Exploring the Scale and Nature of Child Sexual Exploitation in Scotland

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EXPLORING THE SCALE AND NATURE OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN SCOTLAND

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This study was undertaken between January 2012 and June 2012.

- The study had three aims: to review existing research, policy and practice literature from the UK regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation, and trafficking for sexual exploitation, focusing on Scotland; to review key Scottish statistics regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland; and to gather preliminary and exploratory information from key professionals regarding their perceptions of the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland.

- Methods for the study included: a desktop review of the UK literature regarding child sexual exploitation; a review of Scottish statistical information; and an invited seminar, held in June 2012, for „expert" professionals working in the area of child protection and safeguarding, including child sexual exploitation.

- The study adopts the definition of child sexual exploitation contained in the guidance issued by the Scottish Executive in 2003, while taking account of later definitions introduced in English and Welsh guidance.

- There is agreement throughout the UK that child sexual exploitation is child abuse, and that any child or young person, regardless of gender, ethnicity, family background or sexual orientation, may experience this kind of exploitation.

Findings on the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland

- Establishing the prevalence of sexual exploitation is very difficult. The problem is not visible, and its existence is difficult to uncover. Specific problems include: growing but still limited awareness of the issue; differences in the ways in which the issue is defined by young people, parents and carers and professionals; and differences in the way in which policy and practice is developed at local level.

- There is a lack of research investigating child sexual exploitation in Scotland, though related research exists regarding missing children, looked after children and young people and trafficking.

- Research carried out in Scotland is consistent with more recent and larger scale research that has taken place in the UK. Key issues include the nature of vulnerability amongst young people who are sexually exploited, routes into sexual exploitation and young people"s views about the kind of support and services they need.

- Some national studies have collected data from Scotland, but have not examined differences between the different UK countries.

The development of policy, practice and research

- Policy and research regarding child sexual exploitation has emerged from concerns about children and young people involved in prostitution.

- Policy in the UK and in Scotland is guided by international frameworks as well as national legislation and guidance. In Scotland, the issue of child sexual exploitation is recognised within a range of guidance relating to the protection of children and young people.

- The experience of developing policy and practice across the UK highlights the difficulties in ensuring that young people who are sexually exploited receive appropriate and consistent support.

- No national scoping or data gathering exercise regarding sexual exploitation has taken place in Scotland, though UK studies provide some useful evidence.

- Existing literature in Scotland tends to consist of small scale studies relating to looked after children and young people, and those living in secure accommodation.

- There are a number of significant gaps in research into sexual exploitation in the UK, though the evidence base is developing.

The scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland

- UK studies of child sexual exploitation have highlighted a number of difficulties associated with establishing prevalence, including different levels of awareness resulting in varying expertise in identifying the issue and a lack of local scoping exercises.

- The research evidence indicates vulnerability across a range of deprived groups, including those excluded from school, those looked after and those who are delinquent or gang-involved.

- A variety of routes into sexual exploitation are identified within the Scottish samples: grooming by individual adults; the use of drink, drugs and parties to befriend, then exploit, young people; exploitation via groups of other young people; and the targeting of places where young people socialise and residential units.

- Going missing – whether from the family home or from care placements – is highly significant in placing children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

- There is evidence showing the vulnerability of young people who are looked after to sexual exploitation.

- Key issues in understanding these relationships include young people"s pre-care experiences, the environment of the children"s home and the nature of support available to young people.

- There is some evidence demonstrating the vulnerability of gang-associated young women to sexual exploitation.

Effective practice in addressing child sexual exploitation

- Effective practice will be located within existing child protection procedures. GIRFEC provides a good framework for developing good practice in Scotland.

- Barriers to developing good practice include a lack of awareness amongst professionals, parents and carers and a lack of good information through which to identify local patterns of sexual exploitation.

- It is important that all services and individual practitioners take responsibility for sexual exploitation. There is evidence that young people who are sexually exploited are often viewed negatively, and that they are not always recognised as victims of abuse.

- Sexual exploitation requires a co-ordinated multi-agency response. Universal and specialist services have important roles to play.

- Work with individual young people is important, but should be accompanied by a recognition that the issue also requires consideration of the abusive behaviour of the person(s) who have exploited them. This should direct services to work together to disrupt and prosecute abusers.

The practitioner seminar

- The seminar was attended by 27 practitioners. The majority were experienced senior practitioners, with a mix of representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Twenty-six participants completed and returned a questionnaire regarding their experience and work in the area of child sexual exploitation.

- Participants felt that child sexual exploitation was on the agenda, but did not necessarily have high priority, and that awareness of the issue, policy and practice varied considerably across Scotland.

- Participants highlighted several examples of good practice, usually involving third sector organisations. Good practice included the work of specialist services for sexually exploited young people, training materials and partnership working between agencies.

- There was very little evidence of data gathering regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation at local level that would inform the development of policy and practice.

- There was agreement that child sexual exploitation should be viewed as child abuse. There was less clarity about the extent to which it should be viewed as an issue in its own right – perhaps a reflection of the information and training which participants had received, which was frequently described as „mentioning" or „including" child sexual exploitation as part of wider child abuse training.

- The majority of participants recognised that there were various „routes" into child sexual exploitation. Exploitation by adult individuals, peers and organised groups of adults were most recognised; exploitation by gangs was least recognised.

- Focus group discussion revealed differences in perception, and sometimes confusion, regarding what was meant by child sexual exploitation and the appropriate policy and practice response.

- Participants expressed a wish for more sharing of good practice, and access to high quality tools and training regarding child sexual exploitation.

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This report examines the findings from a study of the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland. The research was initiated in January 2012 as part of the Scottish Government"s commitment to commissioning research on child sexual exploitation, and also in response to growing interest in and concern about the issue within the professional community (Barnardo"s, 2011; 2012) and in policy throughout the UK (Department for Education, 2011; Office for the Children"s Commissioner, 2012; Department for Education, 2012).

1.2   The research has taken place over a six-month period. UK government policy on child sexual exploitation has highlighted the importance of research in providing knowledge through which to understand this complex issue (Department for Education, 2011; Department for Education, 2012). This study is built on a series of studies undertaken by the International Centre for the Study of Trafficked and Sexually Exploited Young People at the University of Bedfordshire. It was commissioned in recognition of the value of more and better comparative information regarding the experience of vulnerable children and young people.

Aims

1.3   The research had three aims:

●   To review existing research, policy and practice literature from the UK regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation, and trafficking for sexual exploitation, with a particular focus on the Scottish context.

●   To review relevant Scottish statistical information regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland.

●   To gather preliminary and exploratory information from key professionals regarding their perceptions of the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland.

1.4   The study has employed three methods: a desktop review of the UK literature regarding child sexual exploitation; a review of Scottish statistical information; and an invited seminar, held in June 2012, for „expert" professionals working in the area of child protection including child sexual exploitation.

Definitions

1.5   For the purposes of this report, a child or young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18.

1.6   The definitions and language relating to child sexual exploitation are contested, both in academic debate (Phoenix, 2010; Melrose, 2011) and amongst practitioners (see, for example, Brodie, 2011; see also Estes, 2001, cited in Chase and Statham, 2005).

1.7   The issues of child sexual exploitation and trafficking for child sexual
      exploitation are frequently juxtaposed. While policy around these issues is
      distinctive, the relationship between the two should be recognised in the
      development of local policy and practice (Scottish Government, 2010).

1.8   In Scotland the current definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows:

      "Any involvement of a child or young person below 18 in sexual activity for
      which remuneration of cash or in kind is given to the young person or a third
      person or persons. The perpetrator will have power over the child by virtue of
      one or more of the following – age, emotional maturity, gender, physical
      strength, intellect and economic and other resources e.g. access to drugs."
      (Scottish Executive, 2003)

1.9   This definition has been a useful starting point for the study, while recognising
      that this guidance has been superseded by more recent guidance on child
      protection in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2010). Account has also been
      taken of the definition contained in the UK Government‟s 2009 guidance and
      also adopted in the Welsh Assembly Government‟s guidance:

      "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 performing
      and/or others performing on them, sexual activities." (Welsh Assembly
      Government, 2010)

1.10 Child sexual exploitation can occur even if there is no immediate payment or
      gain, for example, when a child is persuaded to post sexual images on the
      internet/mobile phones. 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 (DCSF, 2009). This „exchange‟
      may also be intangible, in the sense that the young person involved will
      typically believe that the relationship in which they are involved is a
      consensual one, and that the abuser(s) are their „boyfriends‟. Consequently,
      the violence and abuse to which the young person is subjected will be
      perceived as normal and acceptable. This presents major challenges for
      those seeking to intervene to end the abuse, in that the young person will be
      reluctant to accept help and/or to end the relationship (Pearce, 2006; Pearce,
      2009). There are also social and cultural tensions in terms of what is
      understood to represent a „consensual‟ relationship amongst teenagers, and
      the agency accorded to young people in developing their independence,
      including their sexual relationships.

1.11 There is a recognition in the guidance on child sexual exploitation, and in
      other guidance relating to vulnerable children and young people, that child
      sexual exploitation may take place in many different ways, and that there are
      many routes to becoming involved. It may involve grooming by individuals or
      groups of adults, or through groups of peers, including gang association or
      involvement. Social networking sites and mobile phone technology are
      increasingly recognised as important, as is partying with other young people.

There is often a significant level of organisation amongst abusers – whether through the sharing of a flat or room where abuse takes place, or the involvement of local businesses such as takeaways and taxi firms where the young people may first encounter their abusers. The variety of routes through which sexual exploitation can take place contributes to the difficulties associated with defining this as a distinct issue. The perception, on the part of young people, that a „genuine‟ relationship is involved, is a significant feature.

1.12 Both the Scottish guidance and more recent English and Welsh guidance emphasises that sexual exploitation is child abuse and that children and young people are not able to consent to this. Children and young people from all family, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds may experience sexual exploitation, though some groups are especially vulnerable.

1.13 Although sexual exploitation tends to be associated with young women, young men are also affected, though much less is known about their experience (Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005; Beckett, 2011).

1.14 Adolescents aged 12-15 are considered to be at most risk of sexual exploitation, but much younger children have also been identified (Barnardo‟s, 2011) and young people aged 16-18 are also known to be at risk, though this is not always recognised by services (Scottish Executive, 2009).

1.15 Sexual exploitation carries with it risk of serious harm, including physical violence, exposure to harmful drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm, and sexually transmitted disease and unwanted pregnancy (Beckett, 2011; Barnardo‟s, 2011).

Structure of the report

1.16 The report begins with a description of the methods used in this study (Chapter 2). It then goes on to examine: the development of policy, practice and research (Chapter 3); evidence regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland (Chapter 4); and the features of effective practice in preventing sexual exploitation taking place (Chapter 5). Finally, the report describes the views of practitioners attending the expert seminar (Chapter 6) and a set of Conclusions at the end.

Key messages from this chapter

- The study aims to review existing research and statistical knowledge regarding child sexual exploitation in Scotland, and to undertake exploratory research regarding the views of professionals.

- Methods for the study included: a desktop review of the UK literature regarding child sexual exploitation; a review of Scottish statistical information; and a seminar, held in June 2012, for expert professionals working in the area of child protection, including child sexual exploitation.

- The study adopts the definition of child sexual exploitation contained in the guidance issued by the Scottish Executive in 2003, while taking account of later definitions introduced in English and Welsh guidance.

- There is agreement throughout the UK that child sexual exploitation is child abuse, and that any child or young person may experience this kind of exploitation.

2   METHODS

2.1   There were three aspects to the methodology for this project: a desktop, UK based literature review; a review of Scottish statistics relating to child sexual exploitation; and an expert practitioner seminar. This section of the report will describe in more detail each of these strands, and the limitations associated with each.

Literature review

2.2   The desktop review aimed to gather comprehensive information regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland and the UK. It focused on the following questions:

- How is child sexual exploitation defined in policy and practice? What are the benefits and disadvantages of current conceptualisations of the issue?

- What is the shape of research into sexual exploitation? How much do we know and where are the gaps?

- What are the views of young people regarding the risk and experience of sexual exploitation?

- What are the views of policy makers, practitioners and young people regarding the best ways to prevent sexual exploitation taking place, and the most effective practice in supporting, children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation?

- What is known specifically about the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland, and how does this compare with other countries in the UK?

2.3   The literature review took place between February and May 2012. It is important to emphasise that this is a comprehensive, rather than systematic, review. The intention was to provide an assessment of the range of research in the field, identify significant gaps in both substance and methodology, to summarise key messages and to consider how these (if not empirically based in Scotland) relate to the Scottish context. The scope of the review includes both „grey" (that is, published but not peer reviewed literature from relevant NGOs and government departments) and research literature. Studies using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were included.

2.4   The methods and key words for the literature review can be found in Appendix 1. Searches were undertaken using both academic and practice-based engines. Additionally, fingerprint searching took place via key organisations. This was in part a snowballing process, assisted by recommendations from Scottish-based experts in child protection.

2.5   Items were selected from the year 2000 onwards, on the grounds that important changes in policy thinking took place at that time. Searching was restricted to UK literature, on the grounds of policy and practice relevance as well as the timescale for this scoping study.

2.6   The literature review process prioritised searches for Scotland-specific information regarding child sexual exploitation generally, and also the experiences of specific groups of children and young people known to be at particular risk, such as children and young people who go missing and children who are looked after.

2.7   Key „Scotland specific" studies are identified in Appendix 2. These studies are useful in permitting triangulation across the research evidence, but there are difficulties. Studies tend to be small in scale, restricted to particular „at risk" groups and are becoming slightly outdated – for example, use of the term „off street prostitution" (Munro, 2004) which has now been replaced by the term „child sexual exploitation".

2.8   That said, these studies provide important findings regarding the nature of sexual exploitation in Scotland, identifying a variety of routes into sexual exploitation, key aspects of good practice, and outlining areas for future policy and practice development. This information is consistent with more recent, and larger scale, studies in the rest of the UK.

2.9   Some national studies of child sexual exploitation have included Scotland. These tend not to distinguish Scottish data from the other countries of the UK, and tend not to discuss differences in the amount of data collected from Scottish participants.

2.10   Empirical studies highlight the difficulties associated with research into sexual exploitation. These included: identification of the population; the difficulty of ensuring a „spread" of participants, even if representativeness was not the priority; maintaining contact with young people over a period of time; and the emotionally taxing nature of such research. At the level of services, the issue is sensitive and subject to different, sometimes competing interpretations which can make access to, and engagement of practitioners problematic. Recognition of these issues should inform the development of any further research into sexual exploitation in Scotland.

Statistical review

2.11   Systematic data is not collected regarding sexual exploitation in Scotland. Equally, there is no single indicator for sexual exploitation in the rest of the UK. This review, therefore, tried to scope existing statistical data regarding „proxy" indicators of sexual exploitation. Specifically, the review examined social care, education and crime statistics.

2.12   This data provided three strands of information. Firstly, it enabled consideration of data regarding children and young people known to be at risk of sexual exploitation i.e. those „missing" children and young people, those in the care system and those who are experiencing problems at school (Jago et

al, 2011; Beckett, 2011; Brodie, 2011; CEOP, 2011). Secondly, it provided the opportunity to consider data where sexual exploitation may be included within other categories of crime – sexual abuse, under-age sex, trafficking and gang involvement. Thirdly, this process is helpful in identifying the strengths and difficulties associated with existing data which may, in turn, inform planning for further, empirical research.

2.13   This task was not easy. There is a national consensus that gathering data pertaining to child sexual exploitation is extremely difficult, and that procedures need to be greatly improved. CEOP (2011) notes that even where data gathering exercises have considerable force behind them, data relating to child sexual exploitation is „often partial and incomplete" (p3). Improvement in data collection is dependent on the prioritising of child sexual exploitation as an issue at local level. In turn this should lead to consideration of what gaps exist in the information available, and how this can be gathered effectively, either through cross-agency sharing of existing data, and/or through local scoping exercises.

2.14   Official statistics available via the Scottish Government website were the primary source for this element of the project, supplemented by statistics from other research studies. These provided useful information regarding: looked after children and children accommodated in secure accommodation; school exclusion and truancy; alcohol and drug use; and gang involvement.

Expert professional seminar

2.15   The practice seminar took place on 8 June 2012 in Edinburgh. Practitioners were invited from a range of agencies and from across Scotland. The group attending comprised 27 practitioners, representing Child Protection Committees, health, the police and third sector organisations.

2.16   The seminar aimed to gather practitioners" views and experiences regarding: their definition and understanding of „child sexual exploitation"; the nature of the service response to cases which involved child sexual exploitation; perceptions of effective practice in these cases; the nature and extent of inter-agency communication and working in relation to child sexual exploitation; and barriers to the development of effective practice.

2.17   These issues were explored via individual questionnaires, group exercises and general discussion. Throughout the day those attending were also invited to note any additional issues or points relating to practice and post these on a noticeboard. Feedback from the day was positive, and those attending seemed pleased to be engaging in a national discussion regarding child sexual exploitation.

Key messages from this chapter

•   The scoping study involved a desktop review of UK literature, a review of Scottish statistics relevant to child sexual exploitation and a seminar with key practitioners from throughout Scotland.

- The study has demonstrated the complexity associated with undertaking research into sexual exploitation. There are significant gaps in the research literature across the UK, though the research base in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is more developed than that in Scotland.

- Although a range of statistical information is available, relating this to the issue of child sexual exploitation is complex.

- The practitioner seminar highlighted the importance of gathering qualitative information regarding perceptions of child sexual exploitation as an issue, and how this is being addressed in local areas throughout Scotland.

3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

3.1 This chapter examines the current policy context concerning child sexual exploitation in Scotland and across the UK. It examines: the development of policy and the different trajectories this has taken across the UK; the nature of current policy; and the challenges associated with implementing policy and influencing practice.

Background

3.2 National policy should be considered in an international context. The UK government has signed or ratified a number of international conventions and protocols under which it is obliged to protect children from sexual exploitation or abuse.

- Articles 31 and 35 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stipulate that children have the right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and trafficking (ratified December 1991).

- The Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (ratified December 2009).

- The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children and Young People against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (signed in May 2008, not yet ratified).

3.3 The Scottish Government is also committed to supporting and promoting children‟s rights in Scotland according to the principles of the UNCRC.

3.4 Recognition of the issue of child sexual exploitation can be traced to concerns regarding what was then termed „child prostitution‟ in the late 1990s (Melrose, Barrett and Brodie, 1999; Melrose, 2010). This highlighted the vulnerability of young people involved in risky sexual behaviour to criminalisation, and the need for a distinct policy discourse which recognised these young people as children and young people first.

3.5 Policy has also been influenced by a growing recognition that the needs of adolescents have been neglected in child protection policy, with attention more usually focused on the abuse of younger children (Pearce, 2002; 2009; Stein et al, 2009).

3.6 In Scotland, these tensions were identified, though data regarding the scale of the problem was difficult to find. Nevertheless, Buckley and Brodie (2000) note that individual projects could provide evidence of a significant proportion of referrals to projects working with sex workers that involved young people.

3.7 This raises the question of the relationship between policy and practice in the UK. The history of this issue across all UK jurisdictions contains many shared developments and concerns, including the safeguarding of children and young

people. McGhee and Waterhouse (2011) suggest policy development will take place through a combination of factors: cross-cutting political and economic trends throughout the UK; parallel public concerns across all jurisdictions; and unique features that reflect specific socio-economic, cultural and historical features of each jurisdiction.

3.8   Overall, child protection has been addressed through similar legislation across the UK. The issue of child sexual exploitation represents a shared concern, but there are clearly differences in the way in which the issue has been addressed so far in policy and legislation.

3.9   In England, guidance published in 2000 was superseded by new guidance in 2009 (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009). This shifted the focus from prostitution to sexual exploitation as an issue of concern in its own right. A new definition of sexual exploitation was adopted, and the guidance also emphasised the need for a „dual approach" of protection for children and young people, and the disruption and prosecution of offenders.

3.10   In Wales, a review of the existence, content and implementation of local child sexual exploitation protocols developed in response to the 2000 guidance contributed to the development of new guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010) and a risk assessment framework for sexual exploitation which is now in place in most Local Children Safeguarding Board (LSCB) areas in Wales.

3.11   Northern Ireland, like Scotland, does not have specific supplementary guidance on child sexual exploitation. Cases of child sexual exploitation are, therefore, dealt with under safeguarding guidance and legislation (see Beckett, 2011, for a summary).

3.12   In 2011 the UK government issued an action plan on tackling sexual exploitation (Department for Education, 2011). This outlined a series of actions to: increase awareness of child sexual exploitation amongst young people, parents and carers and professionals; provide more training to enable professionals to identify the signs of sexual exploitation and take appropriate action; and strengthen the role of LSCBs to enable them to fulfil better the provisions of the 2009 guidance. The Action Plan emphasises the important role of voluntary organisations, working in partnership with LSCBs and other professionals, in ensuring these goals are met.

3.13   A recent report on progress with the action plan (Department for Education, 2012) also highlights the need to address emerging evidence on the risks experienced by missing children and especially those who go missing from care (APPG, 2012; see also Office for the Children‟s Commissioner, 2012).

Policy and legislation in Scotland

3.14   Current legislation and guidance in Scotland that informs practice regarding child sexual exploitation includes:

- the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;

- Vulnerable Children and Young People: Sexual Exploitation Through Prostitution (Scottish Executive, 2003);

- Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005;

- Safeguarding Children in Scotland who May Have Been Trafficked (Scottish Government, 2009);

- National Child Protection Guidance (Scottish Government, 2010); and

- National Guidance: Under-age Sexual Activity: Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People and Identifying Child Protection Concerns (Scottish Government, 2011).

3.15   The 2003 guidance on sexual exploitation through prostitution predates most of this legislation and guidance. However, the different guidance documents share a commitment to the welfare of the child as paramount and to ensuring children"s rights are taken seriously.

3.16   Some of the guidance listed above identifies sexual exploitation as a dimension of, for example, trafficking. Some groups – for example, homeless young people, children and young people looked after by the local authority – are noted as being vulnerable to sexual exploitation in relation to under-age sexual activity.

3.17   The concept of „grooming" is also recognized in Scottish legislation via the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005. This includes *„meeting a child following certain preliminary contact'* (s1) i.e where a person arranges to meet a child who is under 18, having communicated with them on at least one previous occasion (in person, via the internet or via other technologies), with the intention of performing sexual activity on the child.

3.18   Child sexual exploitation continues to be an issue with a high public profile. A series of court cases resulting in convictions for sexual exploitation has attracted a high level of media attention. At the time of writing, public and media anxiety has focused on the relationship between sexual exploitation, going missing and residential care.

3.19   However, recent petitioning of the Scottish Parliament by the children"s agency, Barnardo"s, argues that there is a body of opinion, both professional and within the general public, that is dissatisfied with the Scottish Government response. Specifically, Barnardo"s notes that local measures outlined in the

2003 guidance, for example, local protocols have not been introduced, further research has not taken place and evidence suggests an absence of prosecutions under the 2005 Act.

3.20 The search process and consultation with experts confirmed a notable lack of research and practice information regarding child sexual exploitation in Scotland. However, a key message from the literature search process is that what evidence does exist from Scotland is congruent with that from the rest of the UK – and, conversely, no findings were identified indicating that the scale and nature of sexual exploitation is likely to be different in Scotland. Instead, findings from Scotland-specific studies indicated strong similarities in the experiences of young people and practitioners. This review, therefore, includes evidence from UK-wide and English/Welsh/Northern Irish work that helps answer the review questions.

3.21 There is also scope for learning from the process of implementation of guidance in England and Wales. While policy should or is likely to inform practice, there is no „linear relationship" between the two (McGhee and Waterhouse, 2011) and the introduction of guidance has not been without difficulty.

3.22 Following the initial guidance from the Department of Health (2000), Swann and Balding (2002) reported that this was not being implemented by most Area Child Protection Committees (now replaced by LSCBs).

3.23 Jago et al (2011), examining policy and practice in LSCBs in England, found that the impact of the 2009 guidance had been „limited". The study found that only a quarter of LSCBs were actively implementing the provisions of the 2009 guidance. There was considerable variation in the amount and quality of inter-agency working, and less than a quarter of LSCBs were active in both protecting children and young people and in disrupting and prosecuting abusers. Even where LSCBs were trying to develop work, it was proving very difficult indeed to gain the commitment of partner agencies.

3.24 Jago et al (2011) argue that "local histories and circumstances emerge as more influential than national policy or guidance" (p113). The extent to which local policy and practice was developing seemed to depend on two factors: a history of work in the area of child sexual exploitation that preceded the 2009 guidance, and extended as far back as the 1990s; and significant events, for example, a child death or a practitioner who had worked on a case involving child exploitation and subsequently championed the issue in a local context. Following from this, the study argues that further guidance is unlikely to generate practice change, "without an obligation on LSCBs to act and the resources to enable them to do so" (p115).

3.25 These findings are mirrored in research undertaken in Wales, where a review of local protocols found awareness and knowledge of local protocols to be limited to key strategic officers, individual practitioners with direct experience of cases of child sexual exploitation, and local champions. There was an absence of effective multi-agency working and intervention in cases of child

sexual exploitation, which in turn led to a loss of faith amongst practitioners in using the local protocol (Clutton and Coles, 2009).

3.26   There is evidence of local variation in policy and practice in Scotland, reflected in the findings from the expert practitioner seminar (see Chapter 6) and some available information – for example, Glasgow City Council has produced guidance on „Vulnerable Young People‟ that is pertinent to working with sexually exploited young people. This summarises existing research evidence regarding patterns of sexual exploitation in Glasgow, including routes through which young people may become sexually exploited, and key locations where this might be happening. The guidance emphasises that the issue concerns both girls and boys, and provides detailed information on legislation and practice resources (Glasgow City Council, 2006).

3.27   The interaction between child sexual exploitation and other issues is significant. Consultation on the draft guidance, ‘Safeguarding Children in Scotland who May Have Been Trafficked‟, highlights many parallels in the practice experience in Scotland – suggesting that the challenges to improving practice regarding child sexual exploitation may well be similar. These included: awareness of trafficking as an issue; the need for local guidance and procedures; the importance of resources; difficulties associated with data gathering and monitoring; practice skills; and appropriate placements for trafficked children (see also Easton and Matthews, 2012).

3.28   The history of policy development in the UK suggests, therefore, that there is a complex relationship between policy on child sexual exploitation and the development of improved practice.

3.29   It is hard to avoid the conclusion that there has only been limited success in the implementation of local protocols, but the value of local scoping to understanding the specific local dynamics of sexual exploitation has consistently been highlighted as a means to develop good practice. The UK government (Department for Education, 2011) has recommended the University of Bedfordshire‟s Data Monitoring Tool for use in collecting local data, and Self-Assessment Tool in tracking local progress in developing policy and practice.

The development of research into sexual exploitation

3.30   This section considers the shape of research into child sexual exploitation. The nature of the current research landscape is important in understanding the changing emphases of policy and practice, as described in the previous section.

3.31   As with policy, research into child sexual exploitation emerged via research into child prostitution (see, for example, Melrose, Barrett and Brodie, 1999). Research has, and continues to play, an important part in policy development regarding child sexual exploitation (see, for example, Department for Education, 2011; 2012).

3.32   Melrose (2011) argues that while recognition of the issue of child sexual exploitation is to be welcomed, there needs to be an ongoing critique of the way in which the issue is being interpreted in policy and practice.

3.33   Although the body of literature regarding sexual exploitation has increased, the literature focusing on specific areas of the UK is limited and authors acknowledge many significant gaps in knowledge. This should be linked to a more general neglect of adolescent experiences of abuse, in contrast to that experienced by younger children (Stein et al, 2009).

3.34   Nevertheless, as research into child sexual exploitation and associated issues such as missing children has developed, there has been a high level of consistency in the levels of risk and issues identified across the UK.

3.35   There is an absence of reliable data on prevalence throughout the UK, including Scotland. There are a number of reasons for this lack of data. These include: the hidden nature of sexual exploitation; different understandings and definitions of sexual exploitation; the relatively recent history and contested nature of the issue, which has contributed to an absence of funding for research; difficulties in constructing samples; concern that child sexual exploitation represents another, and extraneous, category for data collection on top of existing categories such as care, missing, truancy etc.

3.36   There is an absence of other empirical research into sexual exploitation in Scotland. There are a small number of empirical studies, mostly using qualitative methods, which provide important information regarding sexual exploitation and specific groups – most notably looked after children and young people – and broader, non-age specific, work on trafficking (though not specifically related to sexual exploitation). Importantly, these studies have also included the views of young people and practitioners.

3.37   Studies tend to focus on girls, with little consideration of the experience of boys. There is also an absence of information on young people from different minority ethnic groups (Lilywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Ward and Patel, 2006).

3.38   There is a broad understanding of the individual and social factors associated with child sexual exploitation. There is a difficulty, however, in listing risk factors in such a way that does not examine the causal mechanisms through which these factors interact, and how they relate to the life-trajectories of individual young people.

3.39   There is an absence of systematic comparison and evaluation of different models of practice in relation to sexual exploitation, and access to these for different groups of young people.

Key messages from this chapter

- Policy and research regarding child sexual exploitation has emerged from concerns about children and young people involved in prostitution.

- Policy in the UK and in Scotland is guided by international frameworks as well as national legislation and guidance. In Scotland, the issue of child sexual exploitation is recognised within a range of guidance relating to the protection of children and young people.

- The experience of developing policy and practice across the UK highlights the difficulties in ensuring that young people who are sexually exploited receive appropriate and consistent support.

- No national scoping or data gathering exercise regarding sexual exploitation has taken place in Scotland, though UK studies provide some useful evidence.

- Existing literature in Scotland tends to consist of small scale studies relating to looked after children and young people, and those living in secure accommodation.

- There are a number of significant gaps in research into sexual exploitation in the UK, though the evidence base is developing.

4 WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE SCALE AND NATURE OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN SCOTLAND?

4.1 This chapter examines the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland, and how this compares with other countries of the UK. It draws on snapshot studies of child sexual exploitation in the UK, Scottish national statistics regarding vulnerable groups and research using data from specialist services for children and young people experiencing sexual exploitation.

4.2 Research into the prevalence of sexual exploitation is complex and that statistics should be treated with caution. Existing studies highlight difficulties in treating child sexual exploitation as an issue, together with the absence of consistent data gathering procedures in local authorities (CEOP, 2011; Jago et al, 2011).

4.3 The importance of improving local and national data collection has been emphasised in research studies and in policy and practice (Barnardo"s, 2011; Department for Education, 2011). However, it is also clear that attention to data collection is driven by awareness of child sexual exploitation as an issue of child abuse, and an understanding of how data can be used to develop appropriate strategies to identify and support those at risk, and prevent abuse from taking place.

4.4 Studies are often dependent on statistics obtained from referrals to projects working with sexually exploited young people or vulnerable young people. These provide important indications of the scale of the problem where it is recognised and understood by practitioners. However, there are problems in generalising from these statistics to the wider population, and methodologies related to this require refinement (see Cusick et al, 2009 for discussion of this issue regarding sex workers).

4.5 There are also problems of reliability and validity arising from the relationship between sexual exploitation and other forms of child abuse. For example, Beckett (2011) notes that social workers" assessments initially identified cases of sexual exploitation that, on further investigation, were subsequently found to involve other types of sexual abuse or assault.

4.6 In addition to the complexities associated with researching child sexual exploitation specifically, related issues – such as missing children and children excluded or missing from school – are equally subject to problems of definition and in identifying the relevant populations.

Who is sexually exploited?

4.7   In addition to data on prevalence, research provides information about the characteristics of young people who are known to have experienced sexual exploitation. This information has guided the research in terms of examination of additional statistics – for example, regarding schooling, poverty and gang involvement.

4.8   There is consensus that, while any young person may experience sexual exploitation, some groups are especially vulnerable. Individual characteristics associated with risk of sexual exploitation are known to include:

- family difficulties;

- experience of different types of abuse and neglect;

- experience of the care system;

- a history of educational difficulty, including truancy and exclusion from school;

- a history of running away or going missing;

- drug and alcohol misuse; and

- delinquency and gang involvement.

    (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005; Dillane, Hill and Munro, 2005; Jago et al, 2011; Beckett, 2011; Brodie et al, 2011)

4.9   Young people with learning difficulties have been identified as a significant minority within samples of sexually exploited children and young people (Jago et al, 2011; Beckett, 2011). The vulnerability of this group is not currently acknowledged within the 2003 guidance in Scotland.

4.10   These factors will overlap and are difficult to unravel. Young people with experience of family disruption and abuse are also more likely to have experience of the care system; experience of the care system is also associated with running away. One young person may have experience of each of the factors listed above, and more. Some of these issues may have emerged when the young person was much younger, or may be more recent.

4.11   The nature of these issues, and how they interact with a child or young person‟s experience of sexual exploitation vary considerably. Research emphasises the need to treat each young person as an individual, with a unique experience of sexual exploitation. There will also be differences in the way in which individuals perceive and interpret their experience of sexual exploitation – young people will often think these relationships are consensual and romantic (Scott, Creegan and Smith, 2005).

4.12   Smeaton (2005; see also Scott, Creegan and Smith, 2005) suggests that the overlaps between the young people experiencing these difficulties represents

a pattern of „detachment" from key relationships – with family, school, community – that contributes to the vulnerability of some young people to sexual exploitation and other dangers.

4.13   Such detachment takes place on a spectrum. Not all those who are detached from such relationships will be captured within official statistics. It is, therefore, important to recognise that there is a wider group of young people who will be in need but are not known to statutory agencies or, indeed, specialist projects.

Prevalence

4.14   There is currently no estimate of the prevalence of child sexual exploitation in Scotland. Throughout the UK, there is no single indicator that can be used to gather data on child sexual exploitation; information must be extracted from a variety of sources in order to make realistic estimates of scale.

4.15   This exercise is beyond the scope of this project. The information presented here should, however, be helpful in identifying strategies through which to develop methodologies for the collection of better data regarding child sexual exploitation in Scotland. Throughout the UK, the development of research is contributing to the development of improved methodologies for understanding the issue (see, for example, Scott and Harper, 2006). The approach taken to developing processes for the collection of data on child sexual exploitation will, however, depend on how far professionals, young people and their families recognise child sexual exploitation and report this. The extent to which changes are made to existing data collection processes, or new processes introduced, will also depend on the extent to which child sexual exploitation is considered to be a distinct form of child abuse and, in turn, how far existing data collection processes are considered to take account of the issue.

4.16   Three key studies have tried to build a picture of the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in the UK, using different methodologies. Common features, however, include the importance of information from third sector service providers, and the fragmented nature of the information that was gathered.

4.17   The Centre for Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) carried out a „thematic assessment" in 2011 (CEOP, 2011). Using a rapid assessment methodology, CEOP produced an audit of current knowledge regarding the scale of child sexual exploitation using data from police forces, LSCBs, children"s services and service providers. Agencies were asked to submit data regarding cases of child sexual exploitation for the period 1 January 2008 and 1 March 2011. CEOP extracted information from the range of data provided.

4.18   This involved the collection of data from agencies around the UK, including Scottish police forces and area Child Protection Committees. However, no separate analysis was carried out on the Scottish information and there are no plans to undertake this (personal communication, CEOP, 2012). The

assessment does not indicate those areas from which data was successfully obtained. Nevertheless, in presenting a „national", UK picture of child sexual exploitation, the findings from the CEOP study should be taken as applicable to Scotland.

4.19 The national figures from CEOP show there has been an increase in reports of exploitation from 5,411 in 2008/9 to 6,291 in 2009/10 (CEOP, 2011). This may be attributable to greater awareness of the issue, and if anything indicates the difficulties in obtaining reliable prevalence figures.

4.20 Jago et al (2011) conducted a national survey of policy and practice in LSCBs in England and Wales. This took place as part of a trial to develop a data collection system for the UK (see Appendix 1). Twenty-five LSCBs (out of 100 approached) agreed to participate. This data was supplemented by information from agencies contacted through the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Young People. Information was analysed from 1,065 cases of young people being worked with on 6 June 2011.

4.21 Jago et al (2011) reported that there were a number of difficulties associated with collecting this data: there was a very limited response to the invitation to participate and a high level of missing data.

4.22 Scott and Skidmore (2006) collected data on an overall sample of 557 young people in contact with Barnardo"s services in the UK, and detailed information on the case histories of 42 young people. Additionally, this study interviewed external stakeholders and analysed outcome data regarding changes in risk and protective factors in the lives of young people.

4.23 This information highlights the need to consider „risk" of sexual exploitation in the wider context of violence and abuse in the lives of children and young people. Humphreys, Houghton and Ellis (2005) reviewed literature on domestic abuse for the Scottish Government, and highlighted the serious impact of this on children.

4.24 In the same way that adolescents are more likely to be victims of crime in general, young people are also more likely to be the victims of sexual crime. For example, stalking and harassment is also more likely amongst the 16-24 year old group than older adults (Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, 2011).

4.25 Voluntary organisations also report increased numbers of young people contacting them for help regarding child sexual exploitation (Barnardo"s, 2011), indicating a growing awareness of the problem.

4.26 Adolescents are often subject to physical, sexual and emotional violence, though their perceptions of this are complex and sometimes difficult to interpret (Burman and Cartmel, 2005). Barter et al (2009) in a UK-wide study of 1,353 young people, found that partner violence was a significant element in the lives of children and young people. Girls were more likely to report severe physical, emotional and sexual violence from a partner. Twenty-seven per cent of girls stated they had felt pressured to do something sexual against their wishes. Experiencing violence in one area of life was associated with

increased risk of aggression in another. Young people living in more deprived circumstances appeared to be a greater risk of experiencing violence in several areas of their lives.

4.27   In England, local data collection is known to be patchy (Jago et al, 2010; CEOP, 2011). In Northern Ireland, Beckett (2011) estimated that one in seven children and young people were at risk, and highlighted the particular risks associated with residential care. Research undertaken by Barnardo‟s in Wales in 2005 identified 184 cases of sexual exploitation or concern that sexual exploitation was taking place.

Sexual exploitation in Scotland

4.28   Three studies have been identified regarding sexual exploitation in Scotland. None of these have examined prevalence, and are small scale, empirical studies of specific groups of young people known to be at risk of sexual exploitation – looked after and accommodated young people (Dillane, Hill and Munro, 2005); and young people placed in secure accommodation (Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005).

4.29   This research provides important, detailed information regarding the experiences of young people and the perceptions of professionals regarding child sexual exploitation. These findings support research in the rest of the UK regarding the processes through which young people become sexually exploited, and some of the challenges in providing services. They also emphasise the complex histories of the young people, which included severe mental health problems, educational difficulty and past abuse.

4.30   All three studies emphasise the importance of vulnerable young people having appropriate placements/accommodation, and the significance of young people‟s relationships with peers and carers.

4.31   The studies highlight considerable variations in understanding of child sexual exploitation amongst carers and other local authority staff, and, in consequence, differences in practice.

Additional, relevant statistical information

4.32   The Scottish Executive‟s 2003 guidance on vulnerable children who are sexually exploited notes that there is a lack of information about why children are exploited in this way. However, the guidance suggests that this is linked to other problems including parental disharmony, physical violence, relationship problems, sexual abuse, bullying, truancy or substance misuse. Research into these issues is, therefore, relevant to understanding the nature of sexual exploitation in Scotland.

4.33   The additional statistical information available is usually found within research studies, which also provide additional information on the routes through which children may become sexually exploited. Where sexual exploitation is identified, it is usually as one of a range of issues affecting a vulnerable group. There is little detailed information or case studies focusing on sexual

exploitation <u>within</u> these studies. This information is important and complementary to other studies focusing on sexual exploitation.

4.34   More recent research into sexual exploitation has highlighted the complex and overlapping nature of these problems in the lives of individual children, and has also identified additional ways in which children and young people may become sexually exploited. More information, for example, is available in regard to children‟s exploitation via technology, the experiences of children and young people in care and through gang involvement (see, for example, CEOP, 2012; Pitts and Pearce, 2011).

4.35   The following sub-sections, therefore, examine key statistics regarding: alcohol and drug misuse amongst adolescents; children and young people who go missing; children and young people in care; young people who are excluded or truant from school; and young people who are gang-involved.

Key statistics

4.36   **Child Protection Register**: of 2,571 children on Child Protection Registers at 31 July 2011, 84 per cent were under 11. There were 399 cases of children aged 11-15, and only 12 young people were 16+.

4.37   **Alcohol and drug use**: the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) (2010) found that 14 per cent of 13 year olds and 34 per cent of 15 year olds reported consuming alcohol in the last week. Of those who had ever had alcohol, 54 per cent of 13 year olds and 34 per cent of 15 year olds reported having been drunk.

4.38   **Truancy and school exclusion**: In 2010/11 26,844 exclusions from local authority schools in Scotland, including 60 cases where pupils were removed from the school register (this does not include those pupils who moved schools as a result of agreement between their parents and the school).

4.39   **Looked after children and school exclusion**: Exclusion rates are higher for looked after children in Scotland than for all school children. The overall exclusion rate for looked after children in 2010/11 was 365 in every 1,000 children, compared with 45 exclusions per 1,000 pupils for all children.

4.40   **Looked after children and young people**: Scottish Government statistics show that at 31 July 2011 there were 16,171 children looked after by local authorities in Scotland, an increase of 2 per cent since the same date of the previous year. As is the case throughout the UK, there is an upward trend in the looked after population, and this number is the highest since 1981. The main reason for becoming looked after is abuse and neglect; most children will also have experienced poverty, family disruption and difficulties in schooling. The majority of looked after children in Scotland are placed in foster care, and a minority – some 1,600 – placed in residential care.

4.41   **Children and young people going missing**: Wade (2001) surveyed 3,000 children and young people in Scottish schools. The study, which also drew on data from agencies working with runaways, estimated that 9,000 children run

away or are forced to leave home each year in Scotland, where going missing is defined as overnight absence (see also Scottish Police Services Authority, 2012). This number includes those who have run away previously, and represents one in nine children of all children in Scotland. One in six runaways reported being physically or sexually assaulted while away from home. Therefore, taking this estimate of the missing population, 1,500 children in Scotland may be vulnerable to such assault annually.

4.42 **Youth homelessness:** Young people aged 16-24 experience high levels of homelessness. A progress report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2008) found that the annual rate of young people accepted as homeless was higher in Scotland than the rest of the UK (Quilgars, Johnsen and Pleace, 2008). Stonewall Scotland (2009) has highlighted the vulnerability of young LGBT people to have sex with strangers in exchange for accommodation.

4.43 These statistics provide some information on aspects of vulnerability amongst children and young people in Scotland. They point to the numbers of children affected by issues which are known to increase vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. However, these numbers are garnered from different sources and from studies that have used a variety of methodologies. It would be methodologically problematic, therefore, to attempt to assess the scale of child sexual exploitation from these statistics. Information is required regarding known cases of child sexual exploitation in Scotland, and about how Child Protection Committees are implementing policy on the issue.

4.44 The statistics also highlight some areas of difference between Scotland and England which may be interesting or significant in relation to the ways in which patterns of child sexual exploitation are manifested. There are some differences in patterns of provision, for example, in relation to the care population, that may influence the pattern of sexual exploitation. The significance of the group of children and young people who are looked after at home is of particular note, and would merit further research in respect to sexual exploitation in Scotland.

Trafficking

4.45 Data on trafficking is also relevant to thinking about the scale of child sexual exploitation in Scotland. This can include trafficking from abroad as well as the movement of children and young people around the UK.

4.46 Research carried out for the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (2011) analysed statistics from the UK Border Agency Office for Scotland and Northern Ireland regarding National Referral Mechanism referrals of children received between April 2009 and August 2010. A total of 14 referrals had been received, and of these five demonstrated reasonable grounds of having been trafficked. The characteristics of these 14 were examined: three were male and 11 female. In ten of the cases the exploitation was sexual; in four cases it was forced labour; there was one case of domestic servitude (in one case both sexual exploitation and domestic servitude were alleged). The majority of these involved children aged 14-18, though two children were under five.

4.47   The same research study also obtained further data from CEOP regarding trafficking between March 2007 and February 2010. Of the 17 cases recorded, four were identified as trafficking for sexual exploitation. The authors note, therefore, the need to recognise that the trafficking of young people takes place for many different types of exploitation, and should not be assumed to involve sexual exploitation.

4.48   Marie and Skidmore (2007) surveyed Barnardo"s specialist services for sexually exploited young people, plus a smaller number of services working with children who go missing from home or care. This survey investigated services" direct and indirect knowledge regarding internal trafficking, specifically the number of internally trafficked young people they had supported, who had trafficked them, and where to and from.

4.49   Seventy-six young people were identified by 16 services as having been internally trafficked. The majority of these were young women. Young people were moved from places in Scotland or the north of England to Glasgow, as well as from Glasgow to Edinburgh, London or Belfast and other places in Northern Ireland. Young people were also thought to be moved from Northern Ireland to Scotland by boat.

Delinquent and gang-involved young people

4.50   Pitts and Pearce (2011) reviewed the literature regarding the relationship between gangs and sexual exploitation in the UK. This review highlighted that existing evidence suggests that young women are often the victims of gang violence. The evidence on the links between gangs and sexual exploitation suggests that young women have different levels and types of involvement in gangs.

4.51   Beckett (2011) found young people involved with the youth justice system in Northern Ireland, but was unable to determine the causal relationship between the two.

4.52   The precise nature of the relationship between gang involvement or association and sexual exploitation is acknowledged to be under-researched. The Office of the Children"s Commissioner in England is currently undertaking an enquiry into the issue, and has also commissioned research by the University of Bedfordshire.

4.53   The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC), a longitudinal self-report study of around 4,300 young people aged 12-17, found that gang membership appeared to decline with age. At age 13, around one in five of the cohort reported that they were part of a group of friends they would describe as a „gang". Although, generally, gang membership was fluid and changing, only one-quarter of those in a gang at 13 were still in a gang at 16.

4.54   Bannister et al (2010) interviewed service providers and gang-involved young people in five case study sites throughout Scotland and included consideration of gender roles within gangs. This study found it was rare for girls and young women to participate in gangs on „equal terms", but tend to

participate on the basis of a relationship with a gang member. There were contradictions in the accounts provided regarding the nature of relationships between the sexes within the gang – on one hand, interviewees reported that boys would not usually attack a girl unless she had acted aggressively first. However, girls were also „portrayed as the frequent catalyst of conflict" between rival gangs, either through spreading rumours or entering into relationships with boys from rival gangs, sleeping with multiple partners across territorial divisions as well as actually fighting with young men.

4.55 Young men also talked about gang-involved girls in „derogatory and disparaging ways" and a sexual double standard was in operation. Young women recognised this, and reported that young men were verbally abusive and controlling towards young women in the gang. Young women were acknowledged to be vulnerable to sexual assault, including rape, by gang members with most power.

4.56 While there are variations in patterns of gang structure and activity across Scotland, these findings indicate that gang-involvement, or participation in „street" delinquency, can make young women vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Multiple layers and causal mechanisms

4.57 „Thousands of things have happened to get me here" (Montgomery-Devlin, 2008). It is important to emphasise that, for young people in any of these categories, many factors may intervene either to make sexual exploitation more likely, or to prevent sexual exploitation taking place. The findings regarding the causal significance of certain factors varies between studies.

4.58 Official statistics are not always the best guide to these relationships. School exclusion, truancy or other absence from school is a consistent feature of the accounts of sexually exploited young women (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Pearce, 2009). However, boys outnumber girls in exclusion statistics, and relatively little research has taken place into truancy and exclusion as these are experienced by girls. At the same time, those who are excluded are left unsupervised and, potentially, at risk of being left unsupervised and at risk. There are, therefore, a number of interacting factors which will influence vulnerability.

4.59 Some statistics, however, highlight interesting differences within groups. For example, attendance rates for children living in foster care in Scotland were higher than the UK national average. This statistic is striking in the context of wider research evidence concerning educational disengagement and low achievement in the care population in Scotland and the rest of the UK (Brodie and Morris, 2010; McClung and Gale, 2010). This highlights the need to avoid the automatic juxtaposition of school disengagement and experience of care and highlights the role of positive care placements in supporting vulnerable young people.

4.60 The presence of poverty in the lives of young people is widely recognised as significant, though not inevitably related, to other types of vulnerability,

including abuse. There is extensive evidence attesting to high levels of child poverty in Scotland and throughout the UK (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011).

4.61 For example, Wade"s study found that family conflict, abuse and other problems at home were the main reasons for running away, and were present in 80 per cent of the cases studied, children living in substitute care were over-represented amongst those who ran away. Children and young people from poorer families were slightly more likely to run away, but Wade describes the link between poverty and running away as „at best indirect" (p2).

4.62 The strong relationship between substitute care and going missing is supported by a significant body of research. Creegan, Scott and Smith (2005) note that going missing (described as absconding) was often the trigger for young people"s placement in secure accommodation.

4.63 Berridge, Biehal and Henry (2012) in a survey of 200 residents of children"s homes in England, found that over half of the young people went missing overnight during every six month period. Residents went missing from all homes in at least one of the six month periods examined, and some went missing from at least ten of the homes in all three periods. However, four of the 16 homes in the study reported particularly high levels of young people going missing, and these homes also had high rates of placement disruption and permanent exclusion. However, it is difficult to assess whether these rates are attributable to the characteristics of the homes e.g. the nature of intake, or the characteristics of young people.

4.64 The significance of residential care as a placement choice contributing to young people"s risks of sexual exploitation has been identified as a matter of considerable concern at the present time (Office of the Children"s Commissioner, 2012; All Parliamentary Group, 2012; Brodie et al, 2011). These concerns have arisen largely as a result of evidence in high profile court cases in England regarding children going missing from residential care who have gone on to be sexually exploited.

4.65 Foster care is often seen as a preferable option for sexually exploited young people (Scott and Skidmore, 2006), but this option is constrained both by placement availability and the young person"s history of care, specific needs and personal preferences. Other research evidence has also highlighted that foster carers may be far from confident in working with young people who are sexually abused or exploited (Farmer and Pollock, 2003). Overall, the weight of evidence indicates that the key issue is the quality of care being delivered overall, rather than the placement type *per se* (Brodie et al, 2011).

4.66 In England, particular concern has been expressed at the extensive use of „out-of-authority" placements (All Parliamentary Group, 2012). There is an absence of research into this issue. The dynamics are complex, linked both to the way in which residential care is used by local authorities, the geographic distribution of placements (with a large number of residential homes often located in deprived seaside resorts where there are a concentration of social

problems) in addition to the decision making that takes place in respect to individual children and young people.

4.67 In Scotland, the balance of placements is different, with a significant group of children looked after at home. McClung and Gayle (2010) found that children who became looked after beyond the age of 12 tended to be looked after at home or in residential care. This group are also vulnerable to exclusion from school.

4.68 More generally, commentators have argued that the connections between care and poor outcomes for young people should be considered more critically, and have emphasised that care can be a positive intervention (Forrester, 2009; Hare and Bullock, 2006; Stein, 2009).

4.69 It is important that consideration is given to the different causal connections between residential care placements and experience of sexual exploitation. These can be summarised as:

- targeting by adults of residential care units where children are known to be vulnerable;

- peer exploitation via the group of children living in a residential unit;

- peer exploitation via networks of looked after young people inside and outside the unit;

- exploitation as a reason for entry to care;

- exploitation as a result of going missing while in care; and

- exploitation via another route unconnected to the care placement (e.g. internet, school).

4.70 Beckett (2011) examined the time-frame of the onset of concerns about child sexual exploitation with young people"s entry to care. In almost exactly half of the cases where this could be determined, concerns about child sexual exploitation were reported to exist prior to entry to care; in over half of these cases, the concerns continued during the care placement. For the other half, concerns emerged after entry to care.

4.71 There is also evidence of these different links in Scottish research. Munro (2004), interviewing workers from Barnardo"s street team, found evidence that young people living in residential units or in supported placements were being targeted by adult men. This targeting took place in areas of Glasgow city centre where groups of vulnerable young people were known to gather, and was not necessarily linked to the homes themselves.

4.72 Young people may also be vulnerable to sexual exploitation through a variety of different routes. The evidence from Scottish research identifies a variety of routes into sexual exploitation including: grooming by individual adults; the

use of drink, drugs and parties to befriend, then exploit, young people; exploitation via groups of other young people; and the targeting of places where young people socialise and residential units.

4.73   A growing body of evidence also attests to the bullying and violence young people may experience from peers within care settings, most obviously but not exclusively in residential care. Hicks et al (2004) report over a third of a sample of 175 young people living in residential care expressed unhappiness with the behaviour of other residents, and about half had experienced bullying. Barter et al (2004), in a study of violence in children‟s homes, found that girls were three times more likely to experience sexual violence than boys, and also the severest forms. Half of these incidents had not been reported to staff, though young people had disclosed to peers. Peer abuse within residential care may heighten a young person‟s vulnerability to exploitation outside the children‟s home.

Key messages from this chapter

- The research evidence indicates vulnerability across a range of deprived groups, including those excluded from school, those looked after and those who are delinquent or gang-involved.

- Going missing – whether from the family home or from care placements – is a highly significant in placing children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

- There is evidence showing the vulnerability of young people who are looked after to sexual exploitation.

- Key issues in understanding these relationships include young people‟s pre-care experiences, the environment of the children‟s home, and the nature of support available to young people.

- There is some evidence demonstrating the vulnerability of gang-involved young women to sexual exploitation.

- Existing data sources provide important information about groups of children and young people who are potentially more vulnerable to child sexual exploitation, but the causal relationships are complex and this data should not be extrapolated to estimate the scale of child sexual exploitation in Scotland.

5 WHAT IS EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN ADDRESSING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

5.1 This chapter examines evidence regarding effective intervention regarding child sexual exploitation. Research throughout the UK has identified examples of effective practice, but it is widely acknowledged that this is far from consistent (Clutton and Coles, 2009; Barnardo"s, 2012; Beckett, 2011; Jago et al, 2011).

5.2 Establishing what is meant by good practice in regard to sexual exploitation is complex, and there continue to be challenges in defining what is meant by sexual exploitation and how services can best respond (Pearce, 2010). However, all practice should be underpinned by „good, assessment informed, safeguarding practice" (Rigby, Muri and Ball, 2012). Local Child Protection Committees are, therefore, key to the development of good practice.

5.3 The evidence is strong that young people who are known to be sexually exploited have usually experienced a wide range of adversities. Schofield and Brown (1999) describe well the ways in which these adversities do not end with intervention. Family and relationship difficulties, mental health problems, drug and alcohol misuse and lack of housing, education and employment are frequently ongoing issues in young people"s experiences. Instability and lack of secure relationships are often reflected in young people"s experiences of services, for example, frequent placement change (Pearce, 2002; 2006; 2009). Interventions with sexually exploited individuals may, therefore, be met with suspicion.

5.4 Additionally, challenges are presented by wider societal perceptions of adolescents as problematic, rather than in need. This is often reflected in child protection procedures oriented to younger children, and in professional perceptions of sexually exploited young people as lying, uncooperative, difficult to engage, unreliable, aggressive and abusive (Pearce, 2009). Young people who were sexually exploited and living in secure accommodation were described as „attention seeking" „manipulative" and „hard work" (Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005). These challenges should not detract from the recognition of the needs of these young people, and the importance of identifying appropriate intervention.

5.5 There are also tensions in professional perceptions about thresholds for intervention with adolescents, and especially concerning judgements about the extent to which sexual relationships are consensual (Phoenix, 2010; Warrington, 2010; Melrose, 2011). Particular difficulties have been identified, consequently, in the identification of sexual exploitation amongst young people over the age of 16, and the extent to which intervention is possible or desirable (Jago et al, 2010). While these issues are complex, it is important that child protection training includes consideration of best practice in respect to this older group.

5.6 Even where services may be effective for a group of vulnerable young people, it does not follow that practitioners are well-prepared for working with sexually exploited young people. Research by Smeaton (2010) into a refuge for young runaways found that workers noted sexually exploited young people challenging to work with, and felt that it was difficult to accommodate them within the rules of the setting. A key issue here is likely to be the young person"s attachment to the abuser, and reluctance to give up the relationship. Practitioners, therefore, need to be able to allow trust to develop with the young person, often over a lengthy period of time, acknowledging the young person"s understanding of the relationship and working with them to support the making of choices that are as safe as possible in the circumstances (Warrington, 2010). This will require space for the exercise of individual professional judgement and a recognition on the part of agencies regarding the complex nature of such work.

5.7 Effective practice will take place with a wider policy and practice context. *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2012) provides a useful framework for thinking about the prevention of and intervention to support young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation and trafficking for sexual exploitation. This emphasises that children, young people and their families should be at the centre of any intervention.

5.8 The steps of the GIRFEC national practice model are also clearly applicable to developing practice thinking about child sexual exploitation: observing and recording; gathering information and analysis; planning action; and reviewing. It is important to view practice relating to child sexual exploitation as involving a process, and often a lengthy one (Scottish Government, 2012).

5.9 Developing understanding of what is meant by effective practice will involve recognition of the sensitivity of the issue for young people and the difficulties associated with disclosure (Firmin, 2010). Many young people will not be aware they are being sexually exploited, and even when this becomes clear may be reluctant to break ties with the exploiter(s).

5.10 It will also involve an understanding of the variety of different routes through which young people may become sexually exploited (Pearce, 2006; CEOP, 2011; Jago et al, 2011), and the extent to which these routes are evident in local areas.

5.11 Effective practice involves working not only with individual young people, but also with their families and peer groups (Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005; Jago et al, 2011).

5.12 Keeping young people safe will involve gathering intelligence, disrupt and prosecute abusers. Where such action does not take place, then patterns of exploitation are likely to be perpetuated. Overall, evidence suggests this is a weak area of practice in the UK, though expertise is developing (CEOP, 2011; Jago et al, 2011). This issue has not been researched in Scotland.

Evidence from Scottish studies

5.13   The Scottish studies identified in the Appendix 2 highlight a number of issues regarding good practice which are consistent with broader evidence.

5.14   The young people interviewed in these studies highlighted a number of ways in which they could be supported:

- warm and positive relationships with staff, including residential staff, were very important to their disclosure of problems and access to ongoing support;

- the importance of access to counselling or other therapy;

- the need for a range of supportive services, including education, housing and mental health services;

- peer support – for example, participants in Dillane, Hill and Munro"s (2005) study noted that it was important to stay with friends when out at night; and

- the role of community safety measures – in the form of CCTV, street lighting and visibility of liaison police officers.

5.15   These findings are consistent with other research regarding effective services for young people. This highlights the importance of talking to, and taking seriously, the views of sexually exploited young people in the development of services.

5.16   The Scottish Executive"s 2003 guidance highlights the importance of safe accommodation in safeguarding children and young people who are sexually exploited. The guidance also suggests that secure accommodation may be a positive option for young people who have been sexually exploited.

5.17   Creegan, Scott and Smith (2005) explored the experiences of young people placed in secure accommodation who were also sexually exploited. This research concluded that while some placements had been made on the grounds that this was the best option for the young person, in other cases these decisions were made in the context of a perceived lack of other options. The authors conclude that community based interventions would often be preferable.

5.18   A gap in services is often evident in the experience of older young people and care leavers. For example, Dixon and Stein (2002) carried out research with 107 young people leaving care in three Scottish local authorities. The majority of this group had moved on from care before the age of 18, with those in residential care leaving earlier than the foster care group. Support was often limited, and young people encountered more difficulties than their non-looked after peers in finding appropriate education and employment. Finding suitable accommodation was also a problem, with young people often experiencing temporary accommodation. Homelessness had been an issue for four in ten young people.

5.19 Brodie et al (2011) reviewed the evidence regarding safe accommodation for young people in the care system who are at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation or trafficking for sexual exploitation. The findings indicated that the choice of placement is important, but that the young person"s perception of what makes them feel safe also needs to be explored and taken seriously in professional decision making.

5.20 There is no Scottish evidence regarding work with families of sexually exploited young people.

5.21 There is no Scottish evidence regarding perpetrators of sexual exploitation, or the processes associated with seeking the prosecution of abusers. It is important that professionals look beyond the behaviour of individual young people to the actions of those responsible for the exploitation, and work in partnership with the police to disrupt and prosecute abusers (Jago, 2010).

5.22 Practitioners express a desire for better training, information and practice tools relating to child sexual exploitation (Munro, 2004; see also Jago et al, 2011).

Universal and targeted services

5.23 The response of all services working with vulnerable children and young people is important. Universal services, specifically health and education services, also have a key role in identifying concerns that a young person may be sexually exploited, and, where these concerns prove justified, in referring the young person to other appropriate services.

5.24 This process closely coheres with the GIRFEC model. A child-centred approach will also consider the child or young person"s experience of sexual exploitation in the context of their life as a whole, and other difficulties that may exist. Interventions may, therefore, be required from health, education or housing services. Interventions will need to balance the young person"s need for physical safety while also addressing relational problems (Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005).

5.25 The importance of universal services is also demonstrated by other evidence suggesting that, although many young people who are sexually exploited are in touch with services, others may not – for example, young people who go missing and gang-involved young people are not known to statutory agencies (McVie, 2010; Bannister et al, 2010; Malloch, 2006).

5.26 Sexual exploitation is often regarded as a ‚hidden" problem. The extent to which is hidden will, of course, depend on the extent to which is acknowledged and understood by those working with young people, and especially those working with the most vulnerable (Pearce, 2009).

5.27 Awareness raising and education will also be important for young people and their families. There is scope for awareness of sexual exploitation to be addressed within broader educational initiatives regarding positive and respectful sexual relationships (Humphreys, Houghton and Ellis, 2008).

Existing evidence in the UK suggests this is developing in some areas – for example through work in schools – but that practice varies. Awareness of the need to provide information for parents and carers is especially limited (Jago et al, 2011).

5.28   Overall, evidence from the UK suggests that awareness and relevant knowledge regarding child sexual exploitation does not exist amongst many practitioners working with young people (Clutton and Coles, 2009; Beckett, 2011; Jago et al, 2011). The extent to which such awareness exists depends on a range of factors, including the extent to which the issue is prioritised locally, the presence of specialist sexual exploitation services, and awareness of associated issues such as trafficking. There is also some evidence to suggest that there is more awareness of some routes into child sexual exploitation than others – for example, the „grooming‟ model appears to be well-known amongst practitioners, while knowledge of the different ways in which technology can be used to exploit, or gang-associated sexual exploitation, is less well understood.

5.29   In addition to an overall lack of knowledge about child sexual exploitation, practitioners may have more awareness or understanding about certain types of child sexual exploitation. Thus, for example, research evidence suggests more awareness of grooming by adults, peer recruitment and use of the internet in child sexual exploitation. In contrast, there is less awareness of gang-associated child sexual exploitation (Jago et al, 2011).

5.30   Effective multi-agency working is recognised as key to effective practice in guidance in Scotland and throughout the UK. Again, evidence suggests that this is inconsistent in terms of assessment, referral and the range of services working in partnership in respect to child sexual exploitation. This is not, of course, unusual in respect to child protection more generally (Munro, 2012) and is likely to be problematic in respect to an issue which has received variable attention across agencies and in different parts of the country.

5.31   It is important that consideration is given to the extent of knowledge about child sexual exploitation in different agencies, and to identify gaps in understanding and associated training needs. Research evidence from the UK as a whole, and also from the seminar described in Chapter 6 of this report, indicates that there is unevenness in the training and expertise regarding child sexual exploitation that is available to professionals working with young people. As noted above, existing child protection policy in Scotland provides a good framework for developing knowledge and understanding of child sexual exploitation.

5.32   Those with direct knowledge of young people as individuals are best placed to identify changes in their behaviour or emotional state, and, where there are concerns, to make contact with relevant professionals according to child protection procedures. It is important, therefore, that sexual exploitation does not become a matter only for specialist services (Pearce, 2010).

5.33   Service interventions for vulnerable young people may also be „gendered‟ and present barriers to those seeking help – for example, crime prevention

strategies are more often focused on boys, while child sexual exploitation strategies tend to focus on girls (Pearce and Pitts, 2011). Thus, some groups of young people may not be viewed as potential victims of child sexual exploitation. This can also mean practitioners in some services receive more information and training on the issue.

5.34 Where child sexual exploitation is identified, then young people may require intervention from a specialist service, where there is appropriate expertise not found in generic services for children and young people in need (Scott and Skidmore, 2006). CEOP (2011) emphasised the importance of specialist expertise in developing interventions for sexually exploited young people. This may exist within mainstream services, or take place within a separate service with a specific brief regarding child sexual exploitation.

5.35 While intervention for sexually exploited children and young people is recognised as being multi-faceted, research with practitioners highlights the importance of psychological or therapeutic help alongside more practical interventions (Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005; Jago et al, 2011). Professionals have highlighted time lags in young people obtaining appropriate therapeutic help. This is also linked to wider professional uncertainties regarding appropriate interventions for sexually exploited children and young people, and their families.

5.36 The lack of specialist support services for sexually exploited young people needs to be considered in the context of evidence regarding a similar, overall shortfall in therapeutic services for sexually abused children and young people throughout the UK and internationally (Allnock et al, 2009; Asquith and Turner, 2008; Stein et al, 2009; Cody, 2010).

5.37 The shortfall of services is likely to vary geographically, with rural areas facing particular issues in relation to distance and staff capacity (see Glendinning et al, 2003, regarding the experience of young people more generally in rural areas).

5.38 Jago et al (2011) supports the establishment of specialist, co-located services but note that some high profile examples of „excellent" specialist services are now falling victim to service cuts and conclude that the „overwhelming" message is that is does not matter who delivers direct work with young people so long as they are properly trained and skills, have time and space to deliver the work and have the support of the LSCBs and local authorities.

5.39 Key messages from this chapter

• Effective practice will be located within existing child protection procedures. GIRFEC provides a good framework for developing good practice in Scotland.

• Barriers to developing good practice include a lack of awareness amongst professionals, parents and carers and a lack of good information through which to identify local patterns of sexual exploitation.

- It is important that all services and individual practitioners are aware of the different routes through which children and young people can become sexually exploited, are able to identify the signs associated with this, and are aware of the relevant procedures within their agency.

- Sexual exploitation requires a co-ordinated multi-agency response. Universal and specialist services have important, complementary roles to play.

- Work with individual young people is important, but should be accompanied by a recognition that the issue also requires consideration of the abusive behaviour of the person(s) who have exploited them.

6   THE EXPERT SEMINAR: FINDINGS

6.1   This chapter reports on the views and experiences of the group of 27 practitioners who attended the expert seminar on 8 June 2012 in Edinburgh. The findings reported below represent the views of individuals, and have not been examined alongside other information, for example, individual local policies.

6.2   The seminar was intended to provide different opportunities for practitioners to communicate their views. A short questionnaire was completed to provide a profile of those attending, and including a selection of questions from the survey used by Jago et al (2011), thus giving some flavour of comparison with the experiences of practitioners in England and Wales.

6.3   The views expressed are not necessarily representative, and to this extent should be treated with some caution. That said, there are many parallels between the views expressed here and findings from practitioners in the rest of the UK and reported elsewhere in the report. Consequently, they provide an important starting point in understanding the nature of practice experience concerning the issue of child sexual exploitation throughout Scotland, and highlight issues which may inform the development of further research into the issue.

Questionnaire findings

6.4   Participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire, which asked about their individual practice experience regarding child sexual exploitation in Scotland. Twenty-six participants completed and returned the questionnaire. All but one were senior practitioners, working at service manager level or above. Seventeen worked in the statutory sector, mostly as senior child protection officers or council leads. Eight worked in the voluntary sector, in a variety of projects relating to the protection of children and young people. One participant worked in both statutory and voluntary sectors.

6.5   Participants were asked about whether child sexual exploitation was a priority for their agency. Overall, it appeared that participants were aware that child sexual exploitation was recognised as an issue of concern but it did not appear to have a high priority in local policy and practice in most areas. Most participants related the issue of child sexual exploitation to the statutory guidance on the issue (Scottish Executive, 2003).

6.6   The majority (20) of those responding had attended training relating to child sexual exploitation, though in some cases it was unclear how specific this had been. Several were also involved in delivering training.

6.7   All but 21 of 25 responses considered that there were clear referral routes when a child or young person was identified as having been sexually exploited. Where additional comments were made, these linked referral to child protection procedures or to trafficking. One participant commented that

the issue was less the clarity of procedures than whether sufficient knowledge existed to have child sexual exploitation identified in the first place.

6.8   Participants were asked about their experience of different routes into sexual exploitation, including: adult individuals; organised peer groups; peers; gangs; known businesses (e.g. taxi ranks; fast food outlets); and other routes. Sexual exploitation by individual adults, exploitation by peers and exploitation by organised groups of adults were the routes most commonly recognised by the majority of those present; exploitation via gangs was the least recognised. Exploitation via online grooming was highlighted by six participants. These findings mirror responses from practitioners in Jago et al"s (2011) survey of practitioners. They highlight the importance of ongoing training to update practitioners regarding new evidence regarding the range of routes through which children and young people may become sexually exploited.

6.9   Practitioners were also asked about which agencies were most active in the area of child sexual exploitation. The police were identified most often (by 21 respondents) as the most active agency, followed by third sector organisations and children"s services respectively.

6.10   Linked to the question of agency activity, participants were asked about the level of awareness raising with different groups – practitioners in child care statutory agencies, other statutory agencies, third sector organisations, police, parents and carers, and children and young people. Unsurprisingly, the greatest amount of awareness raising was taking place with practitioners from child care agencies, followed by third sector organisations and police. Least awareness raising was taking place with children and young people.

6.11   Responses to the question on awareness raising also highlights a gap between areas where a great deal of awareness raising is taking place, and those where very little is happening. Nine respondents said that awareness raising was taking place in all the domains listed, while six said that awareness raising was taking place in only one or two of these areas.

6.12   Participants were asked about the extent to which policy and practice in their service involved a „dual" approach (DCSF, 2009). Eleven of the 25 responding to this question were clear that this did not happen in their agency. Two did not know. Nine were aware of the issue, and felt work was developing but was only in the early stages – deficits around information sharing, for example, were identified, or that practice was variable. Interestingly, two respondents highlighted police operations as having stimulated efforts to develop this type of approach.

Focus group findings

6.13   The seminar group was divided into four focus groups, each of which examined four questions relating to practice.

•   Prevention – this could include consideration of awareness raising, training, development of strategy, scoping of the issue locally etc.

- Identification – could include data on known at risk groups, local routes into sexual exploitation, local specialist resources etc.

- Support – what kind of interventions are available, quality of inter-agency co-ordination and information sharing etc.

- Disruption and prosecution – work (and training) on evidence gathering, prosecution of offenders, support for victims and their families.

6.14 For each of these areas, practitioners were asked to consider, firstly, what was currently happening in their area or agency/service and, secondly, what they would like to see happen.

Prevention

6.15 Many examples of good practice in training and awareness raising were identified. These included campaigns against violence against women and work with groups of young people or practitioners, for example, foster carers. The need for more training and resources to support this work was expressed by many of those attending the seminar.

6.16 It was felt that good practice in prevention, and indeed other aspects of work relating to child sexual exploitation, tended to be concentrated in urban areas, and were sometimes linked to wider issues – for example, local guidelines on child sexual exploitation have been developed in Glasgow which were linked to other work on child trafficking.

6.17 Participants emphasised the importance of work in schools, and considerable work appeared to be taking place using film and other resources. There was a sense that information is filtering through to practitioners. Wider initiatives, notably the Barnardo‟s „Cut them free‟ campaign, are having an impact as are key media spotlights on the issue – for example, via „Eastenders‟ storylines.

6.18 Participants identified a tension in the extent to which the language of „sexual exploitation‟ was being used, or how it was used in relation to other issues such as domestic violence. This was reflected in the lack of clarity amongst participants about what is meant by child sexual exploitation, and how this relates to other forms of child abuse.

Identification

6.19 Much of the discussion focused on data gathering. It was acknowledged that while individual projects might collect data, there was an absence of systems through which this data could be used effectively at the level of the Child Protection Committee or local authority. It seems possible, indeed likely, that these difficulties in collecting data may be linked to differences in perception of ways in which young people may become sexually exploited and a lack of clarity of the definition of child sexual exploitation.

6.20 Third sector, specialist organisations were acknowledged as having an important role in relation to child sexual exploitation. Specialist services run

by Barnardo"s and Aberlour were highlighted as having played an important role in providing information and training to other agencies. However, some participants felt that partnership working with specialist services could be improved.

Support

6.21   Overall, with the important exception of a small number of well-known projects run by third sector organisations, it was felt that provision for sexually exploited young people was patchy.

6.22   Some practitioners felt that therapeutic interventions tended to be for child abuse generally, and were not focused on child sexual exploitation, though they were not necessarily explicit on what they would want from such services. There was a sense that expertise was not sufficiently developed to allow for work focused on child sexual exploitation to be delivered.

6.23   There was also some disagreement about where services for sexually exploited children and young people should be situated in relation to other services for children and young people. This point is interesting in the light of other research evidence that has highlighted the value of having co-located services for children and young people who are sexually exploited.

6.24   Others noted the importance of ensuring mainstream statutory services understood and were able to respond to issues of child sexual exploitation, for example, services for looked after children. This relates, once again, to the issue of awareness raising and training regarding the different routes through which children and young people may become sexually exploited.

6.25   Concerns were expressed about the amount and quality of services for over-16s, including care leavers. The links between adult and children"s services were also felt to be problematic – reflected, for example, in different thresholds applied by services to supporting children, young people and adults.

Disruption and prosecution

6.26   As the questionnaire findings illustrated, few practitioners had direct experience of gathering evidence, sharing intelligence and working with police to disrupt abusers. Inevitably, this limited discussion of the issue, and the views reported below reflect the views of only a minority of participants.

6.27   Practitioners felt that existing legislation lacked sufficient force – and was not resulting in the conviction of those involved in the sexual exploitation of children and young people.

6.28   This was linked to the other perceived gaps in the system – if, for example, practitioners were not sufficiently trained or supported, then the disruption of abusive networks would not take place.

6.29   Gaps in knowledge were identified – for example, how the process of gathering evidence should take place, and how witnesses could best be

supported. Practitioners were keen to find out more about what had been learned from recent police operations in Scotland.

6.30   There was a recognition of the importance of information sharing within and between services – in terms of intelligence gathering and local patterns of abuse.

6.31   Some practitioners had been worked alongside a police operation, which had not resulted in any prosecutions. This had been an important learning experience in terms of how partnership working with police colleagues could be developed in respect to child sexual exploitation.

Key messages from this chapter

- The practitioners who attended the seminar reported varying levels of awareness, knowledge and experience of child sexual exploitation across Scotland. At the same time there is concern about the issue, and a belief that work is developing.

- There is an absence of a common understanding of what is meant by „child sexual exploitation", and the range of different routes into sexual exploitation. This affects the approaches taken to the issue in practice.

- Practitioners felt that work could be developed in all areas – prevention, identification, support and disruption. Improved partnership working and better systems for sharing information were viewed as important elements of developing good practice.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 This report has brought together available evidence regarding the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in Scotland. It takes place in the context of growing awareness and concern about the issue amongst policy makers, practitioners and the general public.

7.2 It can be concluded that there is a lack of robust evidence regarding the numbers of children and young people who experience sexual exploitation in Scotland. Existing statistics provide data on vulnerable populations which are likely to be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. However, in the absence of empirical evidence addressing the issue of prevalence, it is not possible to estimate scale. It is unfortunate that national studies of prevalence have not, so far, distinguished Scottish statistics from UK-wide estimates. More Scottish-specific data may emerge as methodologies improve for the collection of data on child sexual exploitation.

7.3 The evidence from existing research indicates that children and young people from all backgrounds may experience child sexual exploitation. It is important that future research seeks to understand the scale of child sexual exploitation in the Scottish population as a whole, rather than focusing only on known at risk groups.

7.4 At the same time, the available evidence from Scottish and UK-wide evidence indicates that the pattern of child sexual exploitation appears to reflect what has been found in the rest of the UK.

7.5 There is a range of policy and legislation in Scotland that is relevant to the issue of child sexual exploitation and which recognise the issue. There is a question about the relationship between the different sets of guidance that exist, and the extent to which these contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding regarding child sexual exploitation.

7.6 The evidence reviewed in this report highlights the difficulties associated with the implementation of guidance specific to child sexual exploitation in England and Wales. At the same time, the existence of such guidance has provided an important touchstone for the assessment of policy and practice.

7.7 The GIRFEC framework is important in providing a framework for practice in protecting all children and young people in Scotland which coheres with what is known about good practice in respect to child sexual exploitation. The same principles of child-centred practice can inform the development of local policy and practice, and can also be applied to cases of child sexual exploitation.

7.8 The review has indicated that a small number of studies provide useful evidence about the nature of child sexual exploitation. The strengths of this evidence lie in the information provided about specific groups of children and young people, specifically children and young people in care and children and young people who have been trafficked.

7.9   The evidence from research and from the consultation with practitioners indicates that knowledge and understanding of the issue is likely to vary between individuals and services. However, the evidence from the seminar highlighted examples of good practice, together with a commitment to the development of this area of work.

7.10   Policy and research in England and Wales has emphasised the importance of a dual approach in helping ensure the safety of children and young people who are sexually exploited. There is a lack of Scottish evidence about the ways in which practitioners are working with the police in regard to the disruption of networks of abusers, gathering evidence and seeking prosecution in cases of child sexual exploitation.

7.11   Additionally, it is important that local scoping takes place regarding the nature of the issue in specific locations. Existing studies of trafficking and gang violence indicate important geographical differences across Scotland. The nature of effective practice regarding child sexual exploitation in rural areas has been under-researched in general.

7.12   This report is timely, taking place at a time where not only has awareness and concern regarding child sexual exploitation has increased considerably, but where the research base has also improved. This provides scope for future research in Scotland to build on the theoretical and methodological knowledge that has been accrued.

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APPENDIX 1

There are three stages to the literature review process:

1. Identification of keywords and „update" searching of databases, resulting in the establishment of clear inclusion/exclusion criteria. Again, this process will build on recent reviewing experience in the area and will therefore take the form of an „update" search for UK research 2011-2012, plus additional, focused searching for literature applying to Scotland and English language international literature since 2000. The final sample will be stored on Endnote software.

2. Extraction of relevant items according to search criteria and retrieval and reading of materials.

3. Identification of key themes and analysis of sources. This will include the mapping of research messages which can be said to be „shared" between Scotland and other countries in the UK and/or internationally, and the identification of specific areas of difference and issues requiring further research.

Keywords

*   Scotland/Scottish
*   United Kingdom
*   Sexual exploitation
*   Sexual abuse
*   Family abuse
*   Community and abuse
*   Sex work
*   Prostitution
*   Looked after children/young people
*   Children/young people in care
*   Children/young people in public care
*   Foster care
*   Residential care
*   Missing
*   Running away
*   Asylum seeking young people
*   Refugee young people
*   Secure accommodation
*   Trafficking for sexual exploitation
*   Grooming
*   Leaving care
*   Care leavers accommodation

- Therapeutic accommodation
- Maltreatment in care/foster care/residential care
- Out-of-home care
- Perpetrators
- Abusers
- Pimps
- Grooming
- Partying
- Drugs/alcohol/sex

Search sites

Searches to take place on the following databases. Search results will be supplemented by reference harvesting and searching of organisational databases.

- ChildData
- Children in the News
- Social Care Online
- IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences)
- SocioIndex
- NSPCC Inform
- Barnardo‟s
- Scottish Executive Research
- Pubmed
- ASSIA (Applied Social Studies Index and Abstract)
- PsycARTICLES
- British Library
- COPAC
- ZETOC
- Sage Premier
- Google Books
- Google Scholar
- Research Register for Social Care
- Hansard/They Work for You
- Dissertations and Theses databases: EThOS ethos.bl.uk; ProQuest Dissertations and Theses – UK and Ireland

APPENDIX 2: KEY SCOTTISH RESEARCH STUDIES

Date	Author(s)	Title	Methods used
2004	Munro, C.	Scratching the Surface: What we know about the abuse and sexual exploitation of young people by adults targeting residential and supported accommodation units.	Interviews with workers who are part of Barnardo"s „Street Safe" project
2005	Dillane, J., Hill, M. and Munro, C.	A Study of Sexual Exploitation of Looked After and Accommodated Young People.	Interviews with 28 young people looked after or accommodated
2005	Creegan, C., Scott, S. and Smith, R.	The Use of Secure Accommodation and Alternative Provisions for Sexually Exploited Young People in Scotland	Interviews with local authority managers, unit staff, community agency staff and children"s reporters.
Relevant, related studies not focused on child sexual exploitation			
2011	Scotland"s Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Centre for Rural Childhood, Perth College UHI	Scotland – A Safe Place for Child Traffickers?	Desk-based literature review, web survey and interviews with key professionals and young people

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