecemeal and somewhat random with no individual at the club at which he played and coached, or at county level, seemingly assuming responsibility for its enforcement or managed dissemination, with the practical outcome being that he could potentially breach its conditions with impunity.
65. The evidence is overwhelming that the communication of the suspension of MS was not organised, structured or effective. This led to speculation, arguments, and multiple points of tension, several of which could have resulted in harm to MS or other relevant parties. Such an environment of risk of harm does not constitute an acceptable management of the situation. It is probably not coincidental that, during the said period, MS adopted a low profile.
66. Other than his attendance at the matches referred to above, in which one of his sons was likely to have been playing, there is no evidence that MS ever sought to secure membership or a coaching role at any cricket club following his suspension by the ECB.

Initial Conviction

67. It was in 2012 that MS was finally convicted for the first time when a number of allegations, made by three separate victims, represented a cogent body of evidence and these were finally pursued to prosecution. Whilst he denied his guilt and opted to take the matter to trial, he was convicted on eight counts, all of which related to indecent assaults or indecent acts with pubescent boys just over a decade earlier.
68. All of the indecent assaults had a link to his role in recreational cricket and some, albeit the minority, took place at cricketing venues. The judge made comment about the absolute lack of remorse shown by MS during the trial. Upon this first conviction he was sent to prison for six years.
69. Since that initial conviction MS has been convicted on five subsequent occasions, in 2016, 2020, 2022, 2023 and, most recently, in September 2024. On each of those occasions, save for 2020 when he again took the matter to trial, he chose to plead guilty to the charges laid against him.
70. Whilst those respective decisions have spared his victims the ordeal of a trial, the judge presiding over his most recent court appearance invited some reflection on his behalf.

71. The judge made specific reference to the fact that she felt it was about time that he was more proactive in his candour about his offending and not wait for more potential victims to come forward. He has yet to heed that appeal.
72. In total MS has now been convicted of 34 separate offences of Indecent Assault, Rape and Gross Indecency with boys, involving ten separate victims, the overwhelming majority of whom were sexually assaulted by him, on multiple occasions, between 1993 and 2004. All the incidents related to his role as a cricket coach. An accumulation of the prison sentences handed down to him amounts to a total of 24 years and 10 months and it is believed by the investigating officers that his true body of offending amounts to literally hundreds of incidents of abuse.
73. When interviewed about the allegations, MS either denied them or offered no explanation at all. However, on four out of five occasions he then pleaded guilty at court to the charges that emanated from those allegations. His most recent sentence was also six years. He remains in custody, with an earliest date of release of September 2027.

How MS operated

74. MS was a character of significant note in each of the clubs that he represented. He was not the kind of club member that does little more than routinely attend training sessions, turn out for one of the club teams at the weekend, and have a couple of drinks after the game. He was much more involved and high profile than that, fulfilling a variety of key roles that made him both notable and influential in club life.
75. From captain of the first team, to opening batsman, to a member of the coaching staff, both for the club and the county talent pathway, he was where it was at in terms of the cricket club. All of those factors contributed to him having, mainly in the eyes of the junior members, a perceived influence that was critical in terms of his offending and how he cultivated situations that provided him with his opportunities to abuse. That perceived status that he enjoyed was also a critical factor in those children that he abused not coming forward at the time.
76. Whilst he was recognised to be a player of some ability, and also a very good coach, it is clear that MS also had a darker aspect to his reputation. It was well known, especially amongst his fellow playing members at each of the clubs that he played and coached at, that he was a reliable source of pornographic material, usually in the form of magazines, DVDs and videos, all readily available in his kit bag, along with his mobile DVD player.
77. He would often show pornographic video clips, usually to one or more of the junior members, with one such player that he coached as a teenager describing how he covertly did so to him, behind the groundsman's hut at one club, when he was about 15 years old. Another former junior player described how, when he was at another club, MS would hand out pornographic DVDs and then, in due course, ask questions about them and their content.

78. What is clear is that, whilst some of his distribution of pornography was done covertly and below the radar of others, much of it was more obvious, as was his frequent declaration that he had pornographic material available and his use of an upstairs room to play a pornographic video to junior players in the clubhouse at one of his former clubs. Whilst his touting of pornographic material may not have been known by everyone at the club, it is hardly reasonable to believe that it was not known by other members of the teams that he played in.
79. For example, one of the most senior players at one club, who was very much a friend of MS, robustly took him to task over the fact that he had slipped a pornographic magazine into this friend's kit bag, beneath his whites and without him knowing, with the magazine only being found when the friend returned home. Whilst the magazine had not been noticed by anyone else in the household, the potential for that having happened and the difficult conversations it would have provoked, was the cause of a forthright conversation between the two players when they were both next at the club. It did not happen again.
80. However, MS was not otherwise deterred. It would be a regular occurrence for him to produce pornographic playing cards during a break in play or when he was giving junior players a lift in his car and, whilst it appears clear that it was primarily the younger playing members that he targeted when seeking to impress people with his material, evidence was provided to the review that some of the younger adult players were well aware of what he had to offer and would sometimes obtain pornographic material from him also.
81. Such players tended to be especially those who had come through the junior teams that MS had coached and, as such, they were used to what he did. However, his possession and dissemination of pornography was not the full extent of the depravity that he demonstrated. It also included the topic of conversations that he sought to engage others in.
82. One player at a club remembers, when he was 16 or 17 years of age, being approached by other young members of the team in which he was playing at the time and being told that MS was telling everybody about the regularity with which he (the young player) was having sex with his then girlfriend. The player felt bemused about this because, at the time, he and his girlfriend were not involved in any sexual intimacy and, in any event, he had never had a conversation with MS about the matter.
83. He chose not to address the matter directly with MS, whom he described as a big man, with a physique to match. Indeed, the physical size of MS was, the young player in question believes, a practical factor which contributed to him being able to get away with such behaviour with relative impunity. In effect, young, teenage players were frightened to take him on, or to challenge his behaviour.

84. On a subsequent occasion, whilst playing alongside MS for an adult team at the club and walking out alongside him to take up their respective fielding positions, the same player remembers MS asking him whether he was going to have sex with his girlfriend that night. When the young player did not respond MS repeatedly said to him, "I bet you do, how big is your knob, how big is it?" Other witnesses also spoke of him asking them the same question.
85. The young player was understandably embarrassed by the intrusive questioning but, when interviewed for the review, he was in no doubt at all that such behaviour from MS was common and it resulted in him giving MS, what he described as, a wide berth in the club and on the field of play.
86. Such behaviour was clearly predatory in nature and, from the evidence gathered, it was a common feature of conversation when MS interacted with junior players, even when they were part of an adult team. There is no suggestion at all that MS was ever concerned about being overheard, or of him being the subject of challenge by any of his fellow senior players.
87. In addition to handing out the aforementioned pornographic material, another regular aspect of the grooming of his victims by MS included the handing out of free cricket equipment, including gloves and bats which could be a considerable expense. He claimed that he was sponsored by an equipment supplier named Newbery and would regularly hand out what was expensive equipment such as bats and gloves.
88. When added to the fact that he often bought drinks at the bar for junior players and hosted parties and sleepovers at his home for the younger members of the club, usually when his wife was away, it is easy to understand why he had a following within the junior section of the club.
89. An intriguing aspect of the grooming activity pursued by MS was the regularity with which he would also proactively groom the parents of his victims. He would make himself available to take juniors to or from matches or training, knowing that many parents had limited, if any, transport of their own or had work commitments that meant they were likely to welcome such an offer. There was evidence that parents would proactively contact MS, requesting he give their son a lift to training or a match and he would often go out of his way to accommodate such requests.
90. This resulted in any late return home not usually being the subject of any particular scrutiny as the parents knew their son to be with his coach and, as such, believed him to be in safe hands. His giving of lifts never raised a concern in the minds of parents or fellow senior players. Indeed, quite the opposite. MS was seen as the ultimate club man, going out of his way to get young players to and from the game, ready and able to represent their club. The ideal cover and the perfect example of hiding in plain sight.

91. The grooming process of the parents also often involved MS convincing them of the potential of their son and how integral his own role was in maximising that talent and securing opportunities for their son in terms of potential selection for representative teams at county level.
92. Quite understandably, many parents found such enthusiasm to be both compelling and persuasive and invested their trust in him and, as detailed above, that trust often extended to them being happy for him to convey their son to and from matches and training, oblivious to his real malevolent and abusive intent.
93. It was probably the most effective grooming tactic employed by MS, his selling of the dream. He would relentlessly seek to convince aspiring youngsters that he was influential in terms of selection for county squads and, thus, convince them that they needed to impress him if they wanted to move to the next level in their development.
94. He would name drop the international and professional players at the county, claiming to have a close relationship with them, in a further attempt to cultivate the perception that it was he that the junior players needed to impress if they had aspirations to progress.
95. As a grooming tactic it proved to be something of a manipulative, double edged sword. Not only did it put him on a pedestal, especially in the eyes of the junior players who would do anything to convince him of their talent, but it also served to inhibit those that he abused from reporting him or sharing their trauma with their parent(s), a friend or other trusted person. How could they risk alienating the person that held their cricketing ambitions in his hands.

The Victims and The Abuse

96. The victim group targeted by MS was absolutely consistent and defined. It was young teenage boys that he was coaching, between the ages of 11 and 17 years. His correct criminal categorisation is that of a hebephile, as opposed to that of a paedophile, as paedophiles target and assault pre-pubescent children.
97. It was a consistent feature of the victim accounts that they often seemed to be somewhat in thrall to him, in terms of his ability, his standing in the club and the county (as perceived by them) and his access to cricketing gear and pornography. It was also common for MS to target those junior cricketers that may be described as vulnerable in that they were often bullied at school, the quieter members of the group, not so much one of the players that was always leading the averages and at the forefront of what the team achieved.
98. It appears that he gave some thought into who he would target and who it may be easier to manage, manipulate and intimidate in terms of them not disclosing their respective experiences with him. Victims spoke of their feelings of embarrassment at what MS did to them, feeling scared and not knowing who to speak to.

99. Whilst the objectives of this review do not require a detailed presentation of the actual abuse propagated by MS, it is only by highlighting the scale, duration and gravity of that abuse that a full and informed appreciation of the repeated breaches of trust involved can be achieved, together with an understanding of how enduring and profound the traumatising impact has been on many of his victims.
100. To that end, the following is a precis of the abuse perpetrated by MS, a consistent feature of which was its detailed premeditation and planning. Rarely, if ever, did he spontaneously take advantage of a random situation that simply arose out of circumstance.
101. He planned, cultivated and manipulated his way into situations where he was alone with young boys, boys that he knew very well, whom he had often spoken to about their personal frailties, worries and vulnerabilities and, during such conversations, had convinced them of his status and influence.
102. He would then cynically abuse them, often on multiple occasions, even coaching them what to say to their parents if questioned and frequently going on to repeat the abuse in the subsequent weeks and months, consolidating the harm to his victims.
103. The most common method of abuse was his use of a venue and an environment that he could control. To that end he would cultivate opportunities for himself in his car, which was described as a large vehicle, usually by giving boys a lift to or from training or a match. Instead of simply dropping them off he would either pull over at the side of the road, repeatedly drive around the block or, most regularly, drive to a quiet, non-residential area where the abuse would be perpetrated.
104. Indeed, one former junior player from a club remembers pleading with a fellow junior player that was a fellow passenger in MS's car with him at the time, to come up with an excuse that would allow him to be dropped off first and, thus, avoid the situation whereby he was alone in the car with MS, as he dreaded what might happen.
105. The youngster's dread was based on his previous experiences with MS who had a habit, when the young player in question was last to be dropped off, of pulling over and producing his pornographic playing cards. The young player described how he had always tended to freeze and stay quiet in such situations, which was a tactic that he found worked in his favour, as he felt that MS was not able to then develop the situation further, so he was never the subject of any physical abuse, as MS would eventually just drop him off at home.
106. Indeed, many of the indictments to which MS pleaded guilty consisted of circumstances which were a further development to that described above, where he had taken young boys that he had in his vehicle to a secluded area, such as woodland or an industrial estate, shown them pornographic material and then engaged in the masturbation of the youngster and then had them reciprocate to him, usually to the point of ejaculation.

107. On other occasions, MS took the children to his home address, even to his own bedroom, and engaged in similar sexual activity after, once again, first showing his victim pornography. It was also a feature of his offending that, once he had abused a child, he would do so repeatedly, often over a prolonged period.
108. One victim spoke of being dropped off in a minibus at the home of MS, late at night after an away game and after MS had bought him a couple of alcoholic drinks. He was then shown a pornographic film whilst MS has abused him, only stopping when headlights appeared on the drive belonging to the car of the victim's father.
109. The fact that MS abused the boy, despite knowing that the boy was going to be picked up by his father, and the composure with which he instructed the victim to tell his father that they had been watching cricket, is indicative of an experienced and assured offender, willing to take on significant risk to achieve his thrills yet remaining composed and calm to avoid exposure.
110. Another related ploy that he used to get youngsters to his own house was to run video training sessions in the nets at the club and to then arrange evenings at his home address where he would put on food and drink and invite the juniors to come and review their performance. He did this after club training sessions and also on the courses that he apparently ran alone at schools.
111. He presented the sessions to the juniors as an opportunity to undertake some video analysis of their game which, as a modern coaching technique in the professional game, was always likely to be attractive to young aspiring players, which it evidently was.
112. A similar example that was presented at court prior to the latest conviction involved another creative ploy by means of which MS secured the presence of a teenager, alone with him, at his house. The hook he used was the playing of a round of golf and involved a situation where MS invited a junior player to play a round at a local golf club, that he then paid for.
113. The victim spoke of three separate occasions when MS paid for a round of golf, at a course within walking distance from his home, after which abuse took place at the home address of MS. On each occasion MS claimed to have invited others to play but further claimed that they had failed to turn up. This is a common and effective ploy of offenders, known as the isolation of the victim.
114. Over time the gravity of the offending became even more profound. In addition to the above-described situations that MS cultivated for himself, most of which involved mutual masturbation, he has also admitted to the full rape of a child. This was another offence which took place in his vehicle and, again, it was after he had taken the victim to a quiet area having, purportedly, given him a lift home from the cricket club with the consent of his parents.

115. The most recent conviction relates to a situation where MS put on coaching courses which he, very unusually, ran alone, without any other coaches being present. At one such session, which was held in an unidentified school hall, MS vigorously rubbed cream into the genitals of a young boy who had been struck by the ball in the box area. He then went on to commit further intrusive abuse on the victim in the toilets of the school.
116. Whilst this was a one off, isolated incident with the particular victim in question, a significant proportion of the abuse undertaken by MS went on for a period of weeks, months and even, on some occasions, several years. The extent of his offending and the clearly enduring impact of the trauma that his behaviour provoked may go some way to explaining why it took many of his victims until their adulthood before they had the confidence to come forward and formally report their experiences.
117. It was the period after that vital disclosure threshold had been reached, when a victim took the pivotal decision to formally report being abused to the police, that was a powerful feature of the victim feedback provided to the review. One victim spoke passionately about how difficult that period was for him. How, after enduring years of angst and trauma trying to deal with the impact of his own abuse, it was when he saw that another victim had come forward that he felt emboldened to do so himself.
118. He then explained how his emotional state, which had initially been a sense of relief and of removing a burden, became primarily that of disappointment and anger when he received no contact from the cricketing bodies that he considered to be relevant. During his interview for the review, he emotionally expressed his personal disappointment that neither the county nor his club had reached out to him to establish whether he needed support following his disclosure to the police and the subsequent prosecution.
119. That sense of disappointment also had an altruistic aspect to its motivation as the feedback he sought to impart to the cricket authorities very much included the need to ensure that any future victims will be supported. In the words of the victim himself, *"You cannot change the past, but you can create the future."*
120. He had little time for the suggestion that neither his club nor the county were aware of his identity, and he provided a compelling dismissal of that supposed obstacle. He pointed out that he had been traced and spoken to by a local journalist, who had written to the police and asked them to seek the victim's consent for contact, which they did, yet he had had no contact from his club or the county for whom MS had coached extensively.
121. He felt very let down that, what he saw as insufficient effort, had been made to reach out to him. He felt that for his club or the county to have done so would have been, in his view, a powerfully symbolic gesture and he was hurt that they had not done so. What he was not aware of was the fact that the county had been advised in 2005, by the ECB and the police, not to make contact with any victims.

122. Reference was also made by the victim to the fact that it was only in the aftermath of the case of MS receiving media attention that he was contacted by the ECB. He felt that, up to that point, the case had fallen below the radar of those involved in cricket governance. However, the victim demonstrated the balanced and objective manner in which he is now able to consider the case of MS, and his own abusive experiences, by recognising how positive the support provided to him by the ECB has been since its involvement.
123. He spoke in very positive terms of how the professional support that he had received had helped him to make significant strides forward. The positive impact of that support, funded and arranged by the ECB, served to dispel some of his disappointment about the broader lack of contact but he was still clearly irked by it.
124. He felt that his example could form the basis for improved victim support in the future. As he summarised, *"I don't expect a red carpet, what I want is the protection of players going forward. Monsters find a way around (safeguarding) barriers. When people come forward, they need support to be in place."*

County Involvement

125. His involvement in the county talent pathway was, without doubt, the primary factor used by MS as he endeavoured to groom young players and their parents. It was his ace in the pack. Numerous witnesses referred to how he sought to convince young players of his critical role in the coaching of talented players and their potential progression to county squads and he was adept at achieving that perception of his position and influence. Similarly, there is little doubt that his success in convincing people of his status and influence served to act as an additional inhibitor in terms of him ever being the subject of an allegation.
126. Young players did not want to compromise their chances of being selected by complaining about the person that, they believed, had their aspirations in his hands. Whilst one of the current coach managers at the relevant county refers to MS as 'not a big noise in county cricket', that was certainly not how he represented himself and there is no doubt that he was successful in that endeavour.
127. MS initially became involved in the county pathway coaching set up as the result of one of his sons being involved, as a wicketkeeper, in the county age group squads. As a parent who was volunteering to get involved, especially one who had coaching accreditation, significant experience and a positive reputation, his willingness to help out was fully embraced and welcomed by the coaching team.
128. Indeed, as he got more experienced at running the courses organised by the Coaches' Association at the time he explored with the county how he could increase his contribution and, as a result, he subsequently became involved in the summer events such as festivals and skills development sessions.

129. A former international player at the county described how MS became part of a select group of coaches who would work with the elite junior players which, no doubt, will have enhanced his reputation with those he sought to impress. The current Academy Director, who knew MS well, also confirmed that he was a regular member of the county coaching team but there is no doubt that MS still overplayed his role and his influence when he was seeking to represent it to others.
130. But the fact is that he was compelling and persuasive and, to that end, perception became reality in the eyes of the young players that he coached, and many of their parents. They trusted him and took him at his word.
131. When MS first became involved in coaching the qualification process consisted of a coaching course followed by an examination. Final accreditation did not involve the completion of the thorough safeguarding checks that are the norm today.
132. He attained Level 2 status, having passed courses run by the then national governing body, and participated in the Coach Education Programme which was managed by the County Cricket Association. He became well regarded, both as a coach and as a player, with the latter point carrying more weight at the time than it does today, with the skill of being a professional coach now being more recognised in its own right.
133. MS had a full-time job, working for British Telecom. He was never employed as a full-time coach by the county, but he was paid for his part time involvement as a coach, most of which was in the winter months. His role included involvement when the county would write to clubs asking them to nominate the young players that they considered to be showing promise and to have potential. He would be one of the coaches who assessed such players as part of the talent pathway.
134. MS was one of the coaches used in the Gateshead area to organise and manage the subsequent trial sessions, with his name featuring prominently as the nominated contact on the leaflets circulated by the County Cricket Association to all clubs in the area advertising the coaching sessions from 1995/6 onwards. His involvement in coaching the young talented players was there for all to see.
135. The sessions took place over a period of weeks, usually at Gateshead Leisure Centre, and MS would be part of the coaching group that would coach about 24 aspiring young players. The intended ratio would be one coach to every six players with MS fulfilling the role of Lead Coach. Even though the coaching courses were open to all applicants they were seen by clubs and parents as a stage of the county selection process.
136. At the end of the 6-10 weeks of coaching sessions, which ran from September to December, MS would, with his fellow coach(es), be responsible for nominating the young players that would progress to the next stage of the county selection process. Those that were chosen to progress would be sent a letter inviting them to attend a further 5-week assessment, after Christmas.

137. This would, in turn, be followed by 5 weeks of additional training for those who made it through to the county squads. His summer involvement subsequently extended to him being given sole responsibility for the management of county age group teams at cricket festivals, such as the one held at Ampleforth College in North Yorkshire and, on one occasion, at a festival held at a school in Scotland. Such festivals usually lasted several days, with the young players being accommodated at the venue, usually in dormitories.
138. From the evidence provided to the review there can be little doubt that MS abused the trust that had been invested in him by those involved in the county talent pathway and saw such events as opportunities to behave in a manner that served to satisfy his abusive predilections. Evidence from players and parents that attended such festivals confirm that the abusive behaviour pursued by MS included his sharing of pornographic magazines in the dormitory occupied by the junior players to him habitually touching them inappropriately in the area of their groins and intrusively standing in the shower area watching the naked teenage boys shower after a game.
139. MS was able to do this as he was the person in charge, he was not the subject of any behavioural oversight. He had been given the role of lead coach on trust as, so it was thought, there was no basis upon which to doubt his suitability.
140. And yet, is it unreasonable to believe that that basis of doubt could well have been just a conversation away. Had feedback been sought from the young players that he coached, with regard to how MS behaved and interacted with them when away at tournaments, would his inappropriate behaviour have come to light? The fact is that, 30 years ago, which is the period in which MS was abusing junior players at such tournaments, such matters were rarely, if ever, considered and children were not listened to in the way that they are today.
141. From about 2002 MS reduced his involvement in the county coaching set up as his son was, by that time, playing less at that level. In fact, when MS was suspended from all cricketing activities in 2005, it was a journalist that informed the then County Academy Coach of that fact. He did not know of the suspension beforehand. Up to that point the Academy Coach had assumed that MS's reduced involvement in coaching at the county had been because his son was less involved. The call from the journalist put a different perspective on the matter.
142. With regard to how MS sought to take advantage of his role with the county, evidence was presented at court, and also gathered within the review, that he sometimes arranged and ran coaching sessions, alone, using the facilities in local schools. It appears that such sessions usually took place on a Sunday afternoon with informal arrangements being made to use the school halls, with one or more of the teaching staff with whom he had a friendship.

143. Clear evidence was provided, by multiple victims, that such sessions did take place and that, on occasion, MS did perpetrate abuse there. However, enquiries with the safeguarding leads of the respective schools in question failed to identify any records or definitive knowledge from any of the teaching or support staff as to how MS came to access the facilities.
144. The schools in question have gone through considerable change, not least in teaching staff, in the years since the courses are believed to have taken place there and that lack of archived material and historical knowledge from the staff minimised the chances of confirming how the courses and the use of school facilities were arranged.
145. Efforts were made to contact staff that had retired but no positive outcome was achieved. There is no evidence whatsoever that any staff that may have enabled MS to use the school halls had any knowledge at all of his abusive intentions or behaviour. It is more likely that the teachers were merely seeking to provide an indoor facility to help local youngsters to benefit from a coaching session.
146. Notwithstanding the practical problems involved in confirming the context of how they were arranged, the motives of MS for arranging such sessions must be questioned. Not only because he did abuse at least one of the children that he was coaching there (he pleaded guilty to the relevant charge) but also because one of the schools that he chose to use was a considerable distance, and travel time, from the homes and clubs where the young players attending the sessions lived and played.
147. Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, one of the schools was within walking distance of the home of the coach who normally partnered MS during the authorised talent pathway sessions, and yet that coach knew nothing of the weekend sessions that MS chose to undertake alone. When interviewed the coach in question expressed some concern at why that may have been.

The Clubs

148. MS was a player and/or coach at three cricket clubs. One folded in 1989 at which point he moved to another club in the area for just one season. The following season a third club was looking for both a coach and an opening batsman as their own club professional had retired, so they had a shortfall in key playing and coaching positions.
149. The enquiries made by the club involved them seeking the advice of an intermediary, who was well informed about coaches and players in the county, and he duly identified MS as a suitable candidate to fill the vacancy as he was both a respected coach and a capable opening batsman, making him an attractive candidate for a local cricket club.
150. As a result, he was approached by the club and agreed to take on the role as lead coach, and a player, in 1991. It was a position for which he was modestly remunerated during the decade or so for which he stayed there and, despite an apparent lack of close friends there, it is clear that he still generally enjoyed a positive reputation there.

151. When approached to participate in the independent review the members of the club in question fully accommodated the author, embraced the review, and engaged with its objectives. This is to their significant credit, especially as it is their club that has borne the brunt of local media coverage since the initial conviction of MS in 2012.
152. The members that were interviewed embraced a range of roles and ages. They included players and other members that both played with, and were coached by, MS, in addition to the current safeguarding officer and a former club professional. One experienced member who was at the club for the full tenure that MS was there described him as being 'like a child in a man's body', describing his habit of hanging out with the younger people in the club, not having many friends of his own age.
153. He also highlighted another unusual trait of MS as being his habit of inviting junior players from other clubs to come and watch him play. Another senior player described how MS would occasionally be the subject of ridicule from his fellow players, such was the immaturity that he often demonstrated in his behaviour.
154. It was a regular occurrence for MS to join the group of youngsters, usually after the game in a pub not far from the cricket club, whilst the other members of the senior team headed out into the nightlife of South Shields together. Several members made the point that it was a distinct and prominent aspect of his social interaction that he always sought the company of the younger players, including the juniors.
155. One member recalled being out with his friends on a New Years Eve, when he was about 19 years old, and them being joined by MS who was about 40 years old at the time and, thus, a complete outlier in terms of the rest of the group, all of whom were much younger. He always sought the social company of younger people.
156. A further aspect of note in terms of the regular and memorable behaviour of MS is how he would regularly go well out of his way to pick up junior players in his car, even if they lived a significant distance from where he lived and not on his natural route to and from the club. This was a feature of his behaviour that did not attract any suspicion at the time. Indeed, it was generally considered to be a positive and benevolent gesture on his behalf, helping to get young players to and from the club.
157. The true malevolence of his intentions was never identified and those which he abused did not disclose their experiences, hence his largely positive reputation prevailed. A related example of how MS took advantage of the ambition and aspirations of younger players can be found in the fact that, when he first came to the club, he brought with him a junior player that was a member of another club.
158. This was notable in that the club that the player had left played cricket of a higher standard, but it became apparent that MS had convinced him that he could play senior cricket, in adult teams, if he came to the club at which MS played and coached at the time, which he did. This was despite the club being a significant distance from the player's home, an issue that was overcome by MS regularly providing the junior player with a lift to and from the club.

159. As detailed above, it was in the coaching role that MS was always keen to emphasise his influence in county talent pathway selection, often claiming to have the ear of the former international and current professional players at the county, often dropping their respective names into conversation. The result was that he developed a cohort of aspiring junior players at the club who were impressed and convinced by his claims.
160. However, even though so many of them had MS on something of a pedestal, one of the consequences of the abuse suffered by the junior players at the club is the fact that so many of them ultimately felt it necessary to give up their participation in cricket completely. Not only is this evident from the information presented to the courts, such as that contained in the Victim Impact Statements, but also that provided directly to the review by victims and other witnesses.
161. It was not uncommon for witnesses to the review, that had previously been part of a group of junior players that had been coached by MS, to reflect on how many of that group no longer played the game, citing MS as the primary reason why they had stepped back from the sport. From such testimony it became apparent that some victims of MS have felt unable, or chosen not to, come forward to report their abuse, although the number of such victims is impossible to quantify.
162. Whilst it would be grossly unfair to suggest that MS was able to thrive as a predator for the 11 years or so that he was at one club, as the result of the lack of scrutiny of his behaviour, there is no doubt that he took advantage of a safeguarding related awareness at the club that was very low, albeit commensurate with societal attitudes at the time. The signs of his malevolent and abusive intentions were there, but they were just not recognised as such by those with whom he played and interacted.
163. For the vast majority of members and players at what was, and is, a thriving community cricket club, their primary focus was good, competitive cricket and the social relationships that come with it. It was a club that embraced not just the players but their partners and families too.
164. The club members feel betrayed that so many of the young players that largely constituted the future of their club were abused by a person that had such a position of influence and trust within their ranks. It is clear that whilst the pervading culture of the club in question at the time that MS was there did not actively facilitate his abuse, it just did not recognise the warning signs of it.
165. It was 2002 when MS left the club at which he had been for more than a decade, as a result of the club increasing its coaching options, with two of its senior players achieving their coaching accreditation which led to the stopping of his remuneration. He moved back to one of his previous clubs, along with his son, with the move suiting him in terms of the fact that they would both be playing a higher standard of cricket and, once again, he would be paid for his coaching and playing. His new club was also a club of some repute and relative wealth, regularly being able to fund international players of significant profile and reputation to play there.

166. At his new MS initially played for the First XI, opening the batting with a former international cricketer, and he also fulfilled a Team Manager/Coach role, for which he was paid. In common with his former club and his role with the county talent pathway, minimal scrutiny was applied to his motives for adopting the coaching role, other than a DBS check and what was described as an informal judgement that was made on his character, with the former junior coordinator explaining that the club largely relied on current and former players with technical skills to contribute to the coaching cadre and MS fell within that category.
167. In addition to his formal roles of player and coach, the evidence gathered during the review render it clear that when MS arrived at his new club he continued to distribute, porn at the club whilst letting it be known that he could readily access such material. The former junior coordinator spoke of finding a pornographic magazine in the changing room on a Sunday morning, a fact that he addressed with the First XI captain. The captain very much recognised the dangers of such material being left in the changing room and, whilst that particular event cannot definitively be attributed to MS, there is ample evidence that he had plenty of such material available for sharing and distribution at the club.
168. Another feature of his behaviour that was remembered by members at the club was the fact that MS would frequently have a car full of junior players, albeit some of whom were sometimes his own children. In common with his time at his former club he made it known that he was available to transport junior players to and from games and/or training. Mention was again made of his routine of sitting in the changing room in his towel, always being the last out, passing out magazines and videos as he sat there, including when junior players were present which, when he was in the Second XI, included children as young as 13 and 14 years of age.

Club Culture

169. It was one of the key objectives of the review to secure an understanding of the culture that prevailed at the cricket clubs of which MS was a member during the period of his offending and, in particular, to determine whether any aspect of that culture had any influence on his abusive behaviour.
170. The club at which MS played and coached for over a decade is very much a community club and, as such, it draws the majority of its members from within a relatively short distance of the club itself. It is also a club that is held together and driven forward, as it has been for many years, by the voluntary efforts and commitment of a small core of players and officials, many with family and/or close friendship ties.
171. Of course, to secure a true understanding of the prevailing culture retrospectively is difficult as it relies on the candour and reliability of those who were members of the said clubs at the time and that challenge is made all the more difficult when the review interviews are being undertaken within the context of multiple criminal convictions for a former member of the clubs in question.

172. However, the review author is satisfied that an accurate understanding of club culture was achieved as a result of the personal investment demonstrated by those members that agreed to support the review and help identify any lessons from which we can all learn. A tangible commitment and love for the game was evident to the author throughout his dealings with the club during the review. What was also clear was the respect that former junior players had for those stalwart senior members that were considered to represent the identity of the club.
173. Hence, whilst no formal safeguarding structures were in place at the club for the majority of the period in which MS was offending, which preceded the introduction of the Safe Hands strategy, there is every reason to believe that junior members had a number of reasonable options to consider had they wished to share a concern or an experience with somebody that they trusted, had they felt capable of doing so.
174. MS became a member at the club as far back as 1991 and, whilst acknowledging the fact that safeguarding did not exist as a form of organisational governance then, during the significant period that he was at the club, the profile of safeguarding certainly became more prominent.
175. However, MS left the club before attitudes and awareness significantly changed. It is within that context that it must be recognised that the knowledge that some players had with regard to the use of pornographic material by MS was never knowingly the subject of positive action or challenge by a senior player at the club. This enabled him to continue with his predatory behaviour, albeit unknown by the other players.
176. At the time the club responded and recognised the requirement for the introduction of a dedicated safeguarding role, and it was initially fulfilled by the person that held the role for the league in which the club competed at the time. When that person left the role, she was succeeded by one of the senior players, who as a former captain of the First XI, was a well-respected person within the club. In turn, there is a line of succession to the current safeguarding officer, who is still a senior player at the club.
177. Following several visits to the club by the review author, and the interview of members and players, it is clear that the profile of the current club safeguarding officer is well known and effectively communicated, including photographs and contact details in the clubhouse and on the club website and social media posts. When interviewed, he also demonstrated a level of knowledge and enthusiasm for safeguarding that was tangible and impressive. His commitment to safeguarding was not in doubt.
178. It was clear that safeguarding is a principle that is positively embraced by the cricket club. The drive, enthusiasm and love of cricket that radiates from the small core of members who are the heartbeat of the club will, in the opinion of the review author, sustain the progress that the club has made if it continues to tap into the safeguarding support and advice available to it from the governing body.

179. Indeed, the club board has already demonstrated its ability to unilaterally achieve practical support, in terms of a financial contribution that helped to fund the improvement of facilities at the club, by securing a significant investment from a multinational company in return for the use of the clubhouse to accommodate training courses.
180. But whilst the safeguarding future of the club has a positive trajectory, when the issue of MS is considered, albeit retrospectively, it is beyond reasonable challenge that the extent of his association with pornography should have caused some concern, particularly due to his leading role in coaching the junior cricketers at the club. With regard to the regularity with which he used to have junior cricketers in his car, what was perceived as his goodwill and enthusiasm was, in reality, his cynical cultivation of pre-meditated opportunities to abuse.
181. It was only after he had left the club in 2002 that the requirement for the club to have a welfare officer was introduced. During the three years that MS then played and coached at his subsequent club, the development of safeguarding as a principle, and as tangible operational practice, is evident from the fact that the ECB created its own, albeit only three members strong, dedicated unit.
182. MS's new club is a club that plays cricket of a higher standard and, as a bigger and better resourced club than his previous one, it does not rely so significantly on a small group of individuals to fulfil the key roles that drive the club forward. In terms of safeguarding, and what was previously referred to as child welfare, the club has had a consistency with regard to its junior coordinator and/or club welfare officer for many years. Ample evidence was provided that the club has always been a well-run organisation with a thriving junior section and always welcoming to families.
183. With regard to the requirement for formal safeguarding structures and policies that were introduced by the ECB during the period that MS was offending as a member of his new club, the evidence of the review suggests that the club focus at the time was primarily on the achievement of Clubmark accreditation, the ticking of the necessary boxes and not the actual usefulness and credibility of the said policies.
184. However, despite the focus of the club apparently not being wholeheartedly where it was required, in terms of safeguarding, the mitigating factor is that a trusted and experienced junior coordinator did remain in place throughout the period in which MS was a member there.
185. Whilst such functional matters as Clubmark accreditation were the priority for the club there is little doubt from the evidence provided in interview by a range of members and players that, even before his formal adoption of the CWO role, the then junior coordinator was very much seen as an approachable and supportive person within the club and would have been the obvious person to go to in the event of any trauma or concern.

186. Notwithstanding that consistently expressed view, it is apparent from the evidence provided that, in common with societal attitudes and many other sports clubs, a positive safeguarding culture had yet to become embedded at the club. That would take time. However, that fact did not manifest itself in a negligent or a careless attitude with regard to the safety of junior players, it was more that the awareness of the dangers of certain behaviours had just not developed to the extent that it has done today. As was the case at his previous club, the danger signs were not recognised.
187. In terms of the culture in the changing room, in which junior and young adult players were often present, it would appear to have been not uncommon for MS to distribute pornography, usually in the form of magazines and videos. One former player talked of how the pornographic playing cards that MS often produced, during bad weather or other breaks in play, also included images of male pornography.
188. Such material was being passed around in the First XI changing room, that would sometimes include junior players of just 15 and 16 years of age. It is also worthy of significant note that towards the end of his time at the club MS played more for the Second XI and, during that period, he would have had access to junior players that were younger still, potentially as young as 13 and 14 years of age.
189. Despite there being ample evidence that his proclivity for pornography was clear, there was no evidence gathered during the review to suggest that any player or member at the club ever challenged MS about his behaviour. It appears to have been considered acceptable in a male changing room.
190. As was the case at his previous club, this allowed him to sustain his inappropriate behaviour in terms of the use and distribution of pornography. The potential safeguarding consequences of such behaviour never appear to have been recognised. Once again, this was despite his extensive involvement with the junior teams at the club.
191. That regular contribution to the junior section at the club included the fact that MS would regularly take coaching sessions in the nets at the club. One former player described how he viewed him as something of a 'Dirty Uncle' type of character, largely due to the pornographic material that he always had but, also, due to his propensity to touch the box area and thighs of the junior players as they prepared to net during the coaching sessions. He described him as a 'touchy guy' and detailed how MS would regularly touch him on his box and upper thigh, and that he would habitually do so with other junior players too.
192. At the time such behaviour did not apparently cause any real concern to the junior players as MS still enjoyed a positive reputation with most of them as he was a good coach and it was viewed as something of a bonus that he was willing to share with them pornographic material that, as youngsters, they were largely unable to access elsewhere, hence his popularity.

193. In terms of the current safeguarding awareness and structures at the club, a prominent and fully knowledgeable safeguarding officer is in place, and she was well known and respected by all of the members that were interviewed, with clear contact details and advice available in the key areas of the club and signs clearly displayed in the changing rooms addressing matters such as banning the use of mobile phones.
194. On a practical level, having recognised the potential risks that existed in the area of the changing facilities and, as a means of being able to better accommodate a diverse playing community, the club recently accessed funding from the ECB County Grants Fund budget to make improvements to their facilities. Six lockable cubicles have been created, each of which contain a shower, affording total privacy to the users, in an area that is separate from the changing rooms.
195. The current safeguarding standards at both clubs are sound and effective. Safeguarding is a standing item at the monthly committee meetings, the voluntary staff have undertaken the necessary training and, critically, they are tangibly committed to maintaining safeguarding standards in their respective clubs and ensuring a safe environment for all.
196. With regard to when MS was offending, evidence was gathered that several people at both clubs were considered to be a person that would have offered support and advice had it been sought by any victim(s). Whilst the club members in question were not, at the time, formally nominated as safeguarding leads in the way that they are today, they had informal profiles and reputations at their respective clubs that made them a likely person to be approached.
197. Additionally, no evidence was gathered that would suggest that a complaint was made, or information shared, by a victim of MS that was not embraced or not acted upon.
198. Due to the limited number of victims that chose to contribute to the review there is an insufficient body of evidence from which to confidently identify any thematic reasons as to why victims did not come forward at the time of their abuse. But, from what is known about those that did take part in the review, and those that made complaints to the police, it was not specifically as the result of a lack of trust in their respective clubs nor the availability of a person they felt able to talk to.

The Key Factors That Prevented MS From Being Brought To Justice Earlier

199. It is important to recognise that no person is responsible for the abuse perpetrated by MS other than MS himself. This review is not about pointing a finger at any person or group and suggesting that, if it were not for what they did, or did not do, then MS would not have abused his victims.
200. The review is more an opportunity to identify what signs were there that he was a malevolent predator so that we can endeavour to promptly identify any such signs in the future should a person with similar intentions come to the fore.

201. It should also be recognised that none of the victims are known to have disclosed their experiences even to their own parents, which is not their fault at all, it is more likely a consequence of the shame and confusion that many of them are likely to have felt. It is only in adulthood that victims have felt confident enough to come forward. It is within that context that any lack of disclosure by the victims, within the environment of their respective cricket clubs, must be considered.

A Lack of Safeguarding Related Awareness

202. As stated throughout the review report, it is essential to acknowledge that MS perpetrated his abuse in a period when people were much less aware of behavioural traits and social situations that may potentially represent a safeguarding risk or a concern. It is within that context that, during the course of the review, it became evident that the primary factor that contributed to his ability to sustain his behaviour was not structural or organisational, it was primarily attitudinal.
203. This manifested itself in the low level of safeguarding related awareness that prevailed at the time in the clubs, and the county, at which he coached and played. In simple terms, it just didn't cross the minds of his fellow players and coaches, and the parents, that he may harbour abusive intent towards some of the teenage boys that he coached.
204. His integrity and the appropriateness of his behaviour was largely assumed. It just did not occur to people that a capable player or coach, such as MS, would have anything but the interests of those that he played with, or coached, at heart. When, retrospectively, the various aspects of his behaviour are cumulatively considered, especially through a safeguarding prism, it is much easier to identify the malevolent intent that MS harboured.
205. Such an application of hindsight, not to mention a knowledge of his offending also, would be an unfair basis upon which to solely judge those who played and coached with him at the time. They were different times and people judged each other by different standards.
206. However, having acknowledged that context, much of the known behaviour of MS has never been acceptable from a person so heavily involved in the coaching of junior players and, thus, it is not an unreasonable expectation that his behaviour should have been the subject of challenge, primarily by those senior players with whom he shared a changing room.

Selection and Appointment

207. The selection and appointment of MS as a coach, at both club and county level, was not the subject of any significant scrutiny, which was the norm at the time. The fact that he was a qualified and well-respected coach, together with the fact that one of his own children often played in the groups and/or teams that he was coaching, confirmed him as a volunteer to be embraced and a valuable resource to be utilised.

208. The purity and appropriateness of his motives were, in effect, taken for granted. His trustworthiness, integrity and reliability were assumed. They were taken as a given, as there was no apparent known reason why they should not be, and he took criminal advantage of that fact.
209. The fact that MS used his role as a coach, particularly his involvement in selection for the county talent pathway, as a means by which to groom junior players and their parents only emphasises the need for such appointments to be the subject of more rigour. Motives and intentions must be thoroughly explored, and less weight given to the fact that the volunteer may be a parent of a player. This case is but the latest example of the fact that determined sexual predators often do not consider the presence of one of their own children to be a practical obstruction or impediment that cannot be overcome.
210. Similarly, the selection of MS to manage a county age group team that was taking part in cricket festivals at remote venues that were spread over several days in other counties and, on one occasion, in Scotland is now known to have represented a significant safeguarding risk. At the time, he was considered a capable coach, whose son was in the team, and he had made himself available, all of which were seen as positive factors.
211. No concerns with regard to his suitability were manifested. The fact that he would watch the boys as they showered, regularly touch their box and share pornographic magazines with them in their dormitory was not known by those in the county talent pathway coaching hierarchy at the time. Had it been there is no doubt that he would not have been trusted by them in the way that he obviously was.

Witness Confidence

212. Only one contributor to the review, who had not been coached by or played in the same team as MS, spoke of personally witnessing a specific incident of abusive behaviour that he felt could have been the basis for him being formally reported as representing a safeguarding concern. That took place in 2002 at a 3–4-day tournament that was being held at a school near Edinburgh. MS was the sole coach for the County under 14's team. The highly credible witness spoke of his concern at MS's habit of standing in the shower area, watching the naked boys washing themselves in the shower after a game.
213. Such was the concern of the witness that he queried the behaviour directly with MS, whom he considered to be a long-standing friend of his. The response he received from MS was what amounted to a confident rebuttal that he was behaving in any way inappropriately by watching the boys in the shower, with MS explaining that "Look, I'm their dad. I look after them when they're away, so I've got to make sure they clean all their bits."

214. The witness also spoke of seeing MS rubbing boys in the groin area, over their clothing, on more than one occasion and reflecting that he saw more behaviour from MS that concerned him during that one tournament than he ever had done before. It is within that context that he spoke of how he very much wrestled with his concerns and did consider taking the matter further but he felt that he may not be believed, especially as his concerns related to a well respected coach who was managing a county age group team.
215. The witness convinced himself that he was overthinking the matter and decided not to share his concerns beyond speaking to his wife. However, during his interview for the review he was candid and honest enough to express his regret that he did not take the matter further at the time, explaining that it had been on his conscience for several years, especially since the media coverage of the case and his subsequent convictions.
216. Such was his angst and concern at what he had witnessed, some thirty years ago, the witness had proactively contacted the current County Safeguarding Officer when he heard of the review as he was aware of how pertinent his testimony was likely to be. When he was then contacted by the review author he was more than willing to assist but the emotional toil that his experience had taken on him was clear.
217. Having interviewed the witness at length it is the opinion of the review author that it is very much to his credit that he had the courage to address his concerns with MS personally and directly in the first place. All of his previous experience with MS had never caused him any concern and he was in a trusted and important position as the lead, and only, coach for the county age group team. It is easy to see how a person could, in such circumstances, decide not to formalise their concerns. There should be no negative judgement applied to that decision and recognition given to the courage of the candour of the witness.

Lack of Peer Scrutiny and Challenge

218. When considering the response to the behaviour of MS from a broader perspective, such was its audacity and brazenness, most specifically with regard to his distribution and showing of pornographic material to juniors, it would not be reasonable to simply conclude that the attitudes that prevailed at the clubs, at which he played and coached, merely reflected those of wider society at the time and, thus, to further conclude that it was never likely that his behaviour would cause any real concern.
219. The fact is that the signs were there that MS was an abusive sexual predator and, whilst acknowledging the danger of applying the perspective of hindsight, it is not an unreasonable expectation that those signs should, by any reasonable benchmark, have attracted more scrutiny and challenge.
220. The review author has no doubt that, had the physically abusive activities of MS been known, or even suspected, within the clubs at which he played and coached, or at the county, he would have been the subject of robust, probably physical, intervention by his fellow players.

221. However, the fact that there is no evidence, other than when he put a pornographic magazine in the kitbag of a friend, that he was ever the subject of challenge or significant scrutiny with regard to his behaviour at either club, is a cause for concern.
222. Clear evidence was provided to the review, from players at both clubs at which he played and coached, that it was not just junior members of the respective clubs that were aware of his distribution and showing of pornography, it was some senior players too. However, other senior players that were interviewed were adamant that they had no such knowledge.
223. The fact is that his various convictions embrace his use of pornography at all three of the clubs that he played and coached at, from the showing of a video in a room at the clubhouse at, the sharing of magazines and videos to junior players, his frequent use of pornographic playing cards, his intimate checking of the box of players in the nets and the pornography he would carry around in his kitbag.
224. His inappropriate behaviour was often undertaken in plain sight, for all to see, and it was consistent over a period of more than a decade. When that context is considered, on the balance of probabilities, the weight of evidence suggests that it is likely that at least some of the inappropriate behaviour perpetrated by MS was known, even if his physical abuse of children was not. Therefore, if some of his inappropriate behaviour was known, even taking into account the context of lower societal awareness of safeguarding matters at the time, it is reasonable to expect that such behaviour should have been addressed.
225. When his habit of sitting in his towel and usually being last out of the changing room, the hosting of parties and sleepovers for junior players at his house, the watching of boys in the showers, the videoing of training sessions, his intrusive comments about intimate relationships with partners, his hanging out with the junior players after games and the regularity with which he was alone with one or more junior players in his vehicle, are all taken into account, the threshold at which greater scrutiny of his behaviour could reasonably have been expected was more than met.
226. This is despite the fact that, at that time, the principle of safeguarding had yet to formally become part of general organisational governance. It should not have required policies and procedures that are, in effect, a formalisation of what constitutes appropriate behaviour, for the inappropriateness of MS's behaviour to be readily evident to those with whom he would spend a considerable amount of time.
227. Instead, the liberal attitude that prevailed at the time towards pornography appears to have prevented any substantial suspicion from taking hold and leading to action from the senior players. Nobody ever joined all the dots of potential concern. His reputation as a sound, reliable player and coach was the one that prevailed. He was viewed as someone who just happened to have access to 'dirty' magazines and videos. At the time cricket was primarily a man's sport, played by men, many of whom probably welcomed the chance the chance to access pornography so easily.

228. From the alternative perspective of the former junior players, it is not wholly surprising that it also became clear from the evidence provided to the review that several of them considered, at the time, the fact that they could access pornography from MS to be very much welcomed and exciting and not, in any way, a cause for concern.
229. Whilst it is of significant relevance that the actual physical abuse that was being perpetrated by MS was not known at the time to anyone but his victims, it is also important to recognise that other relevant aspects of his behaviour, such as that detailed above, were clearly evident. However, whilst the review has the advantage of looking back at that behaviour and recognising its relevance, within the context of what is now known about MS, not all of that behaviour can be categorised as definitively predatory in nature.
230. For example, giving a lift to a junior player, or a group of junior players, especially as a parent or coach, was very much a common thing to do in many recreational sports clubs at the time. Also, socialising with people of a younger age would usually be a completely innocent thing to do, especially if one or more of your own children were in that social group too.
231. Of further relevance is the fact that the unambiguously predatory behaviour of showing pornographic videos, watching the boys in the showers, pulling over when in a vehicle to show junior players pornographic images and cards and the touching of boys in the box area when coaching them in the nets, was not common knowledge amongst the senior members of the respective clubs, nor at the county level.
232. But, having considered the sheer weight of evidence gathered both by this review and presented at court to support his multiple prosecutions, notwithstanding the ability of MS to keep much of his abusive behaviour covert and out of sight, the extent and regularity of the behaviour that he did demonstrate should, by any reasonable expectation, have resulted in him being the subject of more significant scrutiny and challenge than he was. Whilst the worst of what he did was not known, enough was known to have caused concern, especially taking into account his role with the junior club members.

Victim Inhibition

233. The reasons that no disclosures are known to have been made prior to 2005 will be many and varied. They will include personal shame and embarrassment, fear at not being believed, worry about the questions that will be asked and a lack of confidence about alleging against a person of considerable stature, in the eyes of many.
234. The junior cricketers involved are also likely to have been influenced, to some degree, by the fact that, in the hierarchical environment of a cricket changing room, the senior players themselves did not, at least publicly, call MS to account about his behaviour. Within that context it is not surprising that young, inexperienced teenagers did not have the confidence to do so themselves.

235. The significance of the inhibition experienced by the victims of MS is evident from the plain fact that not a single one of them is known to have come forward with any complaint or concern over a period of more than a decade but there is little evidence that this inhibition extended to not having anybody to turn to at the respective clubs.
236. As stated earlier, whilst it was only during the latter part of his time at his last club that formal safeguarding procedures were introduced, such as a Club Welfare Officer, there was ample evidence provided to the review that both clubs had the likes of a junior coordinator or other club members that were likely to have been trusted by victims. It was not the fact that respected and trusted club members were not available should a victim, or other person, have decided to disclose their experience or concern.
237. From the evidence of the review, it is clear that the primary factor that prevented his victims from sharing their abusive experiences was the inhibitory effect of MS himself. He was a compelling, persuasive, and charismatic character, not to mention a physically imposing man too. As such, he was able to cultivate a widespread belief, especially in those junior players that he coached, that he was a person of significant note, whether that be in terms of their own personal cricketing aspirations or on a more reputational and personal level.
238. From the perspective of feeling intimidated, as some victims will, undoubtedly, have been, as a junior player in a local cricket team, how could you expect to be believed when you were up against the opening batsman for the first team and a county coach.
239. From an alternative perspective, he coached them well, he often produced successful junior teams, he gave them expensive gear, he bought them drinks, he hosted parties, and he gave them a lift to and from training. He was also the source of pornographic magazines and videos. For a cricket loving, teenage boy making a complaint or sharing a concern about such an individual would not have been an easy decision. It is within that context that the fact that he was not the subject of complaint, until 2005, should be considered.

A Missed Learning Opportunity

240. Following the interviews of members of both cricket clubs and the relevant county it was clear that neither club nor the county had formally recognised that, since his abusive behaviour had become publicly known, the case of MS represented a basis upon which their respective safeguarding practices and procedures could be the subject of review.
241. There was no indication, at either club nor the county, that the matter had ever been discussed at committee level. Despite the extensive media coverage of the case it was simply not recognised as a potential point of learning for either club or the county.

242. The lack of recognition at his final club, the club for which he played when he was arrested and suspended, is evident as far back as when the initial allegation was made against MS in 2005. The prevailing attitude at the time appears to have been that the allegations were likely to have no substance, with enquiries even being made by the club at the time when the original allegation was not pursued to prosecution, as to when MS could return to his coaching role. It was just not considered credible that such a well-respected figure in the game could be responsible for the alleged abuse.
243. That feeling of disbelief also extended to the suspension of MS by the ECB in 2006. When it eventually became relatively common knowledge at the club, it was widely believed that the suspension would soon be lifted and no action was required. This serves to support the assertion that, at the time that MS was at his final club, the club was more focused upon getting safeguarding structures in place because they were a requirement of achieving Clubmark accreditation as opposed to actually making the said structures effective and viable.
244. A similar lack of recognition seems to have prevailed seven years later, in 2012, when MS was eventually convicted for the first time. The enduring view that there was little to learn from the convictions was rationalised during the review by both clubs claiming that the identity of the victims and the detail of the abuse was not publicly known and, therefore, a definitive basis from which to learn for either club could not be established.
245. The view at his final club was influenced by the belief that the abusive incidents in question took place in the years before MS was ever a member at the club and, as such, the matter was not relevant to their club. This attitude appears to have been consolidated by the fact that most of the media attention was focused on his previous club, fuelling the belief at his final club that the problem lay elsewhere.
246. With regard to that former club, the lack of recognition at the club during the period since 2012 when the various convictions have been in the public domain, demonstrates a similar lack of safeguarding related awareness, as to how the case could be used as a useful platform from which to learn, update and, if necessary, improve safeguarding procedures and practices.
247. When asked about this for the review, both clubs and the county accepted that the matter had never been formally considered. They also cited the issue of the confidentiality of data, relating to the victims and their experiences, as a potential impediment to them learning from the case.
248. However, sufficient detail was in the public domain to enable a meaningful review of practice and procedures to have been carried out. Consent could have been sought for the statutory agencies to share sufficient detail, without revealing identities if necessary, to inform an internal review by the clubs or the county. Or, as per the initiative demonstrated by a local journalist, a confidential approach could have been made to the victims via the police.

249. As it stands, more than 12 years since the initial conviction of MS, the fact that neither club nor the county board have embraced the opportunity to learn from the case, and to ensure that the needs of the victims are being addressed, is a matter of concern.

Issue Specific Conclusions

250. The original ECB decision to suspend MS in 2005/6 was sound and prudent, following the making of a criminal allegation. Effective liaison was undertaken with Northumbria Police and other partner agencies. Following that liaison, foresight was demonstrated by the ECB when that suspension was sustained, despite the decision not to prosecute at the time.
251. The communication of the decision to suspend MS in 2005/6 was not organised and effective, with members of his club at the time and the county coaching set up being unsighted on the decision. This led to his suspension conditions being breached, on more than one occasion, and an environment developing that included doubt, speculation, tension, and potential conflict.
252. The opportunity to use the case of MS as a basis upon which to review, and potentially improve, existing safeguarding policies and procedures was not recognised by the relevant clubs nor the county. There is no evidence that the case was ever the subject of discussion, at committee level of either of his clubs despite local media coverage and contact to the clubs. It is surprising that the case of MS did not act as a catalyst for the review of safeguarding policies and procedures by the clubs and the county.
253. Despite that media coverage of the case, over a period of more than a decade, no confidential steps were taken, by either club or the county, to reach out to the victims and ensure that their support needs were being addressed. Whilst recognising that the reaching out to victims of abuse is a skilled and sensitive matter, it can be achieved and can secure positive outcomes .
254. Whilst it is acknowledged that the county was advised, by the ECB and Northumbria Police, not to contact the initial victim, that advice was imparted in 2005 and there is no evidence that an update on that advice was either sought or provided since then. This includes the whole period in which further victims came forward and well publicised prosecutions were pursued, between 2012 and 2024. ECB involvement in the case had concluded in 2006, until it became aware of media coverage of the prosecutions of MS in 2023.
255. Northumbria Police addressed the respective complaints of crime against MS as separate investigations. Despite multiple allegations of abuse being made, over a period of almost two decades and all being in a cricket environment, the force did not apply the strategic oversight that would sensibly have led to a formal notification to the relevant governing bodies of cricket.

256. The physical abuse of children by MS was not known, nor suspected, at the time by those with whom he played and coached at club and county level. He had the trust of parents and of his fellow coaches and players, enjoying a largely positive reputation in both roles.
257. MS effectively used his coaching and selection role, as part of the county talent pathway, to convince junior cricketers and their parents that his influence, with regard to selection for the county squad, was significant. This perception acted as an inhibitor to his victims in terms of the reporting of his abusive behaviour.
258. The level of safeguarding related awareness at the clubs at which MS played and coached, and at the county level, was low. This largely reflected a correspondingly low level of societal and organisational awareness at the time as to what behaviours may represent a safeguarding risk. Those risks that did emanate from some of his behaviours were not recognised.
259. Notwithstanding that low level of awareness, it is reasonable to expect that the known behaviour of MS should have resulted in him being the subject of greater challenge and scrutiny than he was. This is particularly so when his coaching role with the junior players at club and county level is considered. In simple terms, the club distributor of pornography should not have been trusted with a position of responsibility regarding junior players.
260. There is no evidence that a complaint or concern, relating to the abusive, or otherwise inappropriate, behaviour of MS, was ever made and not embraced by any individual, club or organisation.
261. During a junior cricket tournament in Scotland, in 2002, MS was directly challenged about his inappropriate behaviour. He emphatically refuted the challenge and sought to justify his behaviour. The concerns were not taken further at the time.
262. The ability of MS to access the coaching network, to transport junior players in his car, his overt possession and dissemination of pornographic material, his intimate touching and questioning of players, his videoing of training sessions, his presence in the showers and his hosting of parties and sleepovers for junior players were all critical facilitators with regard to the abuse of his victims.
263. All of the related safeguarding issues are fully addressed in the current ECB policy and practice overseen by the Cricket Regulator and, as such, do not require a recommendation from this review.

Main Conclusions

264. When considering the premeditation and cynicism that resonate throughout the offending of MS, there can be little doubt that he was a capable and inventive manipulator and groomer of teenage boys and their parents. He was adept at pressing the buttons of improvement, personal ambition, and opportunity and, in so doing, he placed himself in a position of influence and power in the eyes of his victims who saw him as the person who could deliver their dream. A more influential position, in the eyes of others, is hard to imagine.
265. MS was, definitively, a sexual predator. He was a compelling, charismatic and persuasive orator, being able to convince adults and children alike that he was a coach of significant influence and connection. He was highly creative at cultivating opportunities for himself to abuse young cricketers that he coached without attracting suspicion with regard to his motives.
266. There is some irony in the fact that his most frequently used method of creating an environment that he could control where he was alone with a junior cricketer was the very gesture for which parents and other club members were most grateful, that being the provision of a lift, to and/or from home, in his own vehicle.
267. It was always a cricketing context within which MS operated. His victims all knew him as a club and a county level coach, with many of them sharing the common endeavour of impressing him as they believed he held their aspirations of progression in his hands.
268. When arrested and interviewed by the police MS initially denied his guilt but, as further allegations were made against him over a period of several years, he eventually acknowledged that he had a sexual preference for young boys and, in the majority of cases, he accepted what he had done.
269. There is no evidence that he conspired with any other person to facilitate his abuse but nor is there any evidence that the respective police investigations, although effective, were formally linked and the many common factors identified. The result was that a holistic, overarching understanding of his cricket related offending was never fully achieved.
270. In terms of social context, it is important to recognise that MS perpetrated the majority of his abuse during a period that preceded the emergence of safeguarding as a key aspect of organisational governance and societal attitudes. Hence, the culture that prevailed in the clubs of which he was a member did not actively contribute to, or facilitate, his behaviour. The cultural interaction with his behaviour was more passive in that much of what he did to manufacture abusive opportunities for himself was simply not recognised as an issue of concern in the way that it may be today.

271. Notwithstanding that cultural passivity and the fact that safeguarding awareness was very much lower during the period of his offending, the general behaviour of MS should have attracted more scrutiny and challenge than it did. His proclivity for using and disseminating pornographic material, his intrusive and inappropriate questioning of junior players, his habit of sitting in the changing room in his towel for long periods, his intimate touching of juniors and the regularity with which he had young players in his car should, by any reasonable benchmark and expectation, have raised concern amongst his peers, particularly as he was the coach of the junior team(s).
272. There is an insufficient body of evidence to conclude that the victims of MS did not have the confidence to share their abusive experiences with a trusted person in their respective clubs or in the county framework. Indeed, the victims did not even disclose to their own parents, or other family members, until they had reached adulthood. It was common for their inhibitions to relate to shame, embarrassment, and the worry of not being believed, especially as it concerned their coach, a person of high standing, or so they perceived.
273. The qualification of MS as a coach did not include a scale and range of assessment that may have identified concerns relating to his behaviour, even if they had existed, which it appears that they did not at the time. His subsequent ability to access the county set up was again, the subject of minimal scrutiny with his coaching qualifications and the fact that his son was in the age group team being seen as reason enough for his endorsement and selection.
274. MS was a genuine cricket enthusiast and that may have been his original motivation but the extent to which he sought coaching roles specifically to facilitate his abusive intentions has not been conclusively determined, especially as he repeatedly declined to participate in the review.

Review Recommendations

275. A national policy should be formulated to clarify how, when and in what circumstances, contact should be sought by the ECB and the Cricket Regulator with an alleged victim of abuse in a cricketing context, without compromising the primacy of any criminal investigation.
276. Proactive steps should be taken by the ECB and the Cricket Regulator to confidentially reach out, without prejudice, to potential victims of abuse following a formal allegation of crime (whilst ensuring adherence to the policy recommended above).
277. The ECB and the Cricket Regulator should devise a formal process with regard to how the fact of the suspension of an individual from cricket is disseminated. That process should include notification to County Safeguarding Officers.

278. The County Safeguarding Officer should be responsible for the communication of the fact of that suspension, or restriction, to the relevant Club Safeguarding Officer(s) and any other person(s) that they consider should be informed, with the safeguarding rationale for their decision being recorded and retained.
279. It should be a formal requirement for a cricket club to immediately notify the ECB and the Cricket Regulator if it becomes aware of a police, or other statutory agency investigation, within a cricketing context, relating to one or more of its members, volunteers or other participants.
280. Following the conviction of a person for a safeguarding related crime in a cricketing context, the club(s) at which that person was, or was formerly, a member, volunteer or other participant, should review and consider their safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
281. Representations should be made by the ECB and the Cricket Regulator to the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) for the introduction of a national policy whereby any police service that is investigating one or more allegations of crime, which relate to a cricket environment, should proactively advise the ECB and the Cricket Regulator of that fact.
282. The policies relating to the use of mobile phones and the possession of pornographic material in cricket changing facilities should be reaffirmed to all clubs, leagues and county bodies that oversee recreational cricket.
283. A centralised registration database of players and coaches should be retained by the ECB and the Cricket Regulator. This database should include a safeguarding flagging system to ensure that any relevant suspensions, behaviour or concerns are able to be identified and acted upon.

Ray Galloway
September 2025

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Hebephile	A person who has a primary sexual interest in post pubescent children
LADO	The Local Authority Designated Officer who is responsible for overseeing concerns, allegations or incidents involving individuals working with children and young people
Talent Pathway	The coaching programme intended to identify talented young players and develop their skills to maximise their potential
Grooming	The preparatory stage of child sexual abuse, undertaken to gain the trust and compliance of the child or young person and to establish secrecy and silence to avoid disclosure.
Clubmark Accreditation	An ECB accreditation scheme for cricket clubs which shows that a club is sustainable, well run and provides the right environment for its members
Club Welfare / Safeguarding Officer	The person within a cricket club that acts as the first point of contact for everyone within the club and the ECB for child and vulnerable adult safeguarding matters. This person is also responsible for ensuring the club is adopting and implementing safeguarding activities necessary for it to fulfil its duty of care for children.
Box	The item of protective equipment used by cricketers to shield their groin area from the impact of the ball.
Sexual Predator	A person who is perceived as engaging or attempting to engage in sexual contact with another person in a predatory or abusive manner.
Club Professional	A professional cricket player who is contracted to play and coach by an amateur club. The professional is paid for the services that they provide.

Glossary of Abbreviations

CWO	Club Welfare Officer
CCWO	County Child Welfare Officer
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
MS	Michael Strange (subject of the review)
POCA	Protection of Children Act
RMG	Referral Management Group
TOR	Terms of Reference

This report is intended solely for informational purposes. It reflects the understanding and interpretation of the author based on the information available at the time of writing. The content herein does not constitute legal advice, nor is it intended to make or imply any defamatory statements about any individual, group, or organisation who may have been connected to Michael Strange. All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure accuracy and fairness of this report. Where reference is made to individuals or events, such references are based on documented sources, publicly available information or witness testimony. Any opinions expressed are those of the author. If any party believes that a statement contained in this report is inaccurate or unfair, they are invited to contact the ECB to provide clarification or correction. The author reserves the right to amend the report accordingly