

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):

*Awareness, identification,
support and prevention*



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Introduction

Research review and practice resource

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a pressing child welfare issue. Over the last 15 years it has received a good deal of media attention, and there have been significant research, policy and practice developments. As a largely hidden phenomenon it is not possible to know the prevalence of CSE with certainty and it often raises difficult issues around the balance between respecting children/young people's rights to choice and agency and the need to ensure their care and protection. Consequently, CSE poses challenges for professionals, organisations and communities seeking to both safeguard child welfare and promote children/young people's rights.

Following the arguments of the Munro Review of Child Protection (Munro 2011), a key theme in this resource is good practice in the area of CSE, as others, requires professional curiosity and effective professional judgement rather than merely following routine procedures, however good those procedures might be. One of the key ingredients underpinning

sound professional judgement is reflexivity – the ability to reflect on our own thinking and actions. This in turn requires us to identify the assumptions underpinning our beliefs, question the evidence for them, and consider how they have influenced us to arrive at a particular understanding or course of action.

This resource has primarily been produced for child, youth and family practitioners working within children's social care services in England who have key roles and responsibilities in relation to child welfare, child protection, family support, disabled children/young people and Looked after Children. However, all members of society have a role in preventing and tackling CSE and the resource may have use for a broader audience seeking to better understand the nature and prevalence of CSE in the UK, and the key features of current English law, policy and practice in respect of CSE. The resource has two main parts which respectively focus on: 1) Awareness and identification; and 2) Support and prevention in respect of CSE.

About the author



Robin Sen practised as a local authority child and family social worker in Glasgow and he also undertook community development work there. His teaching and research have been in the areas of child protection social work, family support and children in out of home care.

Part 1: Awareness and identification

Reflective exercise 1: Thinking about your role and responsibilities in regard to CSE in pairs with someone else from your team

Firstly by yourself

1. Identify your individual responsibilities in respect of CSE and how these fit with your team's responsibilities around CSE.
2. What would you do if you had concerns about CSE in respect of a child/young person?
3. Whom would you discuss it with inside your team? Would you discuss it with anyone else outside your team? Name who these people are.

Secondly in pairs with someone else in your team

4. Compare your answers with a colleague – are there any surprises in either of your responses?
5. If you are unclear about anything in points 1-3 discuss with your colleague and develop a list of what you each need to find out about and how you will find out about it.

1. Defining CSE and its key features

There are a number of different definitions of CSE with no agreed definitive one. The Government has recently released a new definition of CSE as follows (DfE 2017: 5):

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

This replaces the previously, widely cited, government definition included in the guidance

Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DCSF 2009). This stated that:

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation 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/young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability (DCSF 2009: 9).

A number of points arise from considering these definitions regarding the nature of CSE as we currently understand it. Firstly, CSE involves sexual activity perpetrated against children/ young people by those in a position of trust, power or authority over them. The exploitative character of CSE may exhibit itself in different ways. It could be via explicit force - coercive sexual violence, physical violence or threats of violence from perpetrators towards a child/young person or their family. Often, however, the exploitation is also underpinned by less overt coercion - manipulation through grooming including the provision of gifts, money and the provision of alcohol or drugs to the child/young person whereby they do not themselves recognise or fully recognise they are being exploited. Notably, under UK law a child/young person cannot legally consent to sexual activity where exploitation is involved, and this provision applies to young people aged 16 or 17 years of age who are legally able to consent to non-exploitative sexual activity.

CSE can involve sexual abuse via direct sexual contact but can also be perpetrated without direct contact. Exploitation via direct sexual contact includes vaginal, oral, anal penetration and intimate touching. Non-contact sexual exploitation includes exposing a child/young person to sexual activity between others and the taking and sharing of sexually explicit images of a child/young person. The use of images may occur after a child/young person is persuaded to share an explicit image of themselves online or via a mobile phone which can then be shared more widely, in some cases, without the child/young person's awareness. Exploitation via direct sexual contact and non-contact may also co-exist – for example

a perpetrator could film and share an act of sexual abuse perpetrated by them against a child/young person and subsequently share it.

Thirdly, perpetrators of CSE can act as lone individuals or in groups. Where CSE is undertaken by groups of perpetrators, the groups can range from looser networks of perpetrators, who know each other already and who may jointly exploit the same child/ children or young person/young people, to highly organised criminal networks purposely established to engage in CSE. CSE involving criminal networks may involve the external trafficking of children/young people from abroad into the UK, and the internal trafficking of children/young people around the country, for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Brayley and Cockbain 2014).

While it can be said that all CSE is a form of 'child sexual abuse', and all 'child sexual abuse' is exploitative, in most cases a distinction is made between the two. 'Child sexual abuse' tends to be used as a broader term which includes sexual abuse perpetrated against very young children, and also includes sexual abuse perpetrated against children/ young people by those within immediate family networks. In CSE the focus tends to be on sexually exploitative acts perpetrated by those outside the immediate family network, and against adolescent young people. Current evidence suggests that those young people 12 and above are at greatest risk of CSE (Beckett 2011; Brayley and Cockbain 2014). However, these features of CSE may not always hold true. In some cases family members in a child/ young person's network have been involved in grooming them for sexual exploitation (Berelowitz 2013) and there is also evidence that children as young as six have sometimes been subject to CSE (Chase and Statham 2005).

Finally, it should be noted that there are links between CSE and all forms of maltreatment.

Children/young people who have already been subject to other forms of maltreatment are at greater risk of CSE (Berelowitz 2013; Flood and Holmes 2016). There appear to be particular links between CSE and child neglect (Flood and Holmes 2016). These links exist because of the cumulative impact of child neglect on a

child/young person's individual development and the links between child neglect and the absence of supportive social relationships and networks in a child/young person's life. These factors combine to increase a young person's vulnerability to CSE (ibid.)

Box 1: Key terminology in this resource

- If age is not otherwise specified 'child/children' is used to refer to those who are 11 years of age and younger, while 'young person/young people', 'young woman/young women', and 'young man/young men' are used to refer to those who are 12-17 years old. Child/young person is used when referring to those aged 0-17. It is worth noting that while young people aged 12-17 seem to be the most common victims of CSE, those under 12 may be subject to it as well.
- 'CSE' will be used as an abbreviation for 'Child Sexual Exploitation' to refer to the sexual exploitation of children and young people aged 0-17. While this age group are the focus of this resource, it is important to recognise that young people aged over 18, especially young people with additional needs and disabilities, may also be subject to sexual exploitation and that the law offers some, albeit lesser, legal protection for adults in this regard.

2. The Law and CSE

This section provides an overview of the key legal provisions connected to sexual activity, CSE and Police disruption powers in England at the time of writing.

Sexual offences and consent

The age of consent for sexual activity in England is 16 years for both males and females and it is illegal to engage in sexual activity with someone who is younger than this. While it is therefore illegal for two young people under 16 to engage in sexual activity, Home Office guidance suggests that where young people under the age of 16, who are of a similar age, consensually engage in sexual activity, they will not be prosecuted (FPA 2015).

Children and young people aged twelve or under cannot legally consent to any sexual activity and therefore any penetrative sexual act perpetrated against someone of this age is automatically considered statutory rape in law. The Sexual Offences Act (2003) gives specific protection to young people aged 16 and 17, by establishing that no-one under 18 can legally consent to sexual activity where exploitation is involved. Therefore, even though 16 and 17 year olds are legally able to consent to sexual activity, the law still offers them this protection against sexual exploitation. Additionally, where an adult is in a position of trust in relation to a young person (e.g. a teacher, social worker, community worker) it is illegal for that adult to engage in sexual activity with that young

person while they are under 18². So, by way of illustration, it is illegal for a teacher to engage in sexual activity with a pupil aged 16 or 17 who attends their school.

When working with older young people approaching adulthood, transition arrangements for supporting them once adults need to be considered (Heal 2015). Children's services have specific legal duties to support the welfare of Looked after Children and young people with a disability beyond the age of 18. More generally, vulnerable adults are also afforded potential protection against sexual exploitation via parts of the 2014 Care Act. This Act gives local authorities specific safeguarding responsibilities for adults who have care and support needs, who are experiencing abuse or neglect, or at risk of doing so, and who are unable to protect themselves due to their care and support needs. Whether these duties will be consistently interpreted to apply to young adults who are experiencing sexual exploitation is as yet unclear. The wording of the Care Act suggests this will come down to how local authorities seek to apply the definition of 'care and support' needs.

The Sexual Offences Act (2003) introduced a range of new offences relating to the grooming and sexual exploitation of children and young people. These include for a child/young person 16 or under:

- Causing or inciting them to engage in sexual activity.
- Engaging in sexual activity in their presence.
- Befriending them in person or online with the intent of engaging in sexual activity with them.
- Meeting or intending to meet them following sexual grooming, either online or in person.

Additionally, the Serious Crime Act (2015) has now amended the Sexual Offences Act so that

it is now also a criminal offence for an adult to send any sexual message via a mobile phone or social media to a child/young person under 16 years old.

The Sexual Offences Act (2003) also makes it illegal to:

- Pay for the sexual services of a child/young person who is under 18.
- Cause or incite a child/young person under 18 to be exploited through prostitution or pornography, including the creation and distribution of sexually explicit images of children.
- Traffick any person (child/young person or adult) into, within or out of the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

It is also worth noting that the Serious Crime Act (2015) amended the Sexual Offences Act (2003) to remove previous references in this Act to 'child prostitution' and 'child pornography'. This is because there have been moves over the last 20 years to replace the previous terminology with language such as 'children/young people abused through prostitution' or 'children/young people exploited through pornography'. The language shift reflects a recognition of the distinction between adult and child worlds and the abusive power relationships underpinning a child/young person's involvement in prostitution or pornography (Chase and Statham 2005; House of Commons 2013). The Serious Crime Act (2015) further decriminalised 'soliciting for the purposes of prostitution' for those who are under 18. Therefore, while it is a crime for an adult to pay for the sexual services of a child/young person under 18, those under 18 can no longer be charged by the Police for involvement in prostitution - as young people regularly were until the late 1990s.

²The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000

Box 2: Estimates of the prevalence of CSE: recent data and emerging evidence

Accurately estimating the extent of CSE is difficult because of the hidden nature of the issue. Estimates of CSE prevalence come in two forms: the number of children/young people reported and recorded in official terms as already being subject to CSE; and the number of children/young people who are at risk of CSE. There are some problems with both of these estimates. The first category is influenced by practitioner and agency reporting and recording procedures and decisions. The second category contains greater numbers of children/young people due to the fact CSE is known to be under-reported and under-detected. However, estimates of numbers 'at risk' are influenced by interpretations of what being 'at risk' means and how it is measured. They are also based on projections about what might happen in the future rather than predictions of what necessarily will happen. Bearing these issues in mind, it is nonetheless useful to consider what the current scale of CSE may be thought to be.

Children/young people who have experienced CSE

- In 2006 the Home Office (now the Ministry of Justice) estimated that approximately 5,000 children and young people under 18 were affected by CSE in England and Wales, but noted this was likely to be an underestimate (McClelland and Newell 2013).
- Berelowitz (2013) reported that 2,409 children and young people in England were victims of CSE by gangs and groups alone.
- The Independent Inquiry Into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (Jay 2014) produced a 'conservative estimate' that around 1,400 children and young people had been subject to CSE in and around Rotherham from 1997– 2013. This number is equivalent to around 2.5% of the current number of children and young people living in Rotherham.

Children/young people at Risk of CSE

- Berelowitz (2013) identified 16,500 children and young people in England were at 'high risk' of CSE.
- Beckett's (2011) research on CSE in Northern Ireland found CSE was a 'concern' for social workers in relation to one in seven young people receiving social work support services. Extrapolating Beckett's findings to England, based on the official data indicating there were around 140,000 children and young people aged 10-17 who were either Looked After Children or on Child Protection Plans, this would mean that CSE was a concern for around 20,000 children and young people.
- In addition to these 20,000, who might be considered to be at the highest risk of CSE, the most recent government statistics for England show that of the Children in Need (CIN) referrals that went forward for social care assessment in 2015/16, 17,600 (or 3.9% of the total) identified CSE as a concern within the assessment (DfE, 2016).
- In total therefore, a very rough estimate is that CSE is a notable concern for close to 40,000 children/young people in England currently in contact with children's social care. There is additionally likely to be other children/young people who are not known to children's social care for whom CSE is a notable concern over and above this estimate.

It is important to note that the age category of 10-17 years is used as Government statistics for Looked After Children. For children and young people on Child Protection Plans the age categories for data are 10-15 years and 16 years and over.

Box 3: The harmful effects of CSE for children and young people

- The possible mental health effects of being subject to sexual abuse as a child/young person include anxiety, conduct disorder, depression, eating disorders, low self-esteem, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), self-harm and suicide attempts (Glaser 2016).
- The potential effects on future behaviour and development include age-inappropriate sexual activity, alcohol and drug misuse, lack of ability to trust others and build relationships, and involvement in the sexual victimisation of others. Physical health implications include contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), unplanned pregnancy and possible termination, physical injury and genital injury (Glaser 2016; McClelland and Newell 2013). There is also a significant link between exposure to sexual abuse as a child/young person and the likelihood of experiencing behavioural problems, poor physical health and poor mental health as an adult (Glaser 2016).
- Notably not all children and young people subject to sexual abuse will exhibit all of these issues. However, some of the effects may also take time to manifest themselves after exposure to the abuse had ended.
- The severity of the effects of CSE will be influenced by a combination of:
 - Individual child/young person level factors: Pre-existing mental health and psychology; age; gender; framing of what has happened to them, particularly the extent to which blame or shame regarding the abuse is internalised.
 - Abuse related factors: Duration, nature and severity of the abuse.
 - Support related factors: Whether the abuse completely ceases; whether there is provision of therapeutic support around the psychological and emotional impact of the abuse; whether there are familial and professional networks of effective support (Glaser 2016; Thapar et al. 2016).

Police disruption powers

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014), the Police in England and Wales gained powers to 'disrupt' suspected perpetrators of CSE where there is not (yet) sufficient evidence to bring a criminal prosecution. Firstly, where Police believe that a person poses a risk to others they can apply to court for a Sexual Harm Prevention Order against a person convicted or cautioned for a previous sexual offence under the Sexual Offences Act (2003)³. The risk the person poses may be to adults, but when a court decides on whether to impose an Order, there is scope to consider risks to children, young people and vulnerable adults in the UK generally, or specific children, young people and vulnerable adults within and outside the UK. If a Sexual Harm Prevention Order is granted it prohibits the person subject to it from doing anything specified in the order and can include a restriction on travel outside the UK. The order lasts for a fixed term of a minimum of five years, or until a further order is granted by court.

Under the 2014 Act, where Police have reasonable grounds to believe CSE is taking place, they can also:

- Issue a Closure Notice or apply to the magistrates court for a Closure Order to shut down premises where they believe the CSE is occurring.
- Request hotels provide them with the names and addresses of guests where they believe CSE is occurring within that hotel.

3. Perpetrators and victims

This section considers what we currently know about perpetrators and victims of CSE. Similarly to the issue of prevalence, what we currently know is likely to be a partial picture, and it is also likely to change as patterns of CSE alter over time. However, an awareness of known current information regarding perpetrators and victims can provide a useful wider context, so long as it is recognised that individual cases of CSE will not always neatly fit into them. The importance of questioning the assumptions underpinning your practice in this area remains key.

³The police may also apply for an Order against some found not guilty of a sexual offence 'by reason of insanity and found to have a disability and to have done the act charged'

Reflective exercise 2: Who are the victims of CSE? Who are the perpetrators?

This exercise is best done in pairs with a colleague but you can do it by yourself as well if you prefer:

1. Think of a victim of CSE who first comes to your mind when you hear the words 'Child Sexual Exploitation'. Go with what your first thoughts are. Write down a description of this person and the nature of CSE they are subject to.
2. Think of a perpetrator of CSE who first comes to your mind when you hear the words 'Child Sexual Exploitation'. Go with what your first thoughts are. Write down a description of this person and the nature of CSE they are involved in.
3. Look again at your descriptions. What are these based on (e.g. media reporting, practice experience, research, other beliefs)? What assumptions can be identified which underlie your descriptions?
4. Discuss the assumptions you identified with a colleague and the implications of these assumptions for practice around CSE.

Adult males are notably more likely to be perpetrators of CSE and young women the most likely victims (Beckett 2011; Brayley and Cockbain 2014). There are documented cases of adult female perpetrators of CSE targeting both male and female victims, but these cases are notably fewer than those involving adult male perpetrators (Brayley et al. 2014). Current evidence suggests that it is overwhelmingly adult males who are responsible for the internal and external trafficking of children and young people for the purposes of CSE and young women are overwhelmingly the victims (Brayley and Cockbain 2014).

A number of the higher profile cases of CSE in recent years have involved CSE perpetrated by groups of Asian, predominantly Pakistani, men principally against young women from a White British background. The extent to which such abuse stemmed from wider cultural attitudes within sections of the Pakistani community has been debated (see HOC 2013b). It also needs to be recognised that CSE is connected to a framing of sexuality and sexual relationships based around domination, power and control. Such a framing has a largely

gendered aspect linked to a construction of male power and sexuality which cuts across different cultures and social groups within UK society, rather than being restricted to one group or culture. There is though evidence that in some recent cases of CSE there was some reluctance to acknowledge the scale of CSE being undertaken by Asian perpetrators by some services, and a refusal by some senior managers and leaders to engage the wider Asian community around the issue due to concerns about its political sensitivity (HOC 2013a; Jay 2014). At the same time, there are suggestions that the media focus on Asian perpetrators has been imbalanced given the rates of sexual offending committed by Asian perpetrators are similar to the rates of sexual offending committed by White British perpetrators when the respective population sizes are taken into account (Peach et al. 2014.)

Though less likely to be victims, boys and young men are also subject to CSE and there is some evidence that their vulnerabilities and experiences are more hidden and stigmatised (Brayley et al. 2014). Barnardo's (2012) reported 10% of CSE victims accessing their services

were male but in some areas this was as high as a third. It is also believed that CSE experienced by certain groups of children/young people is currently less likely to be identified. Firstly Jago et al (2011) identified that practitioners can overlook CSE against 16-17 year olds due to the fact that they are older and legally able to consent to sex. CSE against black and minority ethnic (BME) victims is also thought to be under-identified (Jago et al. 2011; Peach et al. 2014). Within some South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) communities under-identification of abuse may be linked to victims' fears of speaking out due to notions of izzat, or the need to protect family honour, and the stigma attached to sexual abuse (Peach et al. 2014).

Peer to Peer Sexual Victimization

Though adults are most likely to perpetrate CSE, the sexual victimisation of children/young people can also happen through peer to peer interaction. Current evidence suggests this appears to be a particular concern in youth gangs (Berelowitz 2013), and there is the possibility that young people could be simultaneously be subject to CSE from peers while engaging in sexually exploitative behaviour of other children/young people (Beckett et al. 2013).

Over and above CSE within groups and gangs, there are also some issues in respect of this within adolescent relationships more generally, particularly around 'sexting' between young people - where sexting is the sending of sexually explicit images by mobile phone or the internet. The pressures that young people may place on each other around sexting- and in particular the ways in which it can amplify sexist and misogynist attitudes amongst young people has been noted as a concern (Ringrose et al. 2012). Sexting is an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, as it is classed as part of 'creating and distributing child abuse images', even where the images are sent by

a young person. A young person could find themselves charged, cautioned or even placed on the Sex Offenders Register as a result of involvement in sexting. Given evidence that sexting appears widespread amongst young people growing up with access to smart phones, this highlights the need to educate them about the potential consequences of this activity for them and their peers. Concerns have also been raised that the current framing of the law harshly risks criminalising young people for engaging in an activity that is widespread amongst their generation. Individual cases reported in the media illustrate this concern. In one case a 16 year old woman sent her then boyfriend a picture of her topless and he then forwarded it to other friends after they split up. The young woman was herself initially investigated by the Police and the ex-boyfriend subsequently received a Police caution following the investigation (Guardian 2015a). In another case a young man aged 14 had his name added to the Police database after he sent a young woman in his class a picture of himself naked from his phone (Guardian 2015b).

While practitioners need to be aware of the risks to children/young people from all types of sexual exploitation and victimisation, including those from peers, it is also important to distinguish responses to different types of behaviours that may be grouped together under the broad label of 'child sexual exploitation'. Where the perpetrators of sexual victimisation are other children/young people, under the Children Act 1989, the welfare of both those perpetrating and subject to the abuse should be the paramount consideration in any professional response.

Reflective exercise 3: Thinking about Peer to Peer sexual victimisation and CSE

Reflect on the following questions by yourself and/or discuss with a colleague:

1. What are the similarities and differences between peer to peer sexual victimisation and adult to child/young person CSE?
2. Focusing on the differences you have identified, what are the implications of these for your practice?

4. Vulnerability factors and indicators of CSE

This section reviews key evidence about 'vulnerability factors' to CSE and 'indicators' of CSE. These can help practitioners identify where it is necessary to undertake more in-depth risks and needs assessments, moving beyond simplistic assumptions about which children/young people are likely to be victims of CSE. In the list below, 'vulnerability factors' in children/young people may be thought of as risk factors for CSE and can help identify particular at risk groups of children/young people. This means that, according to research and official data, children/young people in these circumstances are more likely to experience CSE in the future. By contrast, 'indicators' are factors which may identify that a child/young person is currently already being subjected to CSE. It is however the case that a number of the 'vulnerability' and 'indicator' factors overlap: for example, a child/young person misusing alcohol or drugs can be a factor which both increases their vulnerability to CSE before it has occurred, and a sign that CSE is currently occurring.

It is important to note that the existence of either 'vulnerability factors' or 'indicators' in a child/young person's life does not mean that they are definitely being subject to CSE: there are, for example, many Looked after Children and many children/young people with a disability for whom CSE will never be an issue. However, where the factors below are apparent in the life of a child/young person,

particular a number of them in combination, it should highlight the need for more thorough assessment of their circumstances and needs for support. A further point to note is that where a child/young person has already been subject to CSE they are at greater risk of it re-occurring as they may be more likely to be re-targeted by the same or different perpetrators, and some of the vulnerability factors connected to CSE (e.g. low self-esteem; isolation; alcohol and drug misuse) may become more strongly evident for that child/young person unless effective support is provided.

Increased vulnerability factors

This list identifies key characteristics which mean that a child/young person may be more likely to come into contact with, or be targeted by, perpetrators who try to sexually exploit them. The child/young person:

- Is going missing from home or care
- Is not regularly attending school or alternative education
- Has a disability, particularly a learning disability
- Has prior experience of victimisation through abuse and maltreatment, particularly sexual abuse or neglect
- Has low self-esteem and lacks a positive peer network
- Lives in a household where there are pronounced family difficulties affecting child care

- Is in the care system, particularly a young woman in residential care
- Is part of a gang
- Is misusing alcohol or drugs

(See Beckett 2011; Berelowitz 2013; HOC 2013b; Miller and Brown 2014; Flood and Holmes 2016).

Indicators of current CSE victimisation

This list sets out factors which may indicate a child/young person is already experiencing CSE. The child/young person:

- Is going regularly missing from education, home or care
- Is self-harming
- Is displaying uncharacteristic negative changes in behaviour, appearance and mood
- Has contracted STIs, become pregnant or had an abortion
- Has gifts or possessions which they do not have a credible explanation for
- Is misusing alcohol or drugs.

(See Barnardo's 2012; Beckett et al. 2013; Berelowitz 2013; HOC 2013b).

Going Missing

The factor that is most frequently identified as both a vulnerability to CSE and indicator of it already occurring is that of a child/young person 'going missing' from home, care or school (Beckett 2011; HOC 2013b; Ofsted 2014). It therefore merits some further attention. Barnardo's (2012) point out that 'going missing' means a child/young person going missing for hours or days rather than

a child/young person simply returning home slightly later than agreed. However, repeat episodes of going missing 'however long in duration indicate a high level of vulnerability to child sexual exploitation' (HOC 2013b: 15). As a result such repeat episodes have been highlighted as a significant risk factor suggest further professional assessment is needed to determine what is going on for a child/young person.

Underlying the seemingly simple idea of a child/young person 'going missing' is a range of different possible scenarios. Running away from home or care may lead directly to a child/young person being subject to CSE in the first place – for example a child/young person running away from home due to family difficulties may be offered a place to stay by an adult in return for sex, and some perpetrators may deliberately target specific places where they are likely to find young runaways (HOC 2013b). Secondly, a child/young person who is already being subject to CSE may go missing from home or care as they are spending time, or being forced to spend time with, those perpetrating CSE against them. This is likely to be the case, for example, where children/young people are being internally trafficked to different geographical areas for the purposes of CSE (Brayley and Cockbain 2014). Finally, a child/young person may go missing in order to try to escape CSE occurring in the local area, including that which may be connected in some way to their family network (HOC 2013b). Responding to children/young people going missing is considered below in the section on support and engagement.

Box 4: Looked After Children and CSE

There is evidence that Looked after Children, particularly those in residential child care, and particularly young women in residential care, are disproportionately likely to be victims of CSE (Beckett 2011). This does not mean that all Looked after Children are at high risk of CSE, and far less that they are all victims. Nevertheless, awareness of the heightened risks of CSE for this group is needed. These stem from the following factors:

1. As we have seen, a child/young person going missing, particularly overnight, is strongly linked to CSE. Children/young people go missing from care placements more often than from home settings. For example Beckett (2011) found in their study 3 out of 5 of young people had gone missing from residential care in the previous year.
2. Some children/young people will be in care precisely because they were subject to CSE, or at high risk of it, in the community. For example repeat running away, and its links to CSE, is the main reason young women are placed in secure care (HOC 2013b).
3. There is some evidence that children/young people in the care system who are already subject to CSE may bring other children/young people in the care system they befriend into a network of perpetrators (Beckett 2011; HOC 2013b).
4. There is evidence that some perpetrators will expressly target residential child care facilities where they believe there is opportunity to groom vulnerable children/young people (Beckett 2011).
5. Finally, particular concerns have been noted about the vulnerability of children/young people to CSE where they are placed in out-of-area care placements without adequate support (HOC 2013b). While such placements may be necessary to remove a child/young person from a circle of exploitation in the local area (Jay 2014), there is a need to ensure adequate monitoring and support for them while placed there, with close liaison between the placing and receiving authorities. There is evidence that this currently does not routinely happen (HOC 2013b; Jay 2014).

Reflective exercise 4: Reflecting on your thoughts and ideas so far

- Thinking about what you have read so far, has anything surprised you in what you have read up until this point? Note down anything that you were not aware of.
- Issues connected to CSE are complex and, in some areas, contested. Do you disagree with anything you have read so far? If so what, and why do you disagree with it?
- Write down one thing you are going to do as a priority to take forward your individual practice around CSE. Be as specific as you can and put a timescale on this stating by when you will have done this activity and a time when you will come back and self-review your own progress on it.

Part 2: Supporting children and young people at risk and subject to CSE

1. Engaging and supporting children and young people subject to CSE and their families

This section primarily focuses on social worker and children's social care roles and responsibilities. As in other areas of working, effective fulfilment of these roles and duties requires extensive partnership and inter-agency working as well as effective and enabling engagement and partnership working with children/young people, families and communities.

Reflective exercise 5: Engaging and supporting children/young people at risk or subject to CSE and their families

- Below is a fictionalised case study. Please read through this and consider the questions below. If you have a case within your own practice or team on which you are currently working, you may wish to substitute this for the case study.

Case Study

Ahmina and Lauren are both 14 and attend the same school. They are best friends. During the last year both started to truant from school, at first occasionally, and then more frequently. Over the last two months Ahmina has regularly absconded from home, at first by herself, more recently with Lauren. The last two occasions they returned home in the early hours intoxicated. The police, social services and the school are all involved, though both young women state that they are not being subject to CSE. The families are in conflict, each blaming the other for the situation.

1. What would your priorities for engagement and support be and how would you establish them?
2. Who would you seek to engage and support and how?
3. Would you seek to involve any other agencies in this work or not? Why/why not?

Where a child/young person is being subjected to CSE, the first consideration will be how to stop their immediate exposure to the abuse. Work with the child/young person and their parents and carers on preventing further exposure to CSE will both be needed. Though there are cases where parents or carers are not in a position to offer guidance, protection and support to children/young people, the assumption should be that the family are a resource of support unless there is clear evidence otherwise (PACE 2014). 'Whole

family' approaches which seek to engage the child/young person and their wider family network through fora such as Family Group Conferences (FGCs) may be particularly effective in harnessing the support available with the family network for care and protection (Morris 2012). It should also be remembered that when a child/young person is involved in CSE it is likely to have a significant impact on parents/carers and siblings in the family and they may need direct support in addition to the young person themselves (PACE 2014). Given

the impact that CSE can have on mental health, physical health and behaviour, all of these areas of support need to be addressed for the child/young person. Therapeutic input of some nature will be needed to help a child or young person process what has happened to them, make sense of it cognitively and emotionally and attempt to unpick feelings of guilt, shame and powerlessness and self-blame. Involving adults who have caring responsibilities for the child/young person in parts of the therapeutic work being undertaken with the child/young person is an important consideration (Thapar et al. 2016).

Physical health input to address physical and sexual injuries and identify any sexual health needs is also important (McClelland and Newell 2013). Finally, work to address the underlying vulnerabilities to CSE within and for the young person, for example in terms of lack of positive social networks and poor self-esteem, will be needed. Children/young people who have been subject to CSE will be experiencing a wide range of strong feelings. Experience suggests there are likely to be times when a child/young person subject to CSE will be reluctant – even extremely hostile – to engaging with support services (Coy 2009). This means that support services need to offer persistent, consistent and assertive support that reaches out to them, continues to try to engage them even after they turn support down or display negative behaviours to professionals trying to engage them (ibid.). When challenging risky or inappropriate behaviours professionals should aim to do so in a way which does not further undermine the child/young person's self-confidence or sense of self-worth (ibid.). It is important for practitioners in statutory roles to consider whether the use of separate agencies to engage the child/young person and their family may be beneficial. The use of child/young people's advocates to work with those at greatest risk of CSE to help them express their perspectives has been used and recommended

(Berelowitz 2013) as has the use of parent and family support workers, who are independent of police and social services, to engage the family around CSE, as happens in Oxford, Rochdale and across Lancashire (PACE 2014).

In terms of children/young people going missing, Ofsted (2014) advises that every child/young person returning from a 'missing episode' is given a 'return interview' to explore what happened. They recommend local authorities establish practice standards around such interviews and that information from them is centrally collated. As noted in the introduction to this resource, professional curiosity and judgement are crucial in this area of work. It will therefore be important that any return interview is used to engage with what is going on for a child/young person, what they are saying about their own situation and what might be behind that, rather than seeing completion of the interview as merely a procedural requirement.

In instances where a child/young person continues to be at high risk of CSE after services have extensively tried to engage them within their current setting – for example because a child/young person continues to repeatedly run away from home or care – then placing them in another care placement needs to be considered. Consideration will need to be given to the location of the new placement and who the child/young person should be placed with both in terms of that child/young person's needs as well as the needs of the other children/young people in that placement. This may be partly determined by the availability of suitable placements. However, the Children Act 1989 guidance does make clear that children and young people should ordinarily be placed close to their family and friends networks unless such placement is inconsistent with their welfare. Where it is considered necessary to place a child/young person further away from their home, this should be done in their

welfare interests – for example because it is necessary to remove them from perpetrator networks to which they are currently exposed (Jay 2014). Regular contact between the social worker child/young person should occur in such circumstances, family contact should be facilitated and there should be close liaison between the placing and receiving local authorities about the child/young person's needs and circumstances.

Where a community placement is inadequate for the protection of a young person's welfare, under the Children Act 1989, young people 13 and over can be placed in secure care on the grounds (i) and (ii) go together and both must be met for placing a young person in secure on non-offence grounds. Young people can only be placed in secure accommodation for longer than three days with the approval of a court. There are upsides and downsides to the use of secure accommodation in such instances. It is a very serious step to restrict a young person's liberty for their own protection, rather than because they pose a risk to the safety of others. It should always be seen as a last resort. A placement in secure accommodation does however offer the possibility of breaking patterns of behaviour a young person is engaging in which are placing them at risk. The regulated nature of the environment also offers greater opportunity for doing structured, tailored, direct work with a young person around CSE. However, there is some evidence that secure care can also bring young people into the networks of other young people who are themselves connected to perpetrator networks which may then put a young person of greater risk of CSE on return to the community rather than less (Beckett 2011). There have, as an alternative, been recent developments to provide specialist foster care placements for those subject to CSE as an alternative to placing young people in secure accommodation. A South Yorkshire partnership was one that received recent Department of

Education funding to develop such placements. The evaluation of the initiative is due shortly.

Children/young people and the criminal court process

Only a proportion of CSE cases will result in a criminal trial, and even less in a criminal conviction. This partly relates to the fact that even though there may be strong grounds for believing that someone has been involved in undertaking CSE it does not reach the evidential thresholds of 'beyond reasonable doubt' required for criminal convictions. This will particularly be the case where the victims of the alleged CSE refuse to testify against the perpetrators. There have been suggestions that the Police and Crown Prosecution Service could do more to ensure cases come to trial and some concerns have been raised that even where victims are willing to testify they are not viewed as credible witnesses (Jago et al. 2011; HOC 2013b; Ofsted 2014). It should also be remembered that parents may have invaluable evidence as witnesses, and they may also be able to provide physical evidence via items such as clothes and mobile phones (PACE 2014).

A child/young person and their family may wish to see a criminal conviction where CSE has occurred. Reasons for this can include a sense of safety arising from the incarceration of perpetrators; a sense of justice that wrong doing has been punished; and a sense of vindication that their testimony appears to have been believed. However, when a case does come to trial, there are also concerns that children/young people's experiences of the court process are poor and the current system set up does not meet their needs (Jago et al. 2011; HOC 2013b). The adversarial legal system in England and Wales does mean that the defence barrister will seek to discredit the testimony of prosecution witnesses which can be a traumatic and daunting experience. Additionally, there are restrictions on what therapeutic support can be provided to

witnesses prior to giving them evidence in a criminal trial due to concern that it may be seen as coaching and undermine the reliability of the witness in the eyes of the court (CPS 1998). There are special measures in place within the court system for children/young people who are witnesses under the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 which include the use of screens in court so the child/young person cannot see the accused; giving evidence by live link; giving evidence without the media present in sexual offence

cases; video recording of evidence-in-chief, cross-examination and re-examination; and examination by the use of an intermediary (Bramer 2010). Some of these measures are better used than others – for example currently the use of intermediaries does not yet seem to occur (HOC 2013b). Finally, it should be remembered that children/young people and their families' support needs, both practically and emotionally, are likely to continue after the court process has ended (PACE 2014).

Box 5: Tackling CSE: Some tips for direct work with children/young people where CSE is a concern

Munro (2011) reaffirmed the importance of trusting, consistent relationships between a practitioner and a child/young person as the single most important factor supporting change. Listening to the child/young person's perspective about what is going on for them is central to this. In reference to specific work with children/young people affected by CSE, persistence and flexible services that fit around children/young people's often chaotic lives are needed (Coy 2009). Paskell (2012) states that direct work should have three main aims: preventing immediate harm; helping the child/young person exit exploitation and supporting victims in any prosecution of the perpetrator(s). These aims will require a mixture of practical and therapeutic support for the child/young person. As noted above, statutory children's social care organisations may not always be best placed to undertake all aspects of the direct work with children/young people and thought needs to be given to the involvement of specialist non-statutory organisations in this work .

Paskell (2012) outlines Barnardo's 'Four A's approach' for organisations working with children/young people around CSE. This approach consists of:

- Access: Easy referral procedures (including self-referrals) to organisations that are welcoming for the child/young person.
- Attention: A key worker who builds a positive and consistent relationship with the child/young person.
- Assertive outreach: Persistent contact that reaches out to children/young people where and when they choose to engage.
- Advocacy: Sensitively supporting children and young people to access other services which are needed.

Such support is unlikely to be a short-term fix. Paskell (2012) notes that support is typically offered for at least 18 months, but support for shorter 6-9 month periods can be effective. Engaging with parents and families around the work undertaken is also important bearing in mind the abuse will have a direct impact on family members as well as the child/young person themselves (PACE 2014).

2. Developing a broader CSE prevention strategy

In this final section, the need for a broader CSE prevention strategy is outlined with some brief suggestions of what the key elements of such a strategy might look like.

Children/Young People

Effective PHSE and age appropriate sex education at school is the primary mechanism for raising awareness amongst both children and young people. Messages need to include information about consent, loving and abusive relationships, gender and relationships (Nelson 2015); and what children and young people should do if they are being groomed or subject to CSE, or believe friends to be. Coverage of peer to peer relationships and issues around use of mobile phones and the internet should be included (Nelson 2016).

Schools and Education Providers

Training and support for staff and governors around CSE is needed including a focus on indicators of CSE and arrangements for how schools should respond where they have concerns about pupils. Schools need to respond proactively to peer to peer victimisation connected to the education setting (Jago et al. 2011).

Given that children/young people at the highest risk of CSE may not regularly be in school, thought needs to be given to how similar information may be given to these children and young people outside the tradition school setting, as suggested above.

Parents/carers

Parents and carers should be actively involved in awareness raising initiatives around CSE

(PACE 2014). Support may include how to speak sensitively to children/young people in their care about CSE, and ways of responding if they have concerns a child/young person in their care, or otherwise known to them, may be experiencing CSE – see the Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE) website <http://paceuk.info> for a range of materials around CSE, primarily aimed at parents and carers.

Wider Community

Nelson (2016) describes a preventative community strategy Neighbourhood Mapping for Community Safety (NCMS). Rather than a reactive response to individual cases, this strategy seeks to use multi-agency co-ordinated mapping exercises to engage local partners in order to evaluate information about children/young people's exposure to sexual harm in the local area, and what needs to be done to better protect them from this harm. Suggested examples of community-wide awareness raising activities as part of such a strategy include use of arts and drama around issues connected to the safety of young people in the community, the offer of self-defence classes locally, providing access to safe low-cost childminding and accessible safety information for young people, which is made widely available (ibid.). The strategy also seeks to incorporate 'bystander education' informing wider members of the community who may be aware of CSE around how they might respond if they suspect that a child or young person may be at risk (ibid.)

Summary and key messages

- What we know about CSE currently is a useful starting point, but it is partial because of the largely hidden nature of the crime.
- The hidden nature of CSE, allied to the fact that children/young people subject to it may often not recognise or fully recognise the exploitative nature of the abuse, make this a particular challenging area of practice.
- From what we know about past cases of CSE it is possible to identify 'vulnerability factors' which make some children/young people more susceptible to CSE, and 'indicators' which may suggest that children/young people are currently being subject to CSE. The factor that is most frequently identified as both a vulnerability to CSE and indicator of it already occurring is that of a child/young person 'going missing' from home, care or school.
- It is important to note that, however, the existence of either 'vulnerability factors' or 'indicators' in a child/young person's life does not mean that they are definitely being subject to CSE. It does suggest that further inquiry and assessment of a child/young person's situation is needed, which should include engagement with the child/young person's perspective of what is going on.
- Sexual exploitation can occur via peer to peer victimisation as well as adult to child/young person victimisation. Children/young people can be simultaneously perpetrators and victims of CSE. Where responding to peer to peer victimisation the welfare of both perpetrators and victims should be the foremost concern.
- Where children/young people are subject to CSE the priorities should be preventing immediate harm; helping the young person exit exploitation; and supporting victims in any prosecution of the perpetrator(s) where a prosecution happens. The engagement of parents/carers as part of this work is important.
- In seeking to prevent CSE, a broader prevention strategy is needed, which engages key stakeholders as well as the wider community in preventative measures.

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