

2014

Child Sexual Exploitation - Young Person's Working Group Report

'Decisions are made about young people every day but they don't take into account the realities of what young people are actually experiencing.'

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Background and Rationale

As part of the inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) led by independent investigator Kathleen Marshall, Include Youth, an organisation committed to hearing the 'voice of young people' was asked to bring together a group of young people to inform and advise the inquiry.

A range of youth organisations from across Northern Ireland had previously been involved in phase one of the consultation, which focused on assessing young people's knowledge of CSE, raising awareness and obtaining feedback on planned media campaigns. These organisations and young people were then invited to take part in phase two – a young person's working group.

Kate Moffett (Practice Manager at Include Youth) and Gail Neill (Independent Facilitator) met with a number of young people from Include Youth, YouthAction, VOYPIC, Children's Law Centre and GLYNI to establish a working group. This group came together over a number of days in order to share ideas, consider the challenges of addressing CSE and to respond to questions raised by the independent investigator.



The Young People's Working Group used the following definition of CSE. This was a shortened version of a definition produced by the CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI:

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires.”

Sample

The group was accessed through those organisations who had previously consulted with young people within phase one of the inquiry. Introductory sessions were held within organisations to provide background information on CSE and to invite young people to participate in the working group. In total 19 young people took part in phase two. Below is a breakdown of those involved:

Age:

16 – 17 years	7
18 – 20 years	5
21 – 25 years	7

Gender:

Female: 16	Male: 3
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Caring Responsibilities: 1

Disability: 2

Ethnic Origin:

White Irish or British: 17	Irish Traveller: 1	Asian: 1
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Religion:

Catholic: 8
Protestant: 6
Other: 2
None: 3

Participants came from both urban and rural locations across the greater **Belfast area, Co. Antrim and Co. Down.**

Sexual Orientation:

Heterosexual	10
LGB	7
Other/Prefer not to say	2

Methodology:

Those organisations working directly with young people, who had previously been involved in CSE consultation events, were contacted and invited to support young people's participation in a working group. While most felt that this was appropriate and facilitated this engagement, others felt that due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the specific experiences of the young people they worked with, that this method of involvement would not be beneficial. In such instances alternative methods to feed into the group were offered.

A young person's working group was developed and came together over two days in Belfast. Young people were provided with background information and told how their involvement would be recorded and who would have access to the information they provided. They developed a working contract that outlined those measures that they felt were important in keeping them safe and ensuring the involvement of all. Monitoring and consent forms were also completed by all those taking part.



An information leaflet which outlined useful telephone numbers and web addresses based the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) *Safer to Know* website was designed and given to all young people who took part in the working group.

Day One of the working group focused on outlining the remit of the group, getting to know one another, developing a contract and explaining the limits of confidentiality. Using small group participative exercises, the young people discussed their

understanding of CSE, key features of exploitative relationships and the ways in which CSE could be tackled in society (See Appendix 2 for detailed session plan).

On Day Two the group worked on developing poster presentations focusing on a range of questions raised by Kathleen Marshall. The young people were facilitated in small groups to complete this task before being joined by Kathleen. Time was then given for an open floor discussion based on the poster presentation themes and other questions that Kathleen had for the group (see Appendix 2 for detailed session plan). As a way of thanking the young people for their involvement the group concluded with a lunch out in Belfast.

It was agreed that the best way for young people to feed into the CSE Stakeholder event was through the making of a video. This approach was considered to be less intimidating than presenting in person in an adult forum. Young people were made aware who would have access to the video and how it would be used before consent was obtained. General filming took place over the two days the working group met, with further follow up filming undertaken to record direct inputs from participants.

All aspects of involvement in the working group, including filming were voluntary, and consent was obtained at the start and was on-going throughout the process. The working group had access to both the video and this report prior to their launch. Those members of the working group who were interested in attending and introducing their video at the CSE stakeholder event were supported to do so.

Key Themes

The remit of the working group was to discuss themes posed by the independent investigator and to make recommendations on how to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland. While the group recognised the importance of legislative, policing and statutory measures in addressing CSE, these were not central within many of their discussions (as the group were often not familiar with these complex structures). They focused instead mainly on the importance of more educative approaches as a means of addressing CSE.

The following areas were raised by the group:

1. Educating young people:

The young people commented that they had received very little information on CSE, some noting that they had not heard of it prior to their participation in the consultation or working group. In addition they all felt that the information they received on sex and relationships in schools was lacking and recommended that all children and young people be provided with more thorough and consistent information in this area. They felt that this would better equip children and young people to identify the signs of both healthy and exploitative relationships and that this should happen from *‘primary schools up to raise more awareness’*.

They noted that these frank and open discussions could take place with parents, carers, teachers, social workers and youth workers. They felt that it was crucial therefore that training and information be made available to these people. Some also commented that the focus of these discussions should be based on educating rather than ‘scaring’ young people (e.g. some in the group felt that the messages of previous ‘stranger danger’ campaigns were illustrative of how information was shared with young people based on instilling fear rather than educating).

A number of the group felt that schools were best placed to universally target all young people and that specific CSE awareness training should be compulsory for teachers. Others felt however that alternative approaches should also be considered in recognition that not all young people attend

school. Some suggested a '*specific centre*' that all young people '*could access*' or a '*texting service or website*'.

Key finding - Young people stated that sex education in school is poor and called for the delivery of a wider and more consistent curriculum.

Recommendation - Young people suggested that schools provide more information on sex and relationships and that teachers be better trained to deliver this.

2. Educating parents:

The group felt that not all parents had an understanding of CSE and the extent of this in Northern Ireland. As such they called for more targeting of parents and carers in awareness raising campaigns (e.g. "*they [parents] should be doing stuff like we are doing with you now*"). Some young people suggested that a guide on 'spotting the signs of CSE' would be a useful tool for parents and carers. Resources such as this could raise awareness of the issue and help parents and carers proactively address any concerns they had.

The group felt that young people might find it difficult to raise the topic of CSE and believed that if parents and carers were more knowledgeable about the issue, that this might place the onus on them to bring the subject up and to talk more openly with their child about it.

Key finding – Young people felt that parents and carers had a lack of awareness and understanding of CSE which could impact on their ability to talk to children about it.

Recommendation – Young people suggested that parents and carers be provided with more information on CSE in order that they might confidently talk to children about it.

3. Educating others:

The group agreed that in order to address CSE there needed to be a range of adults that young people could talk to should they have concerns for themselves or their peers. As previously noted, the group felt that it may be difficult for young people to broach the subject of CSE with parents (though not in all cases) and as such, access to other appropriate adults (youth worker, social worker, school nurse/counsellor, teachers etc) might make it easier to share any concerns they had.

The group noted that the fear of being judged, labelled or not taken seriously would stop young people sharing their concerns with others. They reiterated the importance of training for those who worked with young people, in any capacity, and the need for them to be non-judgemental, approachable and easy to talk to. One point raised was that carers *'should have more time to build relationships, the child shouldn't feel like they're just another number'*.

Key finding – Young people felt there should be other adults they could talk with if they had a concern about CSE.

Recommendation - Young people suggested that all professionals working with children receive appropriate training on CSE.

4. Feeling supported:

A number of the group noted that young people who have police or social services involvement in their lives can often find it difficult to feel supported. They felt that the involvement of a range of professionals in a young person's life can make it difficult to understand who was 'on their side'. One comment was that *'sometimes workers work against young people instead of trying to work with them and this can get their back up'*. They felt that young people, involved in cases of CSE, should be better informed regarding the function of those professionals they might encounter and the supportive, investigative or advocating role that they might undertake.

The group also noted a difference in how concerns for a young person growing up at home compared to those of a young person within a care setting. They felt that everyday actions and behaviours that a parent might overlook (e.g. coming home late etc) would be handled more severely for young people living in a care setting. They commented that these 'over-reactions' could be interpreted as a worker doing what was best for themselves (e.g. ensuring all possible measures were taken should there be a later investigation) rather than what was best for the young person. The group called for a greater balance between, what they considered, bureaucratic reporting and a more young person centred response. The young people agreed that in a care setting *'more one to one support would be useful, setting boundaries together and having some sort of reward system'*.

Key finding – It was felt that young people who have police or social services involvement in their lives do not always feel supported and find it difficult to know 'who is on their side'.

Recommendation – It was suggested that young people involved in cases of CSE be better informed about the function of all professionals they come into contact with.

5. Empowering young people:

The group highlighted that often in attempts to 'protect' children and young people the focus was on increasing the powers of others (e.g. greater powers to the police in accessing parties in order to remove young people or having mobile phones confiscated should a young person be deemed at risk). While the group acknowledged the potential difficulties in dealing with a young person at risk, they felt that actions (such as those outlined above) could feel like a punishment rather than a protective measure and could in instances leave young people more vulnerable or further isolated.

The group agreed that there should be a greater focus on empowering young people through increased access to information. Some of the group felt that the subject of CSE should be introduced to children in primary school and that

they should explore healthy and unhealthy friendships as a way of building awareness.

Key finding – Young people stated that in attempts to ‘protect’ children and young people the focus was often on increasing the powers of others rather than empowering them.

Recommendation – Young people suggested they could be empowered through increased access to information.

Other areas raised by the group included:

What factors do young people consider in assessing if CSE has taken place...

- The age difference between people involved
- Role of person/ power or influence of person involved
- Vulnerability of the young person
- Changing nature of relationship – “may look innocent at the start but that can change over time”.

Elements of exploitative relationships –

- Forced
- Power imbalance
- Exchange of money or something you want
- Big difference (or not) in age
- Can take place inside or outside of friendship groups
- Appears to offer support and/or a sense of belonging
- Feelings of being pressurized
- Controlling in nature
- Gradually isolating the young person
- Instilling fear

Ideas from young people on how to raise awareness of exploitative relationships with other children and young people –

- Greater education on CSE in schools, youth clubs and youth venues
- Highlighting markers of healthy and exploitative relationships (through sex education in school setting)
- More information for parents and those who care for children and young people, to help them talk about it and also to spot an warning signs
- Videos, media and online campaigns aimed specifically at children, young people and adults.

Appendix 1: Session Plan – Information Day

Aim: To ensure the inclusion of young people’s views within the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Northern Ireland report.

Objectives: By the end of this session young people will have -

- An understanding of CSE and be able to identify key features of this form of abuse.
- Been presented with material that outlines clearly their possible input into the writing of this report.
- Discussed the possible pros and cons of being involved.
- Been provided with sign posting information and support material.

Session Plan:

Activity	Time	Aim/Content	Resources
Introductions & Session Overview	10mins	Facilitators to introduce themselves. Highlight the aims and objectives of the sessions.	Flipchart; markers
Opening Circle	10mins	Participants to share their name with the group and respond to the relevant questions.	Starburst; flipchart with colour questions
Icebreaker (if required)	15mins		
Wordstorm and definition	15mins	General Wordstorm around what is meant by CSE. Conclude by providing CSE definition “Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person/persons exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the persons(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.” (CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI). Open floor for questions.	Flipchart; markers.
What does CSE look like?	20mins	Using a range of scenarios participants are asked to consider if	Statement cards, washing line,

		<p>these fictional young people may be in exploitative relationships.</p> <p>Use the exercise to draw out the range of relationships that young people enter into; the difficulty at times in identifying abuse and the markers of less healthy relationships.</p>	pegs
Next steps	10mins	<p>We are looking to work with a group of young people over 2 full days (provide idea of provisional time and location) to think about this topic further and who will help inform youth recommendations to the lead investigator.</p> <p>Involvement is voluntary, you would be supported in getting to the venue and lunch and/or dinner will be supplied.</p>	Flipchart/markers
Pros and Cons of getting involved (Developing informed consent)	15mins	<p>In small groups consider what might be some of the pros (benefits) and con (pitfalls or dangers) of being involved.</p> <p>Share these within the larger group and facilitator to respond.</p>	Pens; Paper.
Next steps	5mins	Those interested to supply contact information.	Contact sheets
Sign posting	5mins	Provide contact details for those organisations that participants or their friends or family might find useful.	Leaflet
Closing Circle	10mins	Thank participants for their involvement.	

Resources: Flipchart; markers; pen; paper; Starburst; washing line; tape; pegs; statement cards; contact sheets; signposting leaflet.

Appendix 2: Young Person's Working Group (Day 1)

By the end of the session young people will have:

- An understanding of the role of the working group
- Consented to take part
- Understand Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and be able to identify key features.

Activity	Time	Aim/Content	Resources
Welcome, House-keeping and Introductions	11am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce staff - Explain Young Person's Working Group Role - Opening Circle - Consent (filming) 	Consent sheets & Monitoring sheets
Icebreakers	11.15am		
Contract	11.45am	What actions are required to make today a staff and worthwhile day for everyone?	Flipchart & markers
What is CSE?	11.55am	Recap on definition/ display on flipchart around the room.	
What CSE looks like	12noon	<p>Use the exercise to draw out the range of relationships that young people enter into; the difficulty at times in identifying abuse and the markers of less healthy relationships.</p> <p>In small groups individuals are asked to read the scenario and place it somewhere on healthy/not healthy washing line.</p>	Scenarios, flipchart, markers, washing line, tape.
LUNCH	1.00pm		
Questions from the Investigator	2.00pm	<p>In small groups work on 4 specific areas – developing answers or raising further questions, problems or concerns</p> <p>Allow each group time to feedback and open floor discussion.</p>	Flipchart, markers & questions
Session Evaluation & Sign-posting	2.45pm	<p>To camera or written highlight something that you enjoyed or found interesting about the day.</p> <p>Make plans for lunch/activity on day ii</p>	Sign-posting leaflet

Appendix 3: Young Person's Working Group (Day 2)

By the end of the session young people will have:

- Highlighted their priorities regarding CSE
- Received an update and had a conversation with the Independent Investigator
- Agreed the next phase of the project

Activity	Time	Aim/Content	Resources
Welcome, House-keeping and Introductions	11am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain Young Person's Working Group Role - Opening Circle - Consent (filming) 	Consent sheets & Monitoring sheets
Icebreakers	11.05am		
Contract	11.10am	What actions are required to make today a staff and worthwhile day for everyone? (Recap)	Flipchart & markers
Review of key points	11.15am	Review the flipcharts from final exercise in day one. Identify emerging themes.	Flipchart
Update by Kathleen	11.45am	Update or process to date or key themes emerging.	
Facilitated discussion - chaired by Kathleen	12noon		
What next	12.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Kathleen to explain what happens next with the report. * Young people to discuss their role in that (video, in person etc) * Gather contact details for follow up * Do you want named in credits 	Flipchart, markers & questions
Video work	12.45pm	To camera or written – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What should be done in the future with regards to CSE? - What did you enjoy about being part of the working group? - Themes (what could be done in this particular area?) Awareness raising with young people and those who work with young people; Education; Sex Education 	Sign-posting leaflet
Lunch	1.00pm	Victoria Square	

Appendix 4: Information Leaflet

Further support and information: If you are

concerned about Child Sexual Exploitation ring the Police on **101** or if there is immediate danger **999**. You can also ring Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111**.

Other sources of information and help for **Young People** -

ChildLine	0800 1111	A private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen. Call free on, or have a 1-2-1 chat online or send an email via their website at www.childline.org.uk any time of the day or night.
Lifeline	0808 800 8000 available 24/7 (calls are free from U.K. landlines & mobiles)	The Northern Ireland crisis response helpline service for people who are experiencing distress or despair

Other sources of information and help for **adults** -

NSPCC Adult Helpline	0808 800 5000 (free from landlines & most mobiles)	A 24/7 line purposely for adults to express concerns they may have in relation to a child/young person.. Visit www.nspcc.org.uk for other methods of getting in touch
Barnardo's Safe Choices	028 9065 8511	Works with children and young people who are at risk of being sexually exploited. The service can provide advice where there are concerns that a child or young person is going missing, help in identifying the signs that a young person might be sexually exploited, advice on how to help a child or young person exit an exploitative situation; and information about other relevant

		agencies and how to contact them.
Parenting N.I.	0808 8010 722 Freephone (Mon – Thurs: 9am-8pm, Fri: 9am – 5pm) or request out-of-hours assistance via their website www.parentingni.org	A leading organisation providing support and services based on the needs of parents/carers.
Women’s Aid Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline	0800 802 1414	A dedicated Helpline which operates 24 hours a day. It is open to anyone, male or female who may be a victim of abuse.
Social Services Gateway	Belfast HSC Trust: 028 9050 7000 South Eastern HSC Trust: 0300 1000 300 Northern HSC Trust: 0300 1234 333 Southern HSC Trust: 0800 7837 745 Western HSC Trust: 028 7131 4090	A social work service for children and families. It is the first point of contact for people who are concerned about a child or young person not already known to social services.

www.safertoknow.info

Appendix 5 - Monitoring Form

EQUALITY MONITORING FORM – PLEASE FILL THIS IN, THANK YOU!

Event:

Date:

Venue:

We are collecting data about the people who attend our events in order to improve how we work. You do not have to fill in this form, but we will be very grateful if you do. This information is being collected anonymously. There will be no connection made between you and the information on this form. This information will be stored confidentially and will be used for Equality Monitoring purposes only. Therefore, please do not write your name on this form.

1. Age

Under 16 ☐ 16-17 ☐ 18-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 65+ ☐

2. Gender (please tick the appropriate box)

Female ☐ Male ☐

3. Are you married or in a civil partnership?

Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Dependent Children/Caring responsibilities

Do you have responsibility for children under 18 or are you the primary carer for someone who needs such care because of disability, old age or long term illness?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please give details. _____

5. Disability

Do you consider yourself to have/have had a disability?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, what is or was the nature of the disability?

6. Ethnic Origin

What is your Ethnic origin (Please tick the appropriate box)

White Irish or British	<input type="checkbox"/>	White European	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Traveller	
Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Other	

Any other ethnic group (please specify) _____

7. Religion

Would you describe yourself as:

Catholic ☐ Protestant ☐ Other ☐ None ☐

If other, please give details _____

8. Sexual Orientation

Would you describe yourself as:

Heterosexual ☐ Homosexual/Lesbian ☐ Bisexual ☐ Other/prefer not to say ☐