



Child Sexual Exploitation Routes In, Myths and Early Warning Signs : Messages from Research

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Child Sexual Exploitation - what do we already know?



- There are similar numbers of young women & men involved in c.s.e. ***True or false?***
- All young people involved in c.s.e. have been sexually abused. ***True or false?***
- Substance misuse is high amongst young people involved in c.s.e. ***True or false?***
- How many sex workers were under 18 when they first became involved?
- Child sexual exploitation is very rare & only happen in a few places, usually in gangs and groups. ***True or False?***

Why do we need to know?



- **‘Children and young people involved in prostitution are a stigmatised marginalized and criminalized group’ (Shaw and Butler 1998:190)**
- **‘They are likely to be a largely hidden population & therefore in large part unknown to the agencies providing services aimed at supporting them’ (Cusick 2002)**



The views and experiences of '*Natasha*' aged 15

'My Mum was involved in prostitution. I think that is where I got the idea from. Me & my friend...it was like a dare...we made loads of money & the money was goodso we just carried on.....it was the worst mistake of my life'.

'People say it's easy money, but you disrespect yourself each time. Is my life really worth £30?'

What is the extent of young people's involvement in sexual exploitation?



- 76% of all ACPCs in England confirmed that there were children in their area involved in prostitution. (Swann & Balding 2002)
- The recent 2011 review of how local partnerships respond to cse found a similar dearth of reliable figures with ½ of LSCBs reporting they had recorded no data (Jago et al 2011)
- It is estimated that 80,000 people are involved in sex work in Britain - 70% were children or teenagers when first involved (Home Office 2004)
- A NWG survey 2010 found 2,894 children had engaged with its member services in 2009
- At least 16,500 children were identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation during one year, 201-11.'(Office of the Children's Commissioner 2012)

What is the extent of young people's involvement in sexual exploitation and who are they?



- In 2010/2011 Barnardo's worked with 1190 young people affected by sexual exploitation, an increase of 8% on the previous year. In 2011/12 this rose to 1452.
- There have been very few prosecutions around CSE, in 2010 only 57 people (over 21) were found guilty of offences relating to sexual exploitation, however convictions for indecent images of children rose more markedly
- Between 20-35% of children who are exploited are also children in care (Jago et al 2011, CEOP 2011),
- Children who are being sexually exploited return repeatedly to their abusers in the same pattern as victims of domestic abuse (Children's Commissioner 2012)
- A high proportion of sexually exploited young people go 'missing' or run away for varying periods of time
- The majority of cases relate to white British girls, however boys and young men from black and minority ethnic communities who have not previously accessed services have also been identified as a victim group (Jago et al 2011)



What is Child Sexual Exploitation?

Sexual exploitation of children and young people **under 18** involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person(s)) **receive something** (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, affection, gifts and money) as a result of them performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.

CSE can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.

In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have **power over them** by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation*. DCSF, London.

What is child sexual exploitation? -two young people's perspectives



- ***'People think prostitution is about drugs & pimps, but it's about survival. Some of them have pimps but some have kids to feed, bills to pay- they need money & a place to stay & food. The majority are there to survive.'***

(Natasha aged 16 involved in cse since she was 15)

- ***'Having been in prostitution, it's a lot of the time about money, not about wanting to do it. You do it because you have to; you have to do it to survive.'***

('Nic' aged 20 –involved in cse since he was 15)

Negative push factors:



- **physical and sexual abuse, neglect**
 - **poverty**
 - **family breakdown**
 - **bad experiences of the care system/inadequate social work responses/inadequate aftercare services**
 - **homelessness (often as a consequence of running away from home or care)**
 - **school exclusion**
 - **unemployment/ lack of benefit provision**
 - **drug and alcohol misuse**
 - **social exclusion**
- and
- **the consequent low levels of self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness which exacerbate the push factors and combine with**
 - **the need to survive,**
 - **peer pressure,**
- all of which contribute to potential and continued involvement**

Positive 'pull' factors



- **Excitement**
- **Independence**
- **Access to money**
- **Support from others involved**
- **A muddled way of seeking /gaining affection**
- **A sense of power, which differs from previous abuse experiences**

How do young people get involved? -models for explaining routes in:-



Two main models, from which others have been developed, explain entry:

The Grooming/Entrapment/Coercion model:

- Ensnaring
- Creating dependency
- Taking control
- Total domination of the young person by a 'boyfriend'/abuser (Barnados 1998)

However-coercion isn't as influential when intervention takes place early enough & isn't the only factor influencing entry

Models of drift:

'Young people seem to be indirectly pushed by the circumstances of their lives into prostitution more than they are directly coerced by another person'. (Melrose et al 1999:37)

models of drift consider the agency of the young person to make decisions albeit from limited options

The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into CSE in Gangs & Groups Interim Report Nov 2012



The broad definition of child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups is this:

Gang – mainly comprising men and boys aged 13 – 25 years old, who take part in many forms of criminal activity, such as knife crime or robbery, who can engage in violence against other gangs, and who have identifiable markers such as territory, a name, sometimes clothing etc. While children can be sexually exploited by a gang, this is not the reason why a gang is formed.

Group - By contrast, child sexual exploitation by a group involves people who come together in person or online for the purpose of setting up, co-ordinating and/or taking part in the sexual exploitation of children in either an organised or opportunistic way.

Categories of child sexual exploitation

(Barnados 2011)



The Barnardo's *Puppet on a String* report 2011 defined 3 broad categories of cse which brought some of these themes and issues together:

- Inappropriate relationships
- 'Boyfriend' model of exploitation and peer exploitation
- Organised/networked sexual exploitation or trafficking

Sexual exploitation has links to other types of crime including child trafficking, grooming, domestic abuse, drugs related offences, abusive images of children, gang related activity, immigration offences and domestic servitude.

It also has links to bullying, sexual health, teenage pregnancy, forced marriage, mental health issues.

Routes into involvement in sexual exploitation are complex and variable



- 'it is clear from the research that it is not only white young people who are sexually exploited in the UK, but that risk factors of poverty, disadvantage and abuse exist within all communities.' (Ward and Patel 2007)
- 'Boys are not exploited' is unfortunately the view, probably subconsciously, of many of the professionals working with vulnerable young men'
(Lilleywhite and Skidmore 2006:351)
- 'all those working with young people who are abused through prostitution bear witness to the fact that young people become involved in commercial sexual exploitation for a range of complex & interconnected – even overlapping – reasons and that it is seldom possible to pinpoint a single 'cause'. Rather there is a complex interaction between a range of 'push' & 'pull' factors & between individual & environmental factors.' (Melrose 2004:22)

CSE Myths.....



- **It doesn't happen in this area.**

It happens everywhere but sometimes you have to look for it. There are crimes that have been reported in Norfolk that come under the definition of CSE but there are a lot more that have not been reported if you look at the indicators.

- **It's only committed by gangs of Asian males.**

Actually it is committed across all ethnic and demographic groups with the largest set of perpetrators being white males. It is also committed by lone males as well as groups and gangs. Females can also be offenders.

- **It only happens to girls.**

Young males are also the victims of CSE, although are much less likely to make any disclosures.

CSE Myths....



- **It only happens to children in care homes.**

Whilst a disproportionate number of victims are living in residential care the majority of sexually exploited children were living at home when the abuse started.

- **If the children won't tell us about it there's nothing we can do.**

It may be difficult to build a prosecution without disclosures but other investigative practices can be used. Importantly, however, disruption tactics can be put in place immediately and intelligence can be build to assist with future prosecutions as soon as CSE is suspected.

Examples of CSE



- 15 year old girl with 20 year old boyfriend who has displayed violence towards her and has threatened to harm himself or others if she wishes to end the relationship. This leads to the victim suffering unwanted sexual advances and suffering emotional and physical abuse.
- A gay 14 year boy is introduced by one of his school friends to a man in his 20's whom the friend had met over the internet. The man takes him to his flat for alcohol and drugs and introduces him to a number of other men who want sex in return for money, alcohol and drugs.
- A 48 year old man befriends a 13 year old girl and exposes her to sexualised behaviour in an attempt to de-sensitise her. He proclaims his love for the victim, who genuinely believes she is in a loving relationship with him and accepts his sexual behaviour.



The following are typical vulnerabilities in children PRIOR TO ABUSE:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality)
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect)
- Recent bereavement or loss
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang-associated CSE only)
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited
- Learning disabilities
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families



The following are typical vulnerabilities in children **PRIOR TO ABUSE**

- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited
- Homeless
- Lacking friends from the same age group
- Living in a gang neighbourhood
- Living in residential care
- Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence
- Young carer



The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are ALREADY BEING SEXUALLY EXPLOITED:

- Missing from home or care
- Physical injuries
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Involvement in offending
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations
- Absent from school
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites
- Estranged from their family



The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are ALREADY BEING SEXUALLY EXPLOITED:

- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations
- Poor mental health
- Self-harm
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide

Evidence shows that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation.

Professionals should immediately start an investigation to determine the risk, along with preventative and protective action as required.

What can be done if.....



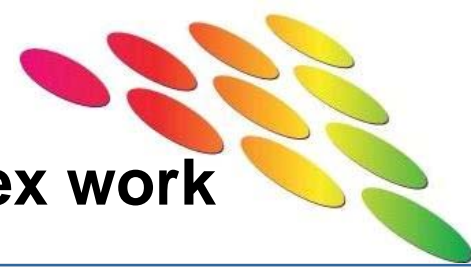
'young people experience themselves as having little value & virtually nothing to lose, & who confront a financial situation which appears to offer them virtually no alternative.'

(Pitts 1997:150)

'Nothing's coincidence-everything you do you do for a reason. If someone tells you for so long that you're crap- then you believe you are crap'

('Ella' quoted in Dodsworth 2011)

Themes emerging from my research on pathways into sexual exploitation and sex work



The research focus:

- Examining different pathways through childhood into sex work, continued involvement or exiting,
- Exploring the meaning given by young and adult women to their childhood experiences, risk and protective factors, critical moments & turning points in their lives & how this impacted on the choices they made
- Examining whether there are identifiable protective factors which enabled some women to 'manage' their pathway through sex work simultaneously with other life experiences, roles and identities -where others cannot

Three groups emerged from the data on 24 women reflecting three different psychological & behavioural strategies for managing sexual exploitation and for some continued involvement in sex work as adults

- Group One- It's who I am' (5 of the 12 were under 18 when first involved in cse)
- Group Two- It's what I do not who I am' (4 of the 8 were under 18 when first involved in cse)
- Group Three –I can't let it be who I am' (3 of the 4 were under 18 when first involved in cse)

Findings



What determines who is likely to be the most vulnerable, and who most able to 'manage' are:

- the accumulation of risk factors in early childhood and the personal, familial and wider ecological resources available to individuals across the lifespan
and
- the individual meanings ascribed to childhood & adult experiences

How these factors are managed:

- influences the degree of victimhood or agency, vulnerability or resilience each individual perceives they have.

Key determinants of pathway outcome were:



- whether, and how, the search for approval and affection was resolved;
 - whether feeling 'different' led to a sense of defeat or strengthened resolve;
 - whether coping strategies were adaptive or maladaptive;
- and crucially:*
- whether individuals experienced the availability of *a secure base relationship*, whatever form it took.

'The only people I really had to help me were the outreach project....they was the people that was there for me. They was the main crutch to hold me up and they got me through a lot of things. They never one day let me go or said I had to sort it out myself. There was always a worker there to support me through everything I was going through.....they are a big part of my life...basically like a family.'

(*'Fiona'* 14 when first involved)

The views of 'Rikki' when asked
how she felt agencies could work more effectively together



'Pull your finger out & do something. It's the oldest profession in the world. It's about time you did something. Police & Social Services should talk to each other.'

I think one department doesn't know what the other is bloody doing! They only talk at conferences –it's too bloody late then.'

(Rikki age 29 involved in sexual exploitation/sex work since she was 13)

The views of 'Amy' on what young people involved in, or at risk of, sexual exploitation want from the professionals working with them.



'Be there for people. They are just normal human beings & they will only tell you things they want you to hear, if they want you to hear them. The only way to find out anything is if you stop putting people in boxes & start looking at them as human beings & talk to them.'

(Amy' involved in cse since she was 17)



What is the way forward?

- It is clear that child sexual exploitation is everyone's responsibility
- Children's Services, the Police Service, Education, Health, Probation and the voluntary specialist agencies all have a crucial part to play
- Lessons from research from good practice and from SCRs suggest that early intervention, clear communication and information sharing is key.

DI Andy Coller will look at the National & Norfolk picture after the break