



Title: POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS TO THE RECOGNITION OF THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF YOUNG MALES UNDER 18

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# POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS TO THE RECOGNITION OF THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF YOUNG MALES UNDER 18

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A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire, in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Professional Doctorate in Children and Young People's Services Leadership

University of Bedfordshire

Institute of Applied Social Research

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## Declaration

I, JACQUI MONTGOMERY-DEVLIN, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

This work was done wholly while in candidature for a research degree at the University;

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- Where I have drawn on or cited the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
- None of this work has been published before submission.

## Abstract

A growing body of research has shown that the discourse on child sexual exploitation (CSE) continues to be female-centric despite some attempts to raise the plight of young males as victims of this phenomenon. This thesis addresses this gap by examining the potential impediments to the recognition of CSE in young males under the age of 18. The central focus of this study is to identify barriers to disclosure by young males and inhibitors to identification by professionals, encompassing an exploration of the existence of any relationship between the two.

The research took the form of a mixed methods approach, obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data from young people and a range of professionals. This consisted of: 91 respondents to a survey for professionals; 1,158 respondents to a survey for young people; 10 interviews with young males; and 30 interviews with professionals. The study is underpinned by the theoretical framework of ecological systems theory, supporting the notion that the sexual exploitation of young males as a phenomenon is not simply a manifestation of the individual male victim operating in a vacuum, but contextual to the prevalence and impact of other factors. This allows for the integration of all levels of human ecology, including the environment and diverse cultural contexts, as responsible for the cause of and solution to the problem. Application of this theory was facilitated by using Sorsoli *et al's* (2008) three domains model as a practical framework, enabling examination of barriers to recognition within each of the systems (or domains) at play, and the interplay between them, demonstrating the complexities surrounding the recognition of this phenomenon.

This study concludes that there is both commonality and dissonance between the views of young people and what we already understand from the Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) literature relating to the non-recognition of males as victims. The findings challenge the actual stereotypical

assumptions regarding males and masculinity believed to inhibit recognition of males as victims. The findings also reveal a level of dissonance between the views of young people and professionals regarding the relevance of barriers to recognition of CSE in young males. These findings present safeguarding implications. They underscore the importance of recognising the role of gender constructs and socialisation in the negating of males as victims of CSE, but more importantly, how they may be manifested. This adds unique complications to the process of both disclosure and identification of CSE in males. The implications of this for the interpretation and application of CSE policies and procedures to the identification of young males as victims, is significant.

The results of this study call for the sexual exploitation of young males to be placed firmly in the child protection arena, providing a basis upon which the young male, the professional, and the wider social system can understand the position of responsibilities in relation to recognition of CSE in males, thereby achieving greater equilibrium in recognition of the two genders as victims of CSE.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to my supervisors, Professor Jenny Pearce and Dr Helen Beckett, who saw my passion for this area of work and provided me with the encouragement and belief that I could achieve this. Their knowledge, critique and patience has been invaluable throughout.

Undertaking this professional doctorate study has enabled me to achieve two goals: to complete a study at this level; but more importantly to contribute something to the plight of boys and young men who continue to suffer in silence from the trauma of CSE. It has been that particular goal which has driven and kept me inspired to complete this thesis.

I have been truly humbled by the willingness of the ten young males whom I interviewed; their openness and their unselfish desire to have their input to this study help protect other young males, is admirable. I also acknowledge the contribution of the young people through the Young Life and Times survey and the many professionals who participated via survey, interview, or by facilitating young males to be interviewed. I am sincerely grateful for your time and often enduring efforts.

To my family and friends who have remained supportive, faithful and understanding of my absence throughout, I love you all loads. It is without doubt that I could not have envisaged undertaking this study without the encouragement and unwavering physical and emotional support of my husband, Neil; thank you. To my children, Callum, Jude and Lydia, I am so very proud of the individuals you have become. Thank you for your understanding and patience throughout this time.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my late mother, Evelyn Montgomery, who I believe unwittingly instilled in me the perseverance to keep going when the going gets tough.

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## Acronyms

BME	Black and minority ethnic
CAWN	Child Abduction Warning Notice
CEOP	Child Exploitation Online Protection
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
DfE	Department for Education
EST	Ecological Systems Theory
NI	Northern Ireland
ORECNI	Office for Research Ethics Committees Northern Ireland
PI	Professional Interview
PS	Professional Survey
SOA	Sexual Offences Act
SOCA	Serious Organised Crime Agency
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
USA	United States of America
YLT	Young Life and Times

## Chapter one: Introduction

The literature base on the sexual exploitation of young people has increased over the last two decades with an increased awareness of the sexual exploitation of children and young people within the UK. However, over more recent years there has also been criticism of the discourse remaining female-centric, with a lack of reliable research and data in relation to young males as victims of child sexual exploitation (CSE). Gohir (2013), in particular, questioned why certain groups of children and young people remain under-represented in those identified as at risk, namely, boys, minority ethnic young people, disabled young people, LGBT young people, and young people involved in offending. I would argue that, if young males have one or a number of these other characteristics, the likelihood of them being recognised amongst young people at risk of CSE, may be further reduced. This accentuated my desire to help legitimise, as valid, young males' rights to disclosure and seeking help, whilst enabling professionals to address their own inhibitors to identifying the victimhood of young males.

The purpose of this research study, therefore, was to address this knowledge gap, in particular, the potential impediments to the recognition of CSE amongst males under the age of 18. To achieve this, this study seeks to examine:

- ❖ Identifying inhibitors to disclosure by young males and potential solutions;
- ❖ Identifying impediments to identification by professionals and potential solutions;
- ❖ Exploring the existence of any relationship between inhibitors to disclosure and impediments to identification.

In view of the dearth of literature specifically relating to the sexual exploitation of young males, the literature on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) provides a basis upon which to examine this issue.



Exploring the applicability of impediments to the recognition of CSA in young males to that of CSE, as a particular form of CSA, offers a unique contribution to the scholarly literature in this academic field.

With reference to the evidence base, I hypothesised that the barriers to disclosure of sexual exploitation for young males and the impediments to identification for professionals exist on multiple levels and are interrelated. The extent to which this is the case is revealed within the findings of this thesis.

## **Thesis structure**

Following this introduction, chapter two provides a conceptual context for this study through a review of the literature. This helps locate my study within the existing research base, whilst drawing out gaps in the literature. In doing so, my intention is to examine the extent to which social constructs regarding males might influence understanding, interpretation and application of any existing definitional, policy or legislative contexts, thus creating disparities between how the victimhood of young males and females is recognised.

Chapter three presents the theoretical lens through which this study is examined, that of ecological systems theory which also links to my original intention to use Sorsoli *et al's* (2008) three domains model as the practical framework upon which to base this study.

Chapter four consists of two sections. The first sets out the methodological framework and study design chosen for this thesis, that involving mixed methods, achieving a valuable range of data from a number of perspectives. The practical detail of using both quantitative and qualitative methods for this study is explored. Section two of this chapter describes the strict ethical procedures to be followed for a study of this nature, involving human participants.

An overview of the quantitative findings is presented in chapter five, before turning to a more in-depth presentation of both the quantitative and qualitative findings in chapters six to nine, based on four specific themes. Chapter ten forms a discussion regarding the applicability of the chosen theoretical framework to my findings, and a comparison of my findings against what the literature tells us about CSA/CSE. Concluding thoughts and recommendations are presented in chapter 11, highlighting areas requiring further research.

For ease of reading, the term 'recognition' will be used throughout this thesis as an overarching term to encompass disclosure and identification unless otherwise specified.

## Chapter two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the potential impediments to the recognition of CSE in males under the age of 18. The main aim of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature in order to locate my study within the existing research base, whilst drawing out the gaps in the literature which this study seeks to address. I will examine the extent to which social constructs regarding males might influence understanding, interpretation and application of any existing definitional, policy or legislative contexts, that may create disparities between the recognition of victimhood in young males compared to young females.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section one begins with an outline of the secondary sources of data collection, followed by an exploration of the definitional context of CSE, essential to the conceptual framework for practice. It then provides a brief history of CSE, taking account of paradigm shifts in terminology. The significant policy and legislative changes to the present day in relation to CSE are then examined. Within the constraints of limited knowledge on the sexual exploitation of young males I will then present some figures regarding its prevalence, with some comparative figures of known CSA amongst young males. What is already known regarding the nuances of how young people, and specifically young males, are sexually exploited will be presented as manifestations of CSE. Section one ends with a consideration of the meaning and context of recognition.

A lack of reliable research and data in relation to the sexual exploitation of young males, particularly regarding disclosure, has been highlighted (Pearce, 2009; Jago *et al.* 2011; Friedman, 2013; Reid and Piquero, 2013; Brayley *et al.* 2014; McNaughton *et al.* 2014; Beckett *et al.* 2017; Hooper, 2018). Consequently, section two shows how I have drawn on the wider literature regarding males as victims of CSA and considered its applicability to CSE, as a particular form of

CSA. I have done so to examine what is distinct to the non-recognition of males as victims of CSE. It begins by considering the influence of gender construction, in particular, how social constructs have the propensity to render the male as perpetrator rather than victim. It also explores the stereotypical view of the male as that of protector of himself and of others. Perpetrator gender exposes complexities for the male victim of CSE that can compound existing inhibitors to recognition that are common to both male and female victims of CSE; this is addressed. Section two ends with an examination of correlations between victim offending and inhibitors to recognition amongst male victims of CSE.

In order to contextualise this chapter fully, it is first of all critical to provide a definition of CSE; this begins section one below.

## **Section one**

### **2.2 Sources of secondary data collection**

This study draws on a review of the literature using specific key words within relevant search engines. The Bedfordshire University electronic research system 'Discover' was initially used to identify the relevant literature. 'Discover' is a single search solution facilitating access to electronic resources such as, journal articles, books, magazines and news articles and grey literature. The grey literature consisted of non-governmental reports, white papers, and conference papers. Google Scholar was subsequently used to search for and gain access to a wider source of literature on the subject of CSE generally.

This study was undertaken within the UK. For this reason, relevant policy and legislation reviewed were UK specific. However, consideration of more global literature for this study was particularly important in light of *Radford et al's* (2017) findings in their Rapid Evidence Assessment regarding child sexual abuse, that is, '*no jurisdiction has everything 'right'*' (2017,

p.9). Recognising that countries' political, economic and cultural factors will direct different responses to CSA, there can still be learning between jurisdictions. This was also recognised by Pearce (in the foreword to Davidson and Bifulco, 2019) highlighting that '*our understanding of what is happening in the UK is dependent upon our awareness of the context of global change*' (2018, p.xv). The geographical parameters of my literature search, therefore, extended beyond the UK to also include literature from the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Ireland, Latvia, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands, and Israel. However, it would be accurate to conclude that the predominance of literature utilised emanated from the UK and the USA. This more global approach to the literature review provided greater clarity in relation to specific issues pertaining to factors impacting disclosure by males, the disclosure process generally, the impact of CSA/CSE on males, and females as the perpetrators of this abuse. The framework for analysis in this study was, in fact, drawn from American authors (Sorsoli *et al*, 2008). This more global perspective also offered what Harrison and Melville (2010) refer to as 'a new analytical lens' that provides new insights and connections between local and global social problems. At the same time, I was conscious of the potential limits to transferability of learning from non-UK countries, for example, the variance in how CSE is defined outside of the UK.

The original search term used for a review of the literature was 'child sexual exploitation'. This was limited to material in English and produced 141,482 results. I subsequently used variations on the terms 'male CSE' (resulting in 86,930 results); 'sexual exploitation of young males' (resulting in 79,648 results); and 'male victims of CSE' (resulting in 1,772 results). However, in scanning many of the results using the term 'male' I found limited references to males. Therefore, from this number I considered peer reviewed journals only, of which there were 654. I then scanned the abstracts of these journals for mention of males. If the abstracts did not guide me to significant reference of male sexual exploitation I did not consider them further. The timespan of the sources searched within the literature review was originally 1980 to 2013. The decision for these timespan parameters was based on the premise that, as Nelson (2016) argues, relying only

on the latest references could result in '*missing important insights*' (2016, p.12). Moreover, it was important to consider the developments in our understanding of CSE/CSA over the last two to three decades and how our knowledge of the sexual abuse and exploitation of young males has progressed with this. However, given the evolving nature of this topic as this study progressed to 2018, and as fieldwork analysis commenced, highlighting specific themes, it was necessary to run an updated literature search. The timespan of this updated search was from 2013 to 2018, with geographical parameters within the UK and non-UK.

As highlighted later in this chapter, during my original search, the dearth of literature specific to boys and young men and CSE was evident; a deficit repeatedly acknowledged within other literature (Pearce, 2009; Friedman, 2013; Reid and Piquero, 2013). The wider literature in relation to child sexual abuse was consequently considered because of the commonalities between CSA and CSE, the latter being a subset of the former, and having transferable learning, for gender specific reasons, for non-disclosure and differential identification rates. Success in discovering relevant literature resulted in using a reference harvesting approach which, again, included literature within and beyond the UK.

As fieldwork for this study progressed and various themes were identified, I continued with a literature search using terms such as: 'masculinity', 'homosexuality', 'youth criminal behaviour' and 'gender'. Literature on masculinity was reviewed because of prescribed attitudes about manliness/masculinity and the impact this may have on the recognition of CSE in males. Similarly, literature on youth criminality was reviewed, given the recognised relationship between offending and CSE (Pearce, 2009; Cockbain and Brayley, 2012; Smeaton, 2013).

## 2.3 Definitional context

Definitions provide the conceptual framework for practice (Research in Practice, 2015) therefore, having a working definition of CSE is critical to its understanding, interpretation, and application to practice. This is underlined by Beckett and Walker who describe definitions and descriptors as:

*...living organisms through interpretation and implementation and, where inadequate clarification is provided, can result in variable responses depending on the interpretative lens through which they are being implemented.* (Beckett and Walker, 2018, p.15).

However, defining CSE has not been without difficulties. While some authors have viewed early definitions as restrictive and negating any sense of agency for the victim (Pearce, 2009; Melrose, 2010), others have seen a definition as essential to enabling professionals to identify sexual exploitation in situations where young people view the experience as consensual (Green *et al.* 2014). Additionally, overlaps between what is CSA and what is CSE have created problems in distinguishing the two. However, delineating these boundaries is critical to the measurement of both (Kelly and Karsna, 2017), identifying risk and responding appropriately, as is highlighted later in the historical context and the journey to get to this point. There is no global or agreed UK definition of CSE. This can lead to multiple interpretations and inconsistencies in defining CSE (Kelly and Karsna, 2017). Despite variances in each of the UK definitions, they all possess a core common element, as cited in the definition below – that CSE is a form of child sexual abuse that can affect any child under the age of 18 years. Each definition also recognises that CSE:

- ❖ Can affect both young males and females;
- ❖ Is used as an umbrella term for different forms of abuse, including contact and non-contact abuse;

- ❖ Can be perpetrated by abusers of either gender, any social class, or ethnicity, by adults or peers, as well as those operating through groups, gangs or alone (Beckett and Walker, 2018).

Given the commonalities between each of the definitions and available space permitted within this thesis, I utilise the English definition in order to determine its utility in aiding recognition of CSE in young males as well as females:

*Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Department for Education (DfE), 2017, p.5)*

The other existing definitions can be found in Appendix 1.

As already highlighted above, a common core element to the definitions of CSE is that it affects children and young people under the age of 18, however, it is also critical to note CSE is most often detected in children and young people of post-primary school age with *'the average age at which concerns are first identified being 12 to 15 years of age'* (Beckett et al. 2017, p.11).

It is the element of age which, of itself, creates one of several challenges in responding to CSE. This, and other definitional concepts, are examined below.



### 2.3.1 Definitional concepts

There has been application of the definition of CSE to all circumstances of the phenomenon without cognisance of the '*potential for inconsistencies in interpretation and application*' (Cockbain *et al.* 2015, p.2). For example, what constitutes the abuse of young people just over the age of consent is dependent on several factors, including consent, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and the act itself (Cockbain *et al.* 2015). Taking these two points I will consider three of the core concepts within the definition, those of 'exchange', 'consent', and 'imbalance of power'. These are examined below and are intended to set the scene for later consideration of the definition's uniform application to young male and female victims.

#### *Exchange*

I begin with the concept of 'exchange' as it is that which differentiates CSE from other forms of CSA. 'Consent' and 'imbalance of power' are important as the context in which the exchange takes place.

In the context of CSE the concept of exchange marks the receipt of something by the victim and/or the perpetrator in return for sexual activity (Beckett *et al.* 2017). The gain for the perpetrator is more than sexual gratification; it can also be financial or increased status. The gain for the victim can include both 'intangibles' and/or 'tangibles' – the former including perceived love, affection, attention, protection, or status, and the latter including drugs, alcohol, money and/or accommodation. The exchange may also be the prevention of something negative for the victim (or perhaps a family member), resulting from a threat by the perpetrator (Beckett *et al.* 2017).

The fact that a victim may gain something from a sexual transaction can disguise the very real power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator. A perception of reciprocity by both the young person and professionals may impede both recognition of the exploitative nature of the act.

## *Consent*

The concept of consent is central to any definition of CSE. It denotes the young person is not in a position to consent to their abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual. The legal age of consent to sexual activity in UK law is 16 years of age.<sup>1</sup> However, the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) (2003) includes offences to protect 16 and 17-year olds, in recognition that, although they can consent to sexual activity, they can still be subject to sexual abuse. Where a young person is able to legally consent to the sexual activity the law still states consent is only valid when the young person makes that choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. There are circumstances specified within the SOA, under which a person cannot be seen as consenting to sexual activity. These include the use of violence, or fear of it, against the alleged victim or another person; where the victim was under the influence of substances (and as a result was stupefied or overpowered); being unlawfully detained; being asleep or unconscious; being unable to communicate due to a physical disability (extended to include mental disability); and being deceived as to the defendant's identity. In such cases consent cannot legally be given, irrespective of the age of the child (SOA s74-76).

An understanding of consent is incomplete without acknowledgement of the debate surrounding the concept of 'agency'. This argument has been fuelled by some who have maintained that the concept of 'agency' should be part of the discourse on CSE (Phoenix, 2002; Pearce, 2009; Melrose, 2010; Warrington, 2013), whilst others, such as Casey (2015), have contested this, refusing to acknowledge the ability of children and young people to consent in the context of CSE, arguing that:

*...children cannot consent to their own abuse...There should be no scenarios in which victims are viewed...as making choices. (Casey, 2015, p.3).*

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<sup>1</sup> Where a child is under the age of 13 there are no circumstances under which it can be argued that they consented to sexual activity.

Those who have argued for the recognition of agency defined it in the context of CSE as exercising a rational choice to exchange sex, '*albeit in circumstances not of their own choosing*' (Phoenix, 2001, p.37). In some circumstances it may be chosen as a survival strategy, thereby, a constrained choice.

The fear of diminishing the rights of young people by ignoring their individual agency has been another part of the narrative regarding consent (Dodsworth, 2000; Phoenix, 2001; Lowe and Pearce, 2006). Kelly *et al.* (2000) also contend that the suppression of a sense of agency discounted the dynamics that made CSE a form of CSA in its own right. However, a theme emerging from many CSE related serious case reviews has been the extent to which young people were seen by professionals to be exercising informed consent i.e. making rational choices. The understanding and interpretation of 'choice' is critical in the context of all that a victim of CSE has experienced. Warrington (2010) suggests that framing outcomes for sexually exploited young people negatively gives the message that can lead to the prioritisation of some victims over others, thus potentially re-creating the historical perceptions of the deserving and undeserving.

What should not be disputed is the young victim's perception of the situation. Despite a young person's choice being constrained by their circumstances, Dodsworth emphasises '*the need for workers to respect how he frames his situation*' (2000, p.34). Whilst this may present a challenge to professionals it requires them to both respect the young person's narrative while being able to respectfully challenge them (Warrington, 2010). It has been evidenced that this can be achieved by workers who have developed the trust of the young person over a considerable period of time, where the young person has experienced respect and being heard (Chase and Statham, 2004).

### *Imbalance of power*

The concept of an 'imbalance of power' between the victim and the perpetrator within the context of CSE is in favour of the perpetrator, using it to coerce, manipulate, or deceive the victim into participating in sexual acts. Although the imbalance is often more readily assumed to be that of

age, it can also be identified in respect of gender, intellect, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources (Beckett *et al.* 2017). Professionals may struggle to identify any power imbalance present in peer related CSE, as discussed later in considering manifestations of CSE. In these situations, Firmin suggests that this should be considered within '*the social fields they are navigating*' (2011, p.46), highlighting the relevance of framing this study within an ecological theoretical framework.

## **2.4 The historical, policy and legislative contexts of CSE**

This sub-section begins by reflecting on the historically shifting parameters of CSE, outlining the prompters and consequences of changes which have led to the current policy and legislative context surrounding it. It is important to contextualise changes to the policy and practice debates around CSE over the last several decades, as a phenomenon having emerged from what was known as 'child prostitution'. Doing so helps demonstrate the challenges it has brought in conceptualising CSE as a child protection issue.

Much of the literature on CSE begins with the recognition that it is not a new phenomenon (Melrose, 2013; Coffey, 2014; Hallett, 2017; Beckett and Walker, 2018). Indeed, Weisberg (1985) refers to the abuse of children 'through prostitution' as having its roots in antiquity. As explained by Gorham (1978), throughout the late nineteenth century there were times when the 'prostitution of children' was raised as a matter of public concern and moral panic. This concern continued through to the twentieth century following the introduction of the welfare state in the 1940s, at which time there began a dialogue about the 'moral decay' of society (Hickson, 2010) with the idea of 'child prostitution' again creating a moral panic. However, rather than taking this opportunity to position these children solely as victims of abuse, there was one view that saw young females as delinquent 'pleasure-seeking girls' who wanted money for clothes and the 'discotheque' (Brown and Barrett, 2002, p.155). This highlighted two issues: firstly, that the focus of blame remained firmly on the child; and secondly, that females remained the focus of attention, whilst young males were overlooked.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was no legislative separation between adults and children involved in exchanging sex for goods (Melrose, 2013). This criminalisation of children from the age of ten (Aitchison, 1997) demonstrated how this form of child sexual abuse was conflated with adult sexual activities. The activities of females constituted street prostitution as a 'public nuisance' and criminalised activities associated with this, such as loitering and soliciting (Phoenix, 2001). Persistence of the activity had to be proven and, if there was occurrence of it more than once, the female was deemed a 'common prostitute' under the law. Such offences by females were dealt with under the Street Offences Act 1959. The Sexual Offences Act 1967 was used to deal with males who were seen to 'persistently solicit or importune in a public place for immoral purposes' (cited in Edwards, 1997, p.60). However, there was no requirement to prove persistence in this behaviour.

In 1989 the protection of children and young people under the age of 18 from CSE was clearly enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); however, this was not ratified by the UK until 1991.<sup>2</sup> The UNCRC is an international agreement aimed at protecting the human rights of children, defined as under the age of 18. It asserts that the state should protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including 'prostitution', trafficking for sexual purposes and involvement in the production of child sexual abuse images.

In 1989 child protection duties of local authorities also became grounded in the introduction of the Children Act 1989 (England and Wales). The equivalent legislation was established in 1995 in Scotland and Northern Ireland (NI): The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and the Children (NI) Order 1995. This legislation underlined the expectations and requirements of local authorities in carrying out their duties to care for children. This involved their duty to investigate situations where there was reasonable cause to suspect a child in their area was suffering or likely to suffer

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989.

significant harm, and to act to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Following the publication of the Laming report in 2003, the Children Act (England and Wales) 2004 further highlighted the expectation on agencies to share early concerns about the safety and welfare of children and to ensure preventative measures were taken where possible. As a child protection issue, the same preventative and protection measures should have been applicable to victims, or potential victims, of CSE.

The developments in legislation happened against a backdrop where, between 1989 and 1995, around 4,000 children were convicted or cautioned for prostitution related offences, some as young as ten (Ayre and Barrett, 2000). Despite the introduction of the UNCRC in 1989 the UK legislative response to children affected by CSE remained a punitive one until 2003 with the introduction of the Sexual Offences Act (SOA), addressed below. This continued criminalisation of children in such situations drew the attention of children's charities which campaigned throughout the 1990s for children 'involved in prostitution' to be recognised as victims of abuse (Barnardo's, 1998). Campaigning continued alongside work by government, charitable and academic organisations profiling CSE as a child abuse issue, for example, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP), 2010; the National Working Group Network (NWG), 2010; Barnardo's, 2011, 2014; Beckett, 2011; Cockbain and Laycock, 2011; Jago *et al.* 2011; Brodie and Pearce, 2012; Smeaton, 2013; Beckett *et al.* 2014, 2017; the BLAST project, 2014; Brayley *et al.* 2014; Cockbain *et al.* 2014; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014.

As the twentieth century progressed, 'child prostitution' continued to be a subject of policy and public concern (Brown and Barrett, 2002; Brown, 2004; Chase and Statham, 2005; Coffey, 2014) with increasing resistance amongst those in the child protection field to the use of the term 'prostitution' in relation to those under the age of 18. It became evident to those arguing against the use of this term, such as some of the children's charities, that the concepts of 'child' and 'prostitute' were anomalies on the basis that a child could not consent to have sex and that this terminology was disguising child sexual abuse (Goddard *et al.* 2005).

One of the consequences of the campaigns by large children's charities, was that in 2004 and 2006 the English and Welsh governments respectively adapted their terminology in policy documents from 'child prostitution' to 'children abused through prostitution'. Although the word 'prostitution' was retained, this change heralded the recognition of the child's involvement in prostitution as abusive (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Inter-agency Working Group on the Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016). This development, alongside the introduction of the SOA (2003) referenced above, positioned this behaviour (what is part of what we now know as CSE) as a crime against children rather than one by children. There was however an exception to this which Phoenix describes as a '*double construction*' of young people (2002, p.366). This related to those children who were perceived as persistently and voluntarily returning to 'prostitution' and being resistant to help to exit the situation. For them there remained the option to deal with them under the criminal justice system. This reflected some of the original thinking regarding children exploited in this way – those who were deserving of help and those who were not (Beckett and Walker, 2018). Beckett and Walker (2018, p.11) maintain that this '*binary distinction*' remains to some extent today '*...particularly those cases where a young person can be seen to be benefitting from and/or initiating the exchange*'. Despite this limitation, these changes to the terminology (to 'abuse through prostitution') and with it the conception of these young people as victims of this form of abuse, was hailed as a success and signalled the beginning of policy engagement around CSE (Berelowitz *et al.* 2012; Barnardo's, 2014; Coffey, 2014).

Further developments followed in 2008 - 2010 when England and Wales heralded the exclusion of the term 'prostitution' from the policy discourse regarding children altogether, to the new terminology that is known throughout policy and practice today, that of 'child sexual exploitation' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010; National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, 2014; Co-operating to Safeguard Children, (NI), 2016; and National Plan to Prevent and Tackle CSE Update (2016); Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (2009); All Wales Child Protection Procedures Review Group, (2008)).

From 2010 the attention given to CSE at social and political levels also increased as a result of several high-profile cases and inquiries across the UK<sup>3</sup> prompting the media and others to criticise child protection and criminal justice agencies for being ineffective in their protection of children at risk of CSE (Jago *et al.* 2011; Harris *et al.* 2015). Therefore, despite earlier progress, CSE became viewed as an issue requiring a more robust policy and criminal justice response, to which I now turn.

## **2.5 Current policy and legislative overview of CSE**

The development of policy to tackle CSE has resulted in distinct policies within each of the UK nations. However, a core common element within them is a clear demarcation between children and adults in the world of prostitution and the formation of the concept of CSE as a child protection issue. The requirement of each nation has been to develop strategies to strengthen a co-ordinated approach to tackling the issue of CSE, with an expectation of increased accountability on agencies regarding those children in need of services yet being missed by them (Beckett *et al* 2017). This included the 2017 definition and guidance produced by the DfE which clearly defined CSE as a form of CSA. The policy and guidance relating to the respective four nations can be found in Appendix 2. Whilst this progress has been welcomed, there should be recognition of the potential for differential responses to victims of CSE throughout the four nations as a result of differentiation in policy and political frameworks across the UK (Barnardo's, 2014).

The introduction of the Sexual Offences Act (2003), England and Wales (equivalent legislation in Scotland and NI – see Appendix 3) represented a major overhaul of the legislation in relation to sexual offences, and within it clearly defined a child as someone under the age of 18 years, even though the age of consent to sexual activity was 16 years of age (Chase and Statham, 2005; Jago and Pearce, 2008).

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<sup>3</sup> Derby (2010); Rochdale (2012); Scotland (2012); Telford (2013); Oxford (2013); Bristol (2014); NI (2014); Rotherham (2014).



This new legislative framework introduced specific offences which recognised, for the first time, grooming, coercion and trafficking as potential elements within CSE, as well as recognising the use of the mobile phone and internet as a means by which perpetrators could exploit (Jago and Pearce, 2008). The creation of the Serious Crime Act (SCA), 2015, in England and Wales, gave a new title to the existing offences of abuse of a child through prostitution and pornography – that of ‘sexual exploitation of children’. This Act removed all references to ‘child prostitution’ and ‘pornography’. The content of the SOA (2003) remained the same (see Beckett *et al.* 2017).

A definition to adequately recognise CSE is critical to an effective response to its young victims as is knowledge of the policy and legislative context to protect them. However, a further important element is the current known extent of CSE amongst males, in order to inform the need for a service response to them. The literature provides some indication of prevalence; this is addressed in the following sub-section.

## **2.6 Prevalence**

The concept of prevalence incorporates actual prevalence and known prevalence. In relation to CSE, quantifying the actual prevalence of CSE has been a problem acknowledged by many authors (Melrose, 2002; Research in Practice, 2015; Fox, 2016; Beckett *et al.* 2017), with most agreeing the true scale of it will never be known. Several reasons account for the lack of knowledge regarding prevalence of CSE: the absence of a general population prevalence study; the hidden and clandestine nature of it; the reluctance of victims to report it; the lack of consistent identification of it; changes to definitions and perceptions; the lack of recording of necessary data; different recording methods across and within the UK; and the fact there remains no lead on data collection from central government (Clutton and Coles, 2008; Pearce, 2009; Jago *et al.* 2011; Paskell, 2012; Beckett *et al.* 2017; Kelly and Karsna, 2017). However, some studies on CSE have attempted to quantify the problem of CSE. In 2003 the Office of the Children’s Commissioner in England reported that 2,409 children identified as victims of CSE and a further

16,500 identified as being at risk of it within gangs and groups in England. More recent data from Barnardo's in 2017 showed that in 2016 over 5,000 cases of young people affected by CSE were worked with by services.

The lack of more specific and substantial data in relation to CSE, has been echoed by others who have commented on a dearth of quantifiable data specifically in relation to young males as victims of CSE across the UK (Jago *et al.* 2011; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014; Beckett *et al.* 2017). Several studies have referenced the gap in knowledge around young males in this context (DfE, 2011; CEOP, 2011; Public Petitions Committee, 2014). Notably, the low reporting of males as victims of CSE and lack of hard information on the scale of their exploitation was also referenced in CSE inquiry reports in both Rotherham and NI (Jay, 2014; Marshall, 2014).

Statistics that are available do in fact suggest the known extent of male CSE is low in comparison to females as shown below:

- ❖ Of a study of more than 9,000 CSE or at risk of CSE service users across England, Scotland and NI, one third were male (Cockbain *et al.* 2014);
- ❖ 11% of the 2,409 children and young people in England who were identified by professionals as being sexually exploited in gangs or groups (in England) were male (Berelowitz *et al.* 2012);
- ❖ 13% of the 2,083 suspected victims in a UK-wide study of 'localised grooming' were male (CEOP, 2011);
- ❖ Almost one-fifth (17%) of children and young people (aged 12-17 years) known to Social Services where CSE was identified as an issue of concern were male as opposed to four-fifths (83%) females (Beckett, 2011);
- ❖ One in 23 males (4.3%) of 786 16-year olds, reported being sexually groomed by an adult before the age of 16 as opposed to one in seven females (Beckett, 2011);

- ❖ Of 4,206 reported cases of CSE worked with by 53 specialist services over one year, 11% were young males (NWG, 2010).

Interestingly the most recent review of the literature on sexually exploited young males internationally has since shown that... '*similar rates of exploitation have been reported among boys and girls*'. (Moynihan *et al.* 2018, p.440).

Despite this claim, and the wealth of studies showing the contrary, one still needs to be mindful that lower known numbers of CSE amongst males does not necessarily equate with lower rates of CSE amongst them, for many reasons. There is consensus that the number of male victims is under-reported (Palmer 2001; Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Ward and Patel, 2006). As highlighted earlier in relation to CSE generally, lower known numbers of young male victims may be a result of how data is recorded; another reason being lower rates of recognition. Geographical variance, as mentioned above in relation to CSA, may also explain lower known rates of CSE amongst males. This was demonstrated in the percentage of males identified in the study by Cockbain *et al.* (2014). Having conducted the research across three of the four UK nations,<sup>4</sup> whilst males accounted for 33% of CSE service users... '*the percentage of service users varied substantially, both by individual service (5-57%) and by region (6-47%)*'. (Cockbain *et al.* 2014, p.6).

I would suggest this does not automatically translate into CSE being more prevalent in one part of the country as opposed to another but, rather, highlights the need to consider other contextual variations. Although not available from the data, Cockbain *et al.* (2014) provide some suggestions to explain this. These include variations in levels of awareness of male-victim CSE and training available to professionals; the availability of services for young males, including outreach work; local demographic patterns, such as hotspots for missing young people, which

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<sup>4</sup> England, Scotland and NI.

may aid access to young males; the role of third-party agencies in being alert to and responding to male victims, thought to impact referral pathways. Of consideration is the argument that, where specialist CSE services employ a specialist worker for males, there is usually a higher percentage of male service users, showing a correlation between these two factors (McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014).

Whatever the reasons for variation in numbers across the UK, it is critical to recognise that explanations will be multiply determined across individual, relational, organisational, and societal levels. In addition, there is something to be learnt from those areas which are identifying greater numbers of young males. One method of doing this may be to consider particular manifestations of CSE amongst males in localised areas.

The lower known rates of CSE amongst males, compared to females, are also indicative of the more general statistics on CSA. Alaggia and Millington (2008) stated that, prior to 1980, it was rare to find any references to male CSA and, therefore, it was portrayed as a phenomenon in which females were exclusively victims and males exclusively perpetrators. Whilst subsequent figures of male victims of CSA are still lower than for females, they are more specific about the numbers and, therefore, do reveal some representation of known extent. Using CSA as a comparison, Kelly and Karsna (2017) note how meta-analyses of data across countries suggests minimum estimates of CSA among males to be 7-8% compared to 15-20% for females. Other studies show that boys constitute a minority of CSA victims, for example, see Priebe and Svedin, 2008; Stoltenborgh *et al.* 2011; Cashmore and Shackel, 2014. However, there appears to be no agreement on whether males are at less risk of CSA than females as a result of...'*conceptual, definitional, and methodological differences and/or to disparities in geographical and socio-cultural contexts*'. (Cockbain *et al.* 2015, p.3).

Other known figures include:

- ❖ In prevalence studies from England and Wales 15% of females and 5% of males experience some form of CSA before the age of 16 (perpetrated by adults and peers) (Kelly and Karsna, 2017).
- ❖ The highest levels of international estimates of CSA suggest it affects 30% of females and 23% of boys (Kelly and Karsna, 2017).
- ❖ Based on 55 studies across 24 countries, prevalence rates of CSA ranged from 8 to 31% for girls and 3 to 17% for boys (Barth *et al.* 2013).
- ❖ One in six boys, as opposed to one in three girls, aged 13 to 17 years, reported experience of some form of sexual partner violence (Barter *et al.* 2009).
- ❖ Approximately 30% of childhood victims of sexual abuse are male (Fergusson and Mullen, 1999).

Two meta-analyses showed CSA as affecting:

- ❖ 18% girls and 8% boys (an international study by Stoltenborgh *et al.* 2011);
- ❖ 19% girls and 8% boys (an international study by Perdea *et al.* 2009).

These figures show consistently lower rates of CSA amongst males compared to females.

Moreover, the figures shown for both CSA and CSE above show an even lower percentage of CSE amongst males compared to females than the comparative figures for CSA. Allnock (2010) suggests one conclusion to be drawn from this is that CSE is a more recent concept than CSA, therefore, more robust research and awareness of the issue may produce more equitable figures in the future.

In addition to CSA and CSE, other forms of abuse also show lower levels of young males as victims. This has been demonstrated in studies in relation to sexual violence within adolescent peer relationships (Barter *et al.* 2009; Beckett, 2011; Hamby and Turner, 2013; Beckett *et al.*

2014; Cockbain *et al.* 2014; Firmin *et al.* 2016). A UK study of young people undertaken by Barter *et al.* in 2009, of which there were 581 males and 597 females, found almost half as many males compared to females (16% as opposed to 31%) had experienced violence within an intimate relationship. Despite the smaller percentage of males to females who had experienced this, males reported a higher level of sexual victimisation. The relative difference in percentage of male to female victims of some form of sexual assault by peers correlates with an American study by Hamby and Turner (2013) where 32% of males compared to 68% of females reported experiences of this.

Moynihan (2018) argues, irrespective of the prevalence of CSE amongst males, there should be concurrent recognition of them as victims and that this currently represents a gap. I fully agree with this and believe greater awareness and recognition of CSE amongst males within the UK will improve our knowledge regarding prevalence. As important as this is, it is our comprehension of the varied and complex 'models' through which young people become exploited (McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014) that is also critical in aiding the recognition of CSE. The following sub-section considers some manifestations of this.

## **2.7 Manifestations of CSE**

To fully conceptualise young people as victims of CSE it is critical to understand the nuances of how they are sexually exploited, often referred to as 'models of CSE'. Writing in 2009, Pearce contested the use of one dominant model to explain CSE, arguing that such an approach failed to take account of the various processes at play for the different groups of young males and females. This referred particularly to the 'grooming' model of the 'older boyfriend', probably the first conceptualisation of CSE. This was supported by Melrose (2010) who posited that this model provided us with:

*...a partial, ahistorical and decontextualized explanation which masquerades as a universal 'truth' and which pretends to explain the involvement of all young people at all times and in all places. (Melrose, 2010, p.17).*

Further research studies have extended understanding of manifestations of CSE. However, the presentation of 'models of CSE' within the literature are overly simplistic, with the reality being more complex and interrelated one with another. I will now turn to consider some of the earliest and later models of CSE encapsulated in the literature and implications in relation to victim gender, followed by more recent contributions specifically in relation to young males. The following three models were developed by Barnardo's from 1998.

Perhaps the first model of CSE which informed much of the early understanding about the phenomenon was the **boyfriend model**. This described a situation whereby a predatory adult (usually male) masquerades as the 'boyfriend' of a young person and grooms them into a relationship with him, before coercing or forcing them to have sex with his friends or associates. This model highlighted the stages of grooming whereby the perpetrator would identify the victim and their vulnerabilities; gain their trust; fulfil their needs, whether these be 'tangible' or 'intangible'; isolate them from other meaningful relationships they may have; sexualise their relationship in an attempt to normalise and/or desensitise them to the planned sexual exploitation; and maintain control of them in order to ensure their silence and continued co-operation.

The **inappropriate relationship** is similar to that of the boyfriend model with the exception that the intention of the perpetrator is not to force the victim to have sex with others. Instead they groom the young person in order to have control over them. As well as the sexual element, the control can also be physical, emotional, and financial. There can often be a significant age gap with the perpetrator being much older than the victim; nevertheless, the young person believes they are in a loving relationship.

The third model, **organised or networked sexual exploitation or trafficking**, is a form of CSE that is usually characterised through the coercion or forcing of young people into sexual activity with multiple perpetrators and often passed through networks of perpetrators and over various geographical locations. Within these scenarios the victims are sometimes forced to 'recruit' other young people into the network.

The term **commercial sexual exploitation** of young people had been used for a number of years as an overarching term to describe CSE, irrespective of gender of victim but usually associated with a male perpetrator. It has been used to describe where the victim, or a third person(s) were perceived to have received remuneration of some kind for the sexual activity of the child or young person. Traditionally associated with the 'street scene', it was seen to be later supported by the Internet and mobile phone communication (Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.*, 2014). Historically, where it was recognised with young males, it was referred to as the 'rent boy scene', now considered an inappropriate term. However, Brayley *et al.* (2014) argued that the involvement of young males in commercial sexual activity had been largely overlooked within the published literature. The model was reintroduced by McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* (2014), making the distinction between 'prostitution' historically being associated with young females and 'commercial sexual exploitation' being associated with young males.

**Peer on peer** exploitation is described as featuring physical, sexual, and emotional abuse occurring within friendship groups or intimate relationships (Firmin *et al.* 2015). The concept challenges the assumption that all perpetrators are adults. In a study by Beckett (2011) in NI, 24% of sexual exploitation cases were reported to have involved some degree of exploitation by peers. Peers solely perpetrated nine per cent whilst 15% was perpetrated by both peers and adults.

Related to peer on peer sexual exploitation is that which is **youth gang related CSE**. The model of exploitation within gangs is explained in Firmin (2015) and Beckett *et al.* (2013) as primarily



involving young people who are in, or associated with, a street-based group who engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. Beckett *et al.* (2013) highlighted how youth gang-associated sexual exploitation is influenced by multiple factors including wider social patterns of sexual violence and power dynamics surrounding gender.

**Online sexual exploitation** is that which is facilitated by technology. It can occur through social media, online games, and through other channels of digital communication (Bentley *et al.* 2017). The behaviours related to CSE include the sharing of sexual or abusive images of children under the age of 18; inciting a child to sexual activity; sexual exploitation; grooming; sexual communication with a child; and causing a child to view or watch videos of a sexual act (Sexual Offences Act, England and Wales, 2003).<sup>5</sup> Within these contexts the model of online grooming and exploitation has commonalities between young males and females. It should be noted that CSE facilitated online can also be linked to that which is offline.

The risk of sexual exploitation via technology is present for both young males and females. However, it is suggested girls are more likely than boys to be victims of it (Wolak *et al.* 2005; Whittle *et al.* 2013). The literature highlights certain groups of young people may be particularly vulnerable to online CSE; these include those with learning difficulties, those with mental health difficulties, and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people. Their desire to achieve social interaction with others in a way that they do not feel able to offline can mean they may not fully understand potential risks involved with online contact (Palmer, 2015).

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<sup>5</sup> Equivalent Sexual Offences legislation in Scotland (2009); NI (2008).

### *Prominent manifestations of CSE amongst young males*

Whilst McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* (2014) stated there was minimal empirical evidence to suggest differences in the ways in which young males and females were sexually exploited, their 2014 UK study into the sexual exploitation of young males, provided some identification of pathways in which males became victims of CSE. These are presented below, however, the authors cautioned that these examples were by no means definitive or exclusive to males.

The **trusted friend** scenario is one whereby a young male might be befriended by a male perpetrator by appearing to be a trusted friend (often older and heterosexual). The relationship is often based on a '*stereotypically masculine*' shared interest, with the relationship becoming sexually exploitative once trust is established (McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014, p.20). This is in contrast to Barnardo's 'boyfriend' model (1998) where there is an initial romantic element to the relationship. One example of this which received significant media attention in 2016, was the exposure of the abuse and exploitation of young males by football coaches.<sup>6</sup> Exploitation through a shared interest has also manifested itself through activities such as online gaming, an activity more predominant amongst young males than females (Davidson *et al.* 2012).

The **exploitation of GBQ** described situations where young males may be exploring their sexuality but feel they have limited safe places to do this because of homo-, bi-, trans-phobic prevailing attitudes. Consequently, they may seek out and engage in same-sex relationships covertly which can create a vulnerability to sexual exploitation. As mentioned above, technology may be one means by which this group of young males might seek this contact with others.

The sexual exploitation of young males by **female perpetrators** was another theme identified by professionals (McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014), for example, older women sexually exploiting

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/soccer/former-english-soccer-players-break-silence-about-sexual-abuse-by-coaches/article33056765/>

young males by acting as their 'girlfriend', sometimes encouraging them to leave their home or place of care to live with them. This also involved women paying the young male for sex or by exchanging drugs for sex. It should be noted that young females are also targeted by female perpetrators for sexual exploitation (McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014) despite little reference to it in the literature.

Having greater clarity regarding the pathways into CSE for males should enable greater identification of males as victims of CSE by professionals. It should alert them to the nuances and concerns surrounding a young males' relationship with someone else where this is likely to be exploitative. If communicated to young males it can facilitate their own recognition of exploitative relationships and hence, their disclosure as a victim. These descriptions of manifestations of CSE have set the context for my later analysis of how they contribute to or impede the recognition of CSE in males. The next sub-section firstly, contextualises the terms disclosure and identification, given their centrality to this study.

## **2.8 The significance of 'disclosure' and 'identification' in the context of CSE**

The core elements of this thesis are those of 'disclosure', 'identification', and young males in the context of CSE. This sub-section examines what the literature has stated regarding recognition, before considering, in the next, what is distinctive for males within this discourse. However, to emphasise the critical importance of recognition in the context of CSA/CSE, I will briefly draw upon knowledge regarding its impact upon its victims.

Bovarnick *et al.* (2017) highlights the potential health impacts as a result of CSE. These include: substance misuse, self-harm, depression, personality disorders, eating disorders, physical injury, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy/termination, suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In particular, Bisson (2009) argues that PTSD sufferers can develop:

*...pathological fear structures characterized by excessive response elements such as avoidance, physiological reactivity, and resistance to modification. (Bisson, 2009, p.290).*

As noted in sub-section 2.4, CSE is an issue that predominately affects young people in their teenage years (Beckett *et al* 2017). Considering adolescence as a time when there is increased brain development, either positive or negative experiences and the extent of support available to the young person can have a lasting impact. Adolescence, therefore:

*...represents a period of increased vulnerability during which the risk of experiencing trauma is particularly high...but the young people's ability to adaptively cope with that trauma is particularly fragile. (Barnardo's, 2014, p.1).*

Breslau *et al.* (2014) found the highest rates of PTSD were discovered in young people who had been sexually assaulted or raped, irrespective of their gender. Moreover, Finkelhor *et al.* 2007, had previously argued that young people who have been sexually traumatised in their adolescence are at greater risk of re-victimisation compared to those who have experienced multiple other traumas.

An increased risk of suicide as another impact of CSE was reported to be influenced particularly by depression and substance misuse, with a passive acceptance of death, (Barnardo's 2014).

The Independent Inquiry into CSA (IICSA, 2017) recorded that many studies have found stronger correlations with suicide attempts by male than female survivors of CSA, with boys thought to be ten times more likely than their non-abused counterparts to attempt suicide, compared to half that for girls (Fisher *et al.* 2017). O'Riordan and Arensman (2007) argued this is partly due to the fact that females possess different and stronger coping mechanisms than males which serve as a protective factor.

Many have reported on impacts of CSE/CSA beyond those of the victim and their physical and psychological being with the potential to impact every aspect of their lives including the potential social, educational, and economic implications manifesting in social isolation, and risks in entering unhealthy relationships (Barnardo's, 2014; Health Working Group Report on CSE, 2014; Fisher *et al.* 2017). All of these factors can have a short or long-term economic impact on the young person, incurring drug debts, unable to attend school, training, or work, stealing to meet their basic needs, and/or unable to find or maintain accommodation.

An understanding of the impact of CSE on young people's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning, their family and the wider impacts is crucial to the efforts to improve identification and disclosure of the issue, however, the scope of this study does not permit examination of the depth of impact, suffice to highlight the significance of such assaults upon young people at their stage of development. Whilst the knowledge surrounding PTSD and other manifestations of CSE helps inform our understanding, within this discourse I also believe it is critical to remember that each experience is very much individual to that young person. Therefore, the success of interventions will be dependent upon this. Similarly, I believe, it has to be without argument that early disclosure and identification of CSE in males (as well as females) should help reduce negative impact and increase recovery. Both will be considered in turn.

### *Disclosure*

Allnock describes disclosure as *'the act of making something new or unknown, known'*. (2018, p.37). This refers to the child or young person making known their abuse. In the context of my study, by 'disclosure' I am referring to the victim making their sexual exploitation known.

Significant to its understanding are the multiply determined factors that prevent disclosure happening. These factors relate to the unique characteristics inherent in a victim of CSA which they bring to the situation to interact with other factors, such as, community, cultural and societal influences, which can ultimately impact disclosure (Alaggia, 2010). Indeed, in a later review of studies on the state of CSA disclosure research Alaggia *et al.* found that:

*...contemporary disclosure models reflect a social-ecological, person-in-environment orientation for understanding the complex interplay of individual, familial, contextual, and cultural factors involved in CSA disclosure. (Alaggia et al. 2017, p.1).*

Disclosure is seen as being significantly influenced by the age and gender of the victim. The interactive nature of the process is viewed as occurring within a relational context. It supports the inclusion of ecological systems theory as a theoretical framework for this study, examined in chapter three. Influences on non-disclosure are, therefore, seen to be multi-faceted, including: the fear of not being believed; being the subject of gossip; or a fear of circumstances worsening, for the victim and/or others, following disclosure (Paine and Hanson, 2002; Barter, 2005; Staller and Nelson-Gardell, 2005).

There is consensus amongst writers that disclosure is an on-going process as opposed to a single event, potentially occurring in concomitant or sequential ways (Summit, 1983; Sorensen and Snow, 1991; Bradley and Wood, 1996; Alaggia, 2005; Collin-Vezina et al. 2015). Two broad dimensions of CSA disclosure were identified by Collings et al. (2005), described as 'agency' and 'temporal duration'. The former relates to a disclosure initiated by the victim, rather than discovered by another person. The latter relates to the situation whereby, after withholding the disclosure, ambivalence about telling is followed by the victim eventually confiding in a trusted person. Disclosure can also occur in a myriad of different ways and is often indirect (Alaggia, 2004; Collin-Vezina et al. 2015). This can include a refusal to engage or can also be manifested through the engagement in other behaviours, such as, violence, drug misuse, and other forms of self-harm, and/or other risk-taking behaviours (Ungar et al. 2009; Hunter, 2011). Understanding of the disclosure process and method are important if professionals are to recognise disclosure in its various forms. However, some studies highlight disclosures are more likely to occur in a 'dialogical context' where victims have access to forums giving information regarding CSA, including prevention of it (McElvaney et al. 2013; Ungar et al. 2009; Hershkowitz et al. 2005).

### *Identification*

As with disclosure, it is important to provide meaning to identification in the context of this study. It was not possible to locate a definition of identification within the CSE or CSA literature; therefore, I have adapted the definition used above for disclosure and applied it to identification for the purpose of my study. Hence, I define identification as ‘the act of the professional making something new or unknown, known in relation to CSE or heightened risk of CSE’.

The crucial significance of identification is based on the fact that most victims of CSE do not self-identify as victims or disclose their experiences of exploitation. Professionals’ identification of heightened risk and understanding of disclosure factors and processes are, therefore, critical in order to prevent the exploitation occurring and, if it does occur, facilitate earlier disclosures. This requires skills, knowledge, and a professional curiosity to accurately assess risk factors in the individual circumstances of a young person (Beckett *et al.* 2017).

Similar to disclosure, cognisance should be taken of the unique characteristics which individual professionals bring to the process which will determine their ability or willingness to identify CSE in victims. Therefore, I suggest that, as Alaggia *et al.* (2017) describe disclosure, the process of identification also reflects a social-ecological, person-in-environment orientation for understanding the complex interplay of individual, contextual, and cultural factors involved in disclosure.

There should also be acknowledgement of the difficulties in recognising issues related to CSE, the nature and context of which is dynamic and changing with new understandings. Nevertheless, because immediate impact and long-term consequences of any form of child abuse can be devastating, early identification is critical (Beckett *et al.* 2017), as is timely access to support services (Alaggia, 2017).

## Section two

### 2.9 What is distinctive for young males in relation to recognition of CSE?

The literature points to a lack of discourse and absence of robust prevalence figures regarding the sexual exploitation of young males and females (Fox, 2016; Beckett *et al.* 2017; Kelly and Karsna, 2017), however, what is particularly relevant to this discourse is the suggestion of a lack of recognition of males as victims of CSE (Hickle *et al.* 2016). It is, therefore, important to consider what is distinctive for males in relation to both disclosure and identification.

#### *Disclosure by young males*

It has been acknowledged that males are an understudied population which has resulted in more recently focused studies on their disclosure of CSA experiences (Alaggia, 2005; Easton, 2014; Gagnier and Collin-Vezina, 2016). However, according to Alaggia *et al.*, despite the fact that:

*...women are at double the risk of being subjected to CSA, the ratio of women to men in most disclosure studies has not been representative. (Alaggia *et al.* 2017, p.19).*

It is suggested that this may be a consequence of male victims being more likely to delay disclosure (Ungar *et al.* 2009). Research has provided some indication of the level of disclosure of CSA by males compared to females:

- ❖ The majority of men who experienced CSA have not told anyone (Holmes and Slap, 1998);
- ❖ Boys are less likely than girls to disclose CSA at the time it is occurring (Paine and Hansen, 2002; O'Leary and Barber, 2008).



- ❖ Men disclose experiences of CSA in childhood approximately 10 years later than women, and on average 22 years after the abuse (Holmes and Slap, 1998; O'Leary and Barber, 2008; O'Leary and Gould, 2009).

Collin-Vezina *et al.* (2015) highlighted the socio-cultural barriers to disclosure more specifically reported by male victims of CSA include: a lack of social acceptance of males as victims; the uncertainty it creates around their sexual orientation; female perpetrated abuse, often viewed as 'sexual exploration'. Easton (2014), also using an ecological lens, suggested stereotypical gender norms surrounding masculinity are responsible for self-blame amongst male victims of CSA, preventing disclosure. The promotion of hypermasculinity as the desired state for males and negative societal attitudes towards males who are victims are viewed as creating different and greater barriers to disclosure for male than female victims of CSA. Such gender norms and beliefs were also seen to be responsible for males' non-disclosure of female perpetrated abuse (Alaggia, 2010; Easton, 2014; Gagnier and Collin-Vezina, 2016).

I now turn to the other primary element relating to recognition, that of identification.

### *Identification of young males*

The literature on CSA also offers relevant learning on the non-identification of CSE particularly amongst males. Dorahy and Clearwater state the literature on male CSA:

*...is replete with examples of passive and active denial and minimisation by health and mental health professionals, which impedes disclosures.* (Dorahy and Clearwater, 2012, p.170).

They add that such experiences serve to increase stigmatisation and shame and reduce the likelihood of further disclosures. From their respective studies, Holmes and Offen (1996) and Dersch and Munsch (1999) state a contributor to non-disclosure for male victims of sexual abuse

may be the attitudes and perceptions of professionals, with males significantly less likely than females to be considered as victims of sexual abuse even where their case histories were identical. In relation to CSE specifically, Barnardo's (2011) cited females were six times as likely as males to be identified as being at risk of CSE. Each of these points illustrates the potential for the non-identification to influence non-disclosure, and possibly vice versa.

This raises questions about parity between male and female victims of CSE when it comes to understanding the unique issues for both genders and required responses. The remainder of this section seeks to address this question by examining how our understanding and application of policy, legislation, definition, and models of CSE serve to enhance or hinder recognition of CSE in males.

Much of the literature surrounding the lack of recognition of young males as victims of sexual abuse indicates prevailing societal ideologies of gender construction and masculinity to be significant influencers. Masculine ideology is defined as the:

*...endorsement and internalization of cultural belief systems about masculinity and the male gender, rooted in the structural relationship between the two sexes. (Pleck et al. 1993, p.88).*

Levant *et al.* (1992) refer to seven dimensions used to describe traditional masculine ideology or 'code of masculinity'; these are described as:

- ❖ Avoiding all things feminine;
- ❖ Being non-expressive of emotions related to vulnerability or attachment;
- ❖ Being tough and aggressive;
- ❖ Being independent and self-reliant;
- ❖ Being driven toward high social status;

- ❖ Perpetually in the mood for sex; and
- ❖ Fear/hate of homosexuality.

Seidler (2006) offers an approach to help our understanding of the concept of masculinity, and sexually abused males specifically, within the sociocultural context. He acknowledges the power aspects of culturally dominant masculinities but emphasises the need to recognise the personal and emotional aspects. He refers to Holter's (2005) description of masculinity as a relational concept – a product of relationships with others including institutions and social and political systems. Pedro *et al.* (2009) argue masculine gender norms serve as an internalised means by which males view and organise themselves through every aspect of life. Thus, this social constructionist ideology of masculinity renders male victims of sexual abuse as failures of their masculine duty becoming more stigmatised than females, ashamed of their situation and less likely to report it.

Spence (1993) explains how the internalization of these gender norms results in males processing information and expectations about themselves as well as the external world. In this section I contextualise the role of gender construction and masculinity in positioning males as victims of CSE. I will do so using three specific themes: gender construction; perpetrator gender; and assumptions regarding male victim behaviour.

### *2.9.1 The influence of gender constructions on recognition of CSE in young males*

This sub-section considers stereotypical assumptions of males based on masculine ideology, questioning how these might aid or impede the recognition of males as victims of CSE. The first two relate to the conventional belief of the male as perpetrator rather than victim; the third relates to the notion of the male as 'protector'.

### *Invisible as a victim*

There are several determinants that call into question the prevailing view, in society, of males as victims of CSE, also evident in the lack of discourse surrounding this (CEOP, 2011; DfE, 2011; Barnardo's, 2014; Cockbain *et al.* 2014; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014; Public Petitions Committee, 2014). A review of the literature has revealed a wealth of opinions regarding the influence of gender constructions and stereotypes in negating the victimhood of males. One example is Andersen's statement that...'*men are refused (both by themselves and by 'culture') the position of being in need of help or of weakness*' (Andersen, 2013, p.236).

This statement refers to the multi-determined nature of such constructs rather than existing in a vacuum, which is discussed in the following chapter, the theoretical framework. The dominant concepts of masculinity portraying males as tougher than females, more likely to be in a position to control their situation and to resist another having power over them, both from a physical and emotional perspective, do not align with conventional fundamentals of victimhood: those of weakness, helplessness and in need of support (Lilywhite and Skidmore, 2006). Instead they create a polarisation of thinking, shaping the prevailing view, in society, of females as victims and males as perpetrators (Mahalik *et al.* 2003a; Connolly, 2006; Dennis, 2008; Firmin, 2013), a free agent whose masculinity makes him '*an active participant in every social milieu*' (Dennis, 2008, p.21) and able to resolve any problems he may find himself in. This all serves to sustain the invisibility of males as victims of CSE.

In a similar vein, the needs of male victims of trafficking or violence, including domestic abuse, can be overshadowed by the existence of a radical feminist theoretical perspective that positions females only as victims of male violence (Pearce, 2002; Hall, 2012). Such stereotypical views also serve to hinder professionals from gaining knowledge about male CSE, stifle confidence in addressing it, or fail to see it as a priority. This can lead to a perception that young males require less supervision and are, therefore, offered less as they get older. Each example highlights the existence of a hierarchy of victimhood, potentially positioning female victims of CSE as priority

over males. This raises the question, to what extent such beliefs may serve to impede the identification of female-on-male perpetration, an issue examined in the next sub-section.

Whether as a result of gender construction or other reasons, two, albeit much earlier, examples demonstrated the active differentiation between males and females. Dating back to early legislation, it can be seen, explicitly and implicitly, as having separated the genders. Firstly, the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, used to deal with males who were seen to persistently solicit for immoral purposes, did not define the behaviours of the male as prostitution; neither was there any requirement to prove persistence as required for females. Even at this historical juncture, I would conclude there was a differential gendered view of how the activity of prostitution was perceived. The meaning of this is perhaps open to interpretation, however, one could hypothesise that, because the males' behaviour was not categorised as prostitution, it could either be seen as a denial of the existence of male prostitution, or not deemed possible for males to act as prostitutes.

Secondly, prior to 1994 the UK legal definition of rape was limited to cases of forced or non-consenting vaginal penetration, thus excluding males as victims of sexual assault (Bullock and Beckson, 2011). Cases of forced or non-consenting anal penetration were dealt with under the legal statute of 'buggery', however, there was a lesser penalty for this than there was for rape, suggesting less significant harm caused by it. Whilst this law was also applicable to female anal penetration, it could be argued males may be more likely to be the subject of this offence. I would suggest, at that time, there was inherent disparity in the recognised level of harm to males. offence.

Such gendered distinctions within the current legislative framework are no longer present; however, they do reflect the potential for differentiation between male and female victims of CSE. It is critical that interpretation and application of the legislation into practice does not replace such disparities between male and female victimhood in the context of CSE. Similarly, although the policy context of CSE has also progressed over the last two decades, the continued lack of

discourse concerning young male victims raises concern as to how this also influences interpretation of policy within practice. One example of this concerns the current definitional context of CSE, discussed in section one, and whether it supports the recognition of males as victims. The 'intangible' element of the 'exchange' perceived as love, affection, attention, and protection may be less likely to be associated with males than females. For example, the traditional model of CSE, that of the older boyfriend<sup>7</sup> may lead professionals to perceive females as the only victim and as having more to gain by way of emotional or 'romantic' benefits. Similarly, the gendered assumption of a male being more able to protect himself may inhibit identification of any threat towards him.

An additional factor that may compound the invisibility of males as victims of CSE relates to the masculine trait, referred to by Levant *et al.* (1992), as being non-expressive of emotions relating to vulnerability. Some contemporary studies on masculinity have highlighted the lack of emotional vocabulary or emotional readiness in males, compared to females, to verbally communicate their feelings (Kring, 2000; Sorsoli *et al.* 2008; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014) potentially appearing uncooperative and/or not being emotionally vulnerable.

As mentioned above, the propensity to view the young male as perpetrator rather than victim has been well documented. It is to this aspect I now turn.

### *Assumed as perpetrator*

A prevailing polarised view, in society, of the two genders, female as victim, male as perpetrator, has the potential to inhibit recognition of the male as a victim of CSE. There are two aspects of the young male as perceived perpetrator I wish to address: that of perpetrator of sexual offences and more general youth offending.

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<sup>7</sup> This refers to the 'boyfriend' model developed by Barnardo's, 1998, whereby girls were seen to be entrapped and/or coerced by older boyfriends into having sex with other men for some kind of payment.

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence regarding the causal link between a male survivor of CSA becoming a perpetrator of it (Salter *et al.* 2003) some of the public, and some male survivors, believe they are bound to become perpetrators (Romano and De Luca, 2001).<sup>8</sup> The fear of being viewed as a potential perpetrator or the fear of becoming one can inhibit disclosure from males (Alaggia and Millington, 2008). Summarising the findings of a study about the experiences in healthcare settings of male survivors, Hovey *et al.* stated that many of the men:

*...expressed fear that if they revealed their secret, health professionals would assume they were perpetrators of CSA because of society's misinformed belief that all abused boys will inevitably grow up to be men who sexually abuse children.* (Hovey *et al.* 2011, p.41).

Teram *et al.* point out how this is reinforced by the societal belief that *'if they have not already done so, it is only a matter of time before they become abusers themselves'* thus intensifying the *'emotional cost of childhood victimization...for male survivors'* (Teram *et al.* 2006, p.507).

Conversely, Alaggia (2005) acknowledges the widely held belief that boys who are sexually abused have a greater propensity of becoming sexual offenders as adults. However, she believes that whilst this can be an inhibitor to disclosure, it can also become a precipitant for disclosure for fear of it actually happening. As I will show later in relation to females, they do not hold this same fear, nor do others hold it about them.

Another recent example of how people can be seen to struggle with not automatically assigning the perpetrator label to young males is where there is peer exploitation within a youth gang context. Without a gendered approach to how peers exploit their peers, one response will be to assume this to be male-on-female in terms of perpetrator/victim divide. However, in a study by

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<sup>8</sup> The authors do not define who they are referring to when they describe 'the public', therefore it is unclear if this is the result of a media review or a survey, for example.

Beckett *et al.* around one quarter of study participants reported young males as '*being victims to some form of sexual violence or exploitation*' within a gang context (Beckett *et al.* 2013, p.39).

This was reported as taking various forms: boys being sexually exploited by gang members; boys being targeted by females with the aim of improving the boys' social status; boys being coerced into the sexual exploitation of other victims (Berelowitz *et al.* 2012). The fact that the victimhood of males was usually not identified by themselves but by third parties was of some significance. This contrasts with how the exploitation of young females was identified in this context. Similarly, during the fieldwork for Beckett's study, the researchers found there was minimal mention, by research participants, of young males as victims in this context without prompting by the researcher. The evidence from Beckett *et al.*'s (2013) study on gangs, demonstrates the complexities within the victim-perpetrator dynamic where both statuses can co-exist for young males (as well as for young females).

Section one of chapter nine examines correlations between general offending by victims and inhibitors to the recognition of males as victims of CSE, therefore, it is suffice to note here there are a number of reasons why both disclosure and identification are impacted by the perceived or actual offending of young male victims. The perception of the male as perpetrator is reinforced when he manifests CSE related trauma through perhaps aggression and/or drug use, without the professional considering other potential behavioural motivators. The concept of the young male as perpetrator has the potential for their victimhood to be negated by professionals. Additionally, where there has been offending by the young male victim, it raises questions about professionals' capacity to work with him as both victim and offender, issues explored by Barter *et al.* (2009).

### *Male as the protector*

In contrast to the male being portrayed as perpetrator, masculine ideology also portrays him as protector of himself and of others. Although Levant *et al.* (1992) did not list this as a specific trait within masculine ideology, it is inherent in this in it that the male should not be weak or be seen to



be weak. Instead he strives to attain and maintain the attribute as 'protector' – protector of self and of others. To be a victim of sexual assault contravenes this. This belief can inhibit both his own disclosure but also identification by the professional who holds this preconception. Feelings of self-blame, shame, and a sense of helplessness all feature as part of the young male's psyche in his perceived failure to protect himself from the abuse. As Summit (1992) states, in the male child especially, self-blame at not protecting himself increases the sense of helplessness. Ashamed of their situation, they are usually less likely to report it (Finkelhor and Browne, 1985; Amstadter and Vernon, 2008). However, there is disagreement amongst some academics as to whether female victims of CSA may be more likely to self-blame than young males. Hunter *et al.* (1992) reported girls may be more likely than boys to blame themselves for abuse, demonstrating there is a correlation between gender and attribution of responsibility. Similarly, Goodman-Brown *et al.*'s study (2003) also concluded girls held greater fear than boys of negative consequences to others should they disclose and that, children who perceived more responsibility for the abuse, took longer to disclose. Whilst acknowledging these points, consideration should be given to how shame and self-blame can be experienced differently by males in the wider context of issues, such as masculinity and self-protection.

Whilst not specifically referring to the male as protector, Bicanic *et al.* (2015) also purport a young male victim's sense of shame is one of the most frequently reported factors causing delayed disclosure after experiences of sexual trauma. Easton (2013) and Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) also highlight shame, and potentially a double bind of shame, as one reason for non-disclosure of sexual abuse by males: shame as a reason they do not disclose and shame for not disclosing. It is, however, necessary to set this in the context of other findings which are mixed regarding the greater effect of shame on males or females. For example, Else-Quest *et al.* (2012) reported in their study there were higher levels of shame (and guilt) amongst females, whilst Aakvaag *et al.* argued that ...'*less is known about gender differences when shame and guilt occur in relation to trauma and violence*'. (Aakvaag, 2016, p.17).

Allied to the concept of self-protection is the males' expectation to provide for himself, particularly in the face of adversity, including homelessness (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Melrose, 2010; Berelowitz, 2012). This is sometimes referred to as 'survival sex', aligning with the model of commercial sexual exploitation discussed in section one. Although this is also true of female victims of CSE, the gender constructs and expectations of males as protector also imply independence. In such circumstances the need to survive is seen to supersede the decision to disclose abusive experiences. The term 'commercial sexual exploitation' was used in some of the earliest research to describe the sexual exploitation of children and young people (Chase and Statham, 2005). The word 'commercial' tends to denote a transaction, which one might assume to be tangible and, in particular, financial. One of the challenges is that of the young male acknowledging his own victimhood because he is receiving these very basic needs to provide for himself. Ironically, for some, they view themselves as taking advantage of the perpetrator (Fox, 2016) which further decreases the likelihood of himself and professionals acknowledging his victimhood.

It should be acknowledged that the concept of 'survival sex' can be equally applicable to young females. However, there appears to be a degree of dissention amongst writers as to whether its application is greater to males or females. The model has been reintroduced in a study by McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* (2014), making the distinction between 'prostitution' historically being associated with young females and 'commercial sexual exploitation' being associated with young males and the term 'rent boy', referenced earlier. However, other literature and policy documents would have used the term 'commercial sexual exploitation' as an overarching term to describe CSE, irrespective of gender.<sup>9</sup> Several European studies have shown a greater incidence of young males than young females selling sex (Pedersen and Hegna, 2003; Lavoie *et al.* 2010). I agree with Quayle *et al.* (2008) who contend that, despite this, there remains little attention on boys in this context, and where there is, males tend to be afforded greater agency than females.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/co-operating-safeguard-children-may2003.PDF>

The male as protector of others is the second masculine stereotype I wish to examine. A study by Schonbucher *et al.* (2012) found the second most common reason for non-disclosure in male victims of CSA was the wish not to burden recipients with the information or believing the potential recipient as too emotionally unstable to receive the information about the abuse. Sorsoli *et al* (2008) also found evidence of males choosing not to disclose their experiences of CSA because they believed their abuse would have been difficult for others to hear and may make others feel guilty or sad. Although also true of female victims, the stereotypical gender constructs, discussed already, suggest a greater pressure upon males to protect others from this knowledge.

This sub-section has examined how gender constructions, and in particular masculine ideology, can influence the non-recognition of CSE in males, potentially affording them less protection than young females. I focussed on how this influences the invisibility of the young male's victimhood; inherent assumptions of males as perpetrators; and their assigned status as protector of self and others. The influence of gender constructions in relation to gender of the perpetrator was also considered as a factor impacting the recognition of males as victims of CSE; the subject to which I next turn.

### *2.9.2 The influence of perpetrator gender on recognition of CSE in young males*

As discussed above, the sexual exploitation of males violates all that is inherent within the prevailing view in society of what it is to be masculine and thus, influences recognition of them as victims. There is yet another tier to this which has the potential to compound the already powerful inhibitors to recognition; that of gender of the perpetrator. I now turn to examine the impact of CSE upon males when the perpetrator is male or female, and its influence upon recognition.

### *Perpetration by males*

Much of the research points to most child sexual assaults being perpetrated by males (Bolton *et al.* 1989; Palmer 2001; Banyard *et al.* 2004; Edinburgh *et al.* 2006). Bolton *et al.* suggest when this happens to a male child two broadly accepted social standards are violated: the abuse of a child and the evidence of a homosexual act. Whilst there may have been some positive shift in the public's acceptance of homosexuality (Cosis Brown, 2008) it can still be the breaking of this social rule in particular which defines the male child victim's reaction, and that of others, to what has happened. Male perpetrator sexual exploitation may impact on young males differently, depending on whether they already identified as GBTQ or heterosexual at the time of the exploitation.

The sexual exploitation of young males who are GBTQ, by other males, has been the subject of more recent studies (Brayley *et al.* 2014; McNaughton *et al.* 2014; Cockbain *et al.* 2015; Fox, 2016). Indeed, it was evident as one manifestation of CSE amongst males in a study by McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* (2014). The consensus is that neither gender nor sexual identity in itself makes a young male inherently vulnerable to CSE, but rather how others respond to it. However, much of the research has highlighted the very real potential risks for this cohort of young males (Donovan, 2014; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014). These risks can result from a number of factors. One is the lack of available safe space for young males to explore their sexuality or, without risk of prejudice, enter into same sex relationships. This can be compounded for young GBTQ males from black and ethnic communities, where they may experience specific stigma from their own culture or religion (Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014). For some young males they perceive the only option as having on-line contacts or making contacts in places where there may be additional risks for them. Use of online media communication as a means of exploring their sexuality is one way in which CSE can differ between males and females. If the young male has felt compelled to seek out contact with other males in any of these ways, and is exploited as a result of this, he may feel complicit in the abuse,

possibly inhibiting disclosure. Similarly, professionals may assign blame to the young male for initiating contact, thereby, impeding their identification of it as exploitative.

Studies have shown how the stigma derived from same-gender sexual assault can result in internal conflict for the young male, if he is GBT, causing him to wonder if his sexual identity 'caused' his exploitation (Kia-Keating *et al.* 2005; Teram *et al.* 2006; Easton, 2014; Gagnier and Collin-Vezina, 2016). Lew (2004) also suggests that, having internalised cultural homophobia, may lead the young gay male to suspect his homosexuality is a result of the abuse. This is further reinforced for the young male victim if he experienced reflexive physiological arousal during the abuse, in which case he may be confused about wanting the abuse to occur. Bullock and Beckson (2011) concluded that studies explaining the physiological mechanisms governing erection and ejaculation confirm it is possible for this to occur during non-consensual sex. They argue that such physiological reactions are only partially under the voluntary control of the victim and can also be a consequence of extreme stress or duress. They conclude that if young males and professionals are not aware of these facts it has implications for recognition of the act as a sexual assault. It can increase the victim's fear of being blamed for the abuse, and therefore, motivated to remain silent (Dorais, 2002). This can be the case whether the perpetrator is male or female, as discussed below.

Issues surrounding homosexuality may also impact on professionals' identification of CSE in males. A professionals' struggle with, uneasiness with, or bias towards homosexuality could inhibit effective identification of the young male as a victim. Similarly, impediments exist where professionals fear, perhaps through a lack of confidence and/or experience, appearing discriminatory by addressing GBTQ issues with a young male. Alternatively, a professionals' misinterpretation of a male's sexual behaviour with another male as simply 'exploration' or 'experimentation', fails to question potential exploitation involved (McMullen, 1987; Darch, 2004). Chase and Statham (2004) take this a step further, claiming there is an assumption that the sexual orientation of male victims of CSE is either gay or bi-sexual. This can occur irrespective of

the male victim's sexual identity. Failure to address each of these issues effectively can only serve to further silence the young male victim.

A male victim of CSE may be struggling with understanding his own sexual identity which may impact disclosure. Alternatively, if he was at the stage of questioning his sexual identity when he was exploited, he may feel this abuse confirms him as gay or bisexual. There are further complexities for the young male who is questioning his sexual identity or is GBT but has not come out as such. For him it is a double bind to disclose exploitation by another male and perceiving this disclosure as an admission of homosexuality when he is not ready to come out. Additionally, an inability to come out as gay, due to fear of homophobic reactions of others, can potentially inhibit a young male from disclosing further abusive experiences.

### *The impact of homophobia on recognition*

Andersen states that '*homophobia is not history*' (2013, p.236) and is discussed in the literature as both consequence of prevailing social ideals about masculinity and manliness and as a personal barrier to male disclosure of sexual abuse. A study of male survivors of CSA, by Teram *et al.* (2006), showed how participants talked about three aspects of homophobia as a barrier to disclosure: a) the belief, by others, that the male survivor abused by a man is gay; b) the victims' struggle with understanding or naming their own sexual identity, heterosexual or homosexual; c) the victims' own homophobia if abused by a male.

A study by Freidman in the USA entitled '*And Boys Too*' concluded boys who were victims of CSE were '*surrounded by a culture that is both hetero-centric and homophobic*' (Freidman, 2013, p.11). The homophobia which continues to be present within societies, either as a result of religious, cultural, or personal beliefs, or a combination of these, makes it difficult for boys to talk about any struggles they might have in relation to sexual identity, or to feel they can safely

disclose experiences of same gender sexual abuse or exploitation. Whilst a hetero-centric and homophobic culture may also have implications for young females who are subject to same-sex abuse, I would argue it does not have the same ramifications as it does for males.

For a male victim to disclose abuse and express these associated feelings can re-enforce a sense of weakness and shame, as discussed within gender construction above. If another male perpetrates the abuse it then also consigns the victim to a struggle in a dual process of both victimhood and homosexuality often being denigrated in the male socialisation process (Spataro *et al.* 2001; Mahalik *et al.* 2003a; Mahalik *et al.* 2003b). For the heterosexual young victim especially, this can result in attempts to prove his 'manliness', manifesting in the adoption of hyper masculine behaviours such as sexual promiscuity, the unplanned or unwanted fathering of children, or offending (Lisak, 1994; Holmes and Slap, 1998; Dorais, 2002; Allnock and Hynes, 2011). It is the offending behaviour in particular which serves to distract professionals from dealing with the male as a victim of exploitation, and instead respond to his criminality. This is considered further in the following chapter.

The discussion above has explored the diverse issues, and complexities surrounding these, for males who have been subject to same-sex sexual exploitation. They highlight the implications of these on disclosure and identification. Next, I will examine the less explored subject of male perpetration by females (O'Leary and Barber, 2008; Sorsoli, 2008; Beckett, 2011; Rigby and Murie, 2013; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014) its impact and influence on the recognition of CSE amongst males.

### *Perpetration by females*

Attention to the perpetration of young males by females is important as a phenomenon that exists but is rarely discussed. As same-sex abuse of males contravenes male constructs, as discussed earlier, so too does the female perpetration of males violate the social construction of the female. This refers to the stereotypical construct of the female as nurturer and caregiver, non-aggressive

and non-sexual, portrayed as the victim in abusive acts (Allen, 1991). As a result, any reference to females as perpetrators of sexual abuse on children demonstrates divergent attitudes of revulsion and disbelief to the issue (Denov, 2003, 2004). Female sexual offending challenges a prevailing sexual script and the significance of patriarchy (Koonin, 1995). This results in consequential denial. Where there is any acknowledgement of abuse or exploitation, there is usually minimisation of the impact of it, by others and often by victims themselves. Ironically there is an acceptance of the female's capacity to physically abuse children (Elliot, 1997) which might suggest the concept of sexual abuse is a step too far in contravening this construct of the female stereotype.

The initial shock and denial, and subsequent acknowledgement, of CSE generally through the late 1990s was reminiscent of the response to CSA as a phenomenon in the 1970s (Olafson *et al.* 1993). However, CSA by females did not form part of this discourse until the mid-1980s. Rowan *et al.* (1990) suggested data regarding the sexual abuse of children by females was not available prior to 1986. One of the earliest figures in relation to this phenomenon was that of Finkelhor (1986) who concluded, of sexual offences committed by women, girls and boys made up 5% and 20% of the victims respectively. Evidence of this was later shown in the 2004/5 figures from Childline indicating that 35% of 2,099 boys calling about sexual abuse, identified a female as the abuser. Brayley *et al.* (2014) noted a higher proportion of males than females are victims of female abusers (36% as opposed to 6%). Similarly, the sexual exploitation of young males by females remains relatively unrecognised.

As noted previously, the original 'boyfriend' model of CSE failed to consider the role of adult females as perpetrators. However, as outlined in section one, McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* (2014) described cases where older women sexually exploited young males by offering them a place to live or encouraging them to leave their care home. This study revealed professionals did not always view sexual relationships between older females and young males as exploitative or indeed, damaging to the victim. There are two specific factors which appear to explain this: one is



the social construct of the male as the dominator and initiator of all things sexual, and his physical make-up as stronger than the female; the second is the prevailing concept of the female, as already defined. The physiological composition of the female and the absence of a penis tends to render perpetration by her as inconceivable while the physiological make-up of the male deems him to be in control of the sexual activity, rendering him blameworthy, or at least responsible. This is compounded by the stereotypical perception of masculinity which asserts that a male should be physically able to protect himself, as discussed earlier.

The physiological make-up of the male also supports the concept of the female as some form of 'cougar', and a sign of a male's sexual attractiveness or manliness, when abused by a female (Fromuth and Burkhart, 1989; Holmes *et al*, 1997). Throughout history, via film and song, the 'sexual activity' between a young male and older female has been portrayed and been received with societal acceptance, or even a sense of accomplishment. The view of the young male as being 'initiated' by an older female may even be perceived with envy by his peers and viewed as a conquest. According to Fromuth and Burkhart, 1989; Dhaliwal *et al*. 1996; and Nelson and Oliver, 1998, heterosexual males largely reported a sexual experience with a female as consensual or even status-enhancing. If the young male holds this perception this may be sufficient to hamper disclosure of sexual exploitation, however, where he does not hold this view, knowing this is the view of others is likely to be sufficient to impede disclosure.

These arguments illustrate the difficulties in persuading young males, professionals, and others of the existence of female perpetration, the harm caused by denial or minimisation of impact which all serve to compound non-recognition of the problem. The gender stereotypes of both males and females serve to negate any sense of victimhood in the eyes of the young male victim himself, or at least, confuse him as to whether the act was in fact abusive. The figures quoted regarding extent of female-on-male abuse show this to be a significant problem for young males, yet the question remains as to why it is so rarely part of the discourse on CSE.

### 2.9.3 Correlations between victim offending and inhibitors to recognition of CSE

There are several reasons why it is important to examine the role of criminality in relation to the recognition of CSE in males. Positive correlations have been found, by several authors, between CSE victimisation and youth offending (Day *et al.* 2008; Cockbain and Brayley 2012; Rigby and Murie, 2013). In a study of children accessing CSE support services in one UK town 55% of boys and 35% of girls had youth offending histories (Cockbain and Brayley, 2012). In a later study by Cockbain *et al.* (2015) there was the same significant difference between male and female CSE service users known to have a criminal record (48% and 28% respectively). This study also noted young males were 1.7 times more likely than girls to be referred by criminal justice agencies to services for CSE issues, whereas referrals of males by social services were more than half as likely as those of females. Arguably, this can be viewed as a young males' offending behaviour being given priority over support required as a victim of CSE, whilst their criminal behaviour could be a manifestation of their exploitation. Smeaton also noted how professionals identified boys and young men who ran away and experienced CSE as *'often criminalised for engaging in anti-social behaviour rather than being recognised as being exploited and/or relying upon criminal survival strategies'* (Smeaton, 2013, p.48).

Cockbain and Brayley (2012) suggest that the interactions between CSE and criminal activity are complex and ambiguous and that it is, therefore, difficult to determine the impact of CSE on youth offending and vice versa, concluding that *'for many children CSE and youth offending seem to coexist in a state of twisted symbiosis'* (Cockbain and Brayley, 2012, p.699). However, the literature does highlight a consistent message regarding the presence of inherent vulnerabilities for children and young people, male and female, within the criminal justice system. It is, therefore, important, first and foremost, to set this part of the discourse in the context of social, health and educational problems already facing young people before they enter the criminal justice system; young lives *'replete with examples of vulnerability'* (Bateman, 2017, p. 22).

### *The underlying vulnerabilities of young people within the criminal justice system*

A Barnardo's report into children and young people in the criminal justice system highlighted the existing vulnerabilities of children serving custodial sentences, '*suffering disproportionate levels of disruption including inadequate parenting, abuse and neglect, learning difficulties and mental health problems*' (Glover and Hibbert, 2009, p.24) with their homes described as '*at best chaotic and at worst abusive*' (Glover and Hibbert, 2009, p.18).

Other studies of young people within custodial settings have reinforced the links between youth offending and other problems, citing inherent vulnerabilities, such as, living in a deprived household, (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013); having a learning disability (Firmin and Lloyd, 2017); experience of the care system and/or being on the child protection register (Glover and Hibbert, 2009); having experienced the death of a parent or sibling (Bateman *et al*, 2013); having experienced school exclusion, attendance at a special school or a diagnosis of special educational needs (Glover and Hibbert, 2009); self-harm or attempted suicide (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Jacobson *et al*, 2010); having experienced abuse (Arnall *et al*, 2005); having a low or extremely low IQ (Harrington and Bailey, 2005); mental health concerns (The Centre for Social Justice (2009); bullying at school or in the local community (Firmin and Lloyd, 2017).

Living in areas of poverty underlies many of the problems associated with some of the highest levels of crime and adverse family circumstances (The Centre for Social Justice (2009).

Moreover, it is argued that the longer a child lives in poverty the greater the chance they will become involved in criminal activity (Kingston and Webster, 2016; Bateman, 2017). An additional dimension to the lives of young people living in economically and socially deprived areas is the high level of organised crime and gang affiliation (The Centre for Social Justice (2009). The Home Office (2011) highlighted the existence of gangs in some of the most economically deprived areas in Great Britain. Further, Khan *et al* (2013) also noted that the

experience of multiple problems, within a family and/or as a result of personal problems can increase the chances of young people's gang affiliation.

The pull towards being part of a gang culture, and with it, organised criminal activity, surfaces a further element of complexity for young people where activities such as violence and drug-dealing may become, or have always been, the norm for them (The Centre for Social Justice (2009). As highlighted by Beckett *et al* (2013), for some young people, membership of a 'gang' might be the only way to secure their safety. For many, brought up in a life of poverty and marginalised within their own schools, the gang provides an alternative route to achieve respect and status. Under these conditions, young People's vulnerabilities are unlikely to be observed, even for those *'young people whose affiliation is reluctant: a product of fear, constraint or coercion'* (Pitts, 2008, p.84). In addition, the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2007) and the Centre for Social Justice (2009) also described young people who were most likely to become gang affiliated as predominantly male.

A further factor for consideration is the interrelatedness between the high proportion of young people from BME communities living within poverty-stricken areas and also found within the criminal justice system (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Bateman, 2017). As Bateman noted, *'direct and indirect forms of discrimination, on the basis of ethnicity'*, then serve to *'exacerbate the impact of disadvantage'* (2017, p. 22.) Such connections between race and poverty are by no means a new phenomenon as Gilroy highlighted in his writings in 1987, referring to a social movement *'created out of poverty, exploitation and racial subordination'* (Gilroy, 1987, p.37).

An additional factor related to young people within the criminal justice system is what Beckett *et al* describe as the *'blurred boundaries between young people's experiences of being either a victim or a perpetrator of sexual violence, with many young people (including young men) experiencing*

*both'* (Beckett *et al*, 2013, p7). Relating again to the issue of poverty, Bateman (2017) highlights the tendency in economically deprived areas to find an overlap between young people who are both perpetrators and victims of crime. This was addressed earlier in sub-section 2.9.1 of chapter two, highlighting the tendency to label young males, primarily or solely, as perpetrators of sexual as well as more general youth offending, whilst ignoring their victim status. The literature has highlighted this particularly where young people present with harmful sexual behaviour, either alone or in groups, where, in fact, young people had been identified as being coerced into this behaviour, to have followed the lead of others, to have been sexually abused in extrafamilial settings and/or to have witnessed sexual activity or materials in their own home (Firmin and Lloyd, 2017).

An appreciation of these potentially inherent vulnerabilities of young people in the criminal justice system alongside their experience of CSE, and the relatively low identification rate of CSE among known offenders, serves to highlight the level to which their victim status can extend. This is crucial to fully understanding the context of youth offending in the lives of young males who have also experienced CSE, and the impact of this upon the non-recognition of them as victims. I now turn to address potential correlations between youth offending and CSE.

### *The correlations between youth offending and CSE*

Despite the complexity and ambiguity of interactions between CSE and youth offending, as stated above, previous research has revealed two primary reasons for CSE experienced young males to be involved in criminal activity: firstly, coercion into criminality by exploiters as a means of initiation into and control over their sexual exploitation; and secondly, criminal behaviour as a manifestation of trauma, experienced as a result of sexual exploitation (Cockbain *et al*. 2014; Fox, 2016;). However, criminal behaviour as a manifestation of CSE is not always recognised by professionals (Fox, 2016) or indeed by young male victims themselves.

It is possible to understand reasons as to how offending behaviour can mask CSE amongst young males. One reason may evolve from the reluctance of young males to report experiences of exploitation if he is also involved in offending, believing he may lack credibility given his criminal reputation or he may not want to draw attention to his criminal behaviour. Research evidence showed young male victims of CSE, with criminal behaviour, to be likely to receive, perceive or expect a negative response from professionals (Cockbain and Brayley, 2012; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014). In a study conducted with the Pandora street work project in Bristol (Darch, 2004), of the 87 sexually exploited boys and young men with whom the project had contact, 98% had a class A drug dependency, most had housing problems and 90% had been in care, placing them all at risk. All had experienced crimes against them, but none had reported these to the police. The research suggested there can be a double barrier for the young male victim feeling he is not worthy of protection or if he does decide to report, considering first if he will be believed. Although this may also be a factor relating to females, as Coy (2009) suggests, the later discussion in relation to professionals will highlight the greater propensity for this to be an issue for males (Darch, 2004).

In a briefing document on youth offending and CSE, University College London (2011) identified nearly 40% of CSE victims were involved in offending, with aggression and dishonesty offences being the most common. Although this figure does not distinguish between male and female, Cockbain and Brayley state '*male victims are significantly more likely to offend than their female counterparts*' (2012, p.691). Several studies refer to the externalisation of anger and feelings of shame, as a result of exploitation, which can be manifested in outward aggression and other anti-social or destructive behaviours, whilst at the same time, avoiding disclosure (Garnefski and Arends, 1998; Romano and De Luca, 2001; Allnock and Hynes, 2011; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014; Fox, 2016). In contrast, many of these authors suggested females tended to exhibit internalising behaviours such as guilt and depression. However, Coohy (2010) contests this, stating there is mixed evidence in relation to the internalising behaviour of male and female victims of abuse.

## 2.10 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been to provide a conceptual context for this study through a review of the relevant literature. Section one of this review has confirmed there has been a significant shift in the recognition of CSE as a child abuse issue. As a phenomenon it has grown as an issue of concern at social and political levels since the 1900's. However, this has mainly been prompted by children's charities, academics and high-profile cases evidencing failures in the systems tasked with protecting young people from CSE. Undoubtedly, policy, legislative, and definitional contexts relating to CSE have responded positively to the changes, demonstrating a greater understanding of the issues, and giving recognition to the victim status of young people affected by CSE. There is the implicit inclusion of males and females within this. However, through my analysis of the literature, I have concluded, given the complexities entailed with CSE and specific nuances involved for both male and female victims, there is the potential for inconsistencies in interpretation and application of policy, legislation, and in defining the issue. The existence of these safeguards does not necessarily or naturally translate into equality of practice or provision of services for males and females.

The absence of a UK prevalence study on male CSE is problematic. The known prevalence rates of male CSE illustrate, not necessarily a lower rate of male than female victims, but a need to focus on why our knowledge is more limited in relation to males, and a need to improve recognition of it alongside more robust statistics. This review has lent heavily on the literature in relation to male CSA highlighting fundamental gaps in the research specific to barriers to recognition of male CSE.

There has been a welcomed recognition that one single model of CSE is limiting. It is advantageous to have additional knowledge regarding models or routes into CSE for males, and to acknowledge, as McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* discerned from their study ...'*complex intersections of different factors appear to influence the different models of sexual exploitation by which boys and young men are victimised*' (McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014, p.24).

Section two provided a critique of issues discussed in section one by determining what is distinctive to male victims of CSE that results in less recognition of their victim status. Gender constructions, and in particular masculine ideology, was exposed as a significant influencing factor in this discourse; the latter because the sexual exploitation of young males violates a prevailing perception in society of all that is masculine. This theme permeates throughout the remainder of this chapter when also considering perpetrator gender and the role of offending behaviour in the lives of male victims of CSE.

Research focusing on the sexual exploitation of young males has only begun to gain prominence in recent years, with an increasing appreciation of difficulties in relation to the recognition, and hence the low rate of known cases (Beckett, 2011; Berelowitz *et al.* 2013). However, in the absence of more focused research into these barriers to disclosure and the impediments to identification, fundamental gaps exist in knowledge and understanding, and inevitably limit the degree to which we can effectively protect boys and young men from this form of abuse. The concept of the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' suggested by O'Connell-Davidson (2011), establishes a moral hierarchy which, currently, does not appear advantageous towards male victims of CSE. Theoretical frameworks can help us understand these complex issues; the subject of the next chapter.



## Chapter three: Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Introduction

Providing the conceptual context for this study, chapter two, the literature review, highlighted a recurrence of particular themes that appeared to be relevant to the question of non-recognition of CSE in males, including masculinity (Mahalik, 2000; Teram *et al.* 2006); homosexuality (Dorais, 2002; Cosis Brown, 2008); homophobia (Teram *et al.* 2006; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014), and criminality (Pearce, 2009; Cockbain and Brayley, 2012; Smeaton, 2013). It was evident that such phenomena were not solely a manifestation of the individual male victim of CSE operating in a vacuum, but contextual to other factors such as peer groups, economic support available and the prevalence and impact of criminality. This points to the significance of contextualising CSE when responding to the phenomenon. The adoption of a theoretical framework, for my study, that supported the impact of the environment, or ecology on CSE was, therefore, crucial.

Tudge *et al.* postulate that:

*...the meaning of theory in any scientific field is to provide a framework within which to explain connections among the phenomena under study and to provide insights leading to the discovery of new connections. (Tudge et al. 2009, p.198).*

This position, combined with the contextual nature of CSE, pointed to more than one theoretical lens through which to examine impediments to the recognition of CSE in males. However, ecological systems theory was the overarching theory which seemed most instrumental in providing the theoretical framework for my study. Ecological systems theory also links to my original intention to use Sorsoli *et al.*'s (2008) three domains model as the practical framework on which to structure this chapter.

This chapter is divided in four main sections. The first section will introduce ecological systems theory, defining each of the systems and providing a brief overview of its use and development. Section two will introduce Sorsoli *et al*'s (2008) three domains model and the categories within each, illustrating barriers to disclosure. The third section will move to discuss how both ecological systems theory and the domains model have influenced and helped inform my study. In the fourth section I provide a brief critique of ecological systems theory. Throughout this chapter I will demonstrate how other theories can be used in conjunction with ecological systems theory and the domains model to complement explanation of individual behaviour. These theories include: social cognitive theory, child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome (CSAAS), Stockholm syndrome, and social exchange theory.

### **3.2 Introduction to ecological systems theory**

The pioneer of ecological systems theory was Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1986, 1995). He developed the theory to explain how human development occurs and the contextual influence on this. He argued contemporary studies of human development failed to examine the interrelations between the developing person and the changing micro and macro context (1977a). Tudge *et al* later aptly defined ecology as '*the study of organism-environment interrelatedness*' (1997, p.73), also emphasising the individual and contextual systems involved, and the interdependent relations between the two. In its final form, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory consisted of five levels: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. These are defined below.

The microsystem concerns the individual, bio-psycho-social characteristics of the person and is described as:

*...a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics.*

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22).

This level encompasses informal support systems and, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979) is defined as face-to-face interactions between individuals and others within their immediate setting such as family and other intimate relationships. The term ‘experienced’, in Bronfenbrenner’s definition of this subsystem, is used to indicate the way in which certain things are perceived by the individual in their direct environment and give meaning to them. As such, the individual is not a mere recipient of experience within the environment but also contributes to the construction of the environment. Bronfenbrenner does not claim originality for this formulation. He acknowledged its roots in the work of earlier theorists and the phenomenological conception of the environment derived primarily from Lewin (1931, 1935, 1951, cited in Siporin, 1980) who posited that the focus should not be on the objective environment but how it is perceived by individuals interacting with it and within it.

The mesosystem reflects *interconnections and linkages between individuals and between individuals and systems* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25).

As individuals spend more time in one microsystem this is then referred to as the mesosystem. For example, when a child enters school, they become the primary link between two other systems – the school and family. Bronfenbrenner (1979) referred to this as a ‘setting transition’ and constitutes the mesosystem (Lee, 2010).

The exosystem refers to ‘*one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person*’. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25).

The macrosystem refers to ‘*consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the sub-culture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such inconsistencies*’ (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25).

At this level, cultural contexts can include the socioeconomic status of the individual or the family, political and cultural norms, beliefs, values, and practices which can influence a phenomenon.

The Chronosystem refers to Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of the interactions between the individual and the environment being reciprocal and subject to change over the lifespan of the individual, including the cumulative effects of events of this life span (1998). This level of Bronfenbrenner's theory does not appear to have received as much attention as other levels, with many omitting it from their discussions on ecological systems theory (Belsky, 1980; Alaggia, 2010).

This has provided an overview of ecological systems theory, defining each of the systems. I will now move to examine how this theory has been used and developed within social science.

### *3.2.1 Use and development of ecological systems theory*

Ecological systems theory helps us understand that individuals are '*part of a nested system of ecological contexts*' (Derksen, 2010, p.336), and hence, how reciprocal interactions between systems influence the development of individuals. I believe this is what Pardeck was referring to as the '*concept of transaction*'...*being a 'bi-directional and cyclic relationship... between the client and the environment'* (Pardeck, 1988, p.137). Others have also described how the environment influences the individual's adjustment and development, whilst '*the person's behaviours create unique responses with the environment, thus changing the environment and ultimately its effect on the person*' (Rhodes and James, 1978, cited in Pardeck, 1988, p.137). In relation to CSE amongst males, this theoretical lens suggests strategies to address recognition of the issue need to be on multiple levels; the problem being a result of a maladaptive or malfunctioning ecosystem rather than confined to the individual victim.

Since Bronfenbrenner's original application to understanding human development in the child, many social science researchers have used ecological systems theory, or adapted it, to address

other social issues, such as: interpersonal violence (World Health Organisation - Violence Prevention Alliance, 2018); education and health care (Bogdanova *et al.* 2017); reporting sexual victimization during incarceration (Kubiak *et al.* 2018); disclosure of CSA (Alaggia, 2010; Collin-Vezina *et al.* 2015); sexual victimisation (Campbell *et al.* 2009; Tillman *et al.* 2010); preventing child abuse and neglect (Jewkes *et al.* 2002); and contextual safeguarding (Firmin 2018) . The theory has facilitated explanation of not only an individual's risk factors in relation to such issues, but also how societal norms and beliefs, and the economic systems, are responsible for the creation of conditions for such phenomena to occur. As Derksen (1988) suggests, the ecological perspective offers a shift in thinking in response to problems, particularly during the process of assessment and treatment of individuals.

While ecological theory has benefits in enhancing our understanding of a variety of social issues, its misuse, as well as its use, was the subject of a paper by Tudge *et al.* (2009). In this paper Tudge *et al.* were critical of scholars who based their work on inaccurate readings of the theory. This may be partly due to the continual development of the theory, being revised and extended to its final position of five levels. Indeed, it was only in his later writings in 2001 and 2005 that Bronfenbrenner began to consider the individual's role in changing their context, that of 'ontogenic development' (Tudge *et al.* 2009). Despite developments to his theory, Bronfenbrenner's focus has always remained one of person-context interrelatedness (Tudge, *et al.* 1997).

This focus on the individual was developed by Bronfenbrenner as below.

Demand characteristics are those which act as an immediate stimulus to others, such as age, gender, skin colour, and physical appearance, and may influence a particular response from others based on the immediacy of expectations formed (Tudge *et al.* 2009).

Resource characteristics are those which are not immediately apparent to the observer although they might be induced from the demand characteristics observed. They can relate to '*mental and*

*emotional resource such as past experiences, skills, and intelligence'* (Tudge *et al.* 2009, p. 200).

It can also relate to social and material resources available, such as, access to accommodation, food, education, and positive parental support.

Force characteristics refer to differences in the individual's development trajectory such as their level of motivation, persistence, or temperament.

Bronfenbrenner explained these characteristics to emphasise how the individual's role operates in changing their context. Change can be a relatively passive one, simply by being present in the environment, as others react to the individual's demand characteristics. The individual can also create a more active role in changing their environment, based on their mental, emotional, or physical resource characteristics. The most active role of the individual in changing their situation is linked to their force characteristics – their motivation to do so.

As highlighted above, ecological systems theory was chosen as the overarching framework on which to base my study because it challenges the idea that any one single factor is responsible for a phenomenon. Rather, it advocates multi-level factors to be the cause. In addition to this relevance as a theoretical framework to my study, I was drawn to the theory by Bronfenbrenner's original purpose for it: this purpose was not to examine *'the forces that have shaped human development in the past, but in those that may already be operating today to influence what human beings may become tomorrow'* (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000, p.117). For my study I do not simply want to understand the contextual nature of impediments to recognition of CSE in males but wish it to facilitate greater prevention of and protection for male victims of CSE.

Ecological systems theory can be used alongside other theories which complement individual accounts of psychosocial development. This helps ensure holistic support systems can be developed whilst having cognisance of the individual's unique circumstances (Taylor, 2016).

Whilst it is not classified as a theory, Sorsoli *et al's* (2008) three domains model is a framework

which supports, and to a large extent parallels, ecological systems theory. The model provides a practical framework for my study, through which to examine the multi-level influences on the recognition of CSE in males, whilst reflecting the multi-dimensional position of ecological theory. It is this domains model to which I next turn.

### **3.3 An introduction to Sorsoli *et al*'s (2008) three domains model**

The domains model was developed by Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) as a means to explain the various levels of a male's experience in relation to his decision to disclose CSA. Their study was based on interviews with 16 male survivors of CSA, regarding their experiences of disclosure. Using a grounded theory approach, their analysis found three distinct levels of barriers to disclosure: personal, relational, and socio-cultural. This led the authors to conclude that barriers to disclosure exist in multiple domains of experience which can interconnect with each other and are encountered across the lifespan. The domains model is important to CSE because it helps demonstrate the cause of non-disclosure lies not only with the individual victim of CSE, but also at other levels. Moreover, the interconnectedness between the domains highlights the complexities surrounding disclosure. I will now explain each of the domains, and obstacles to disclosure within each domain.

#### *Personal domain*

Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) explain the personal domain as referring to what the individual personally feels they could or could not do or handle, or how they would feel, if they did disclose. They describe several types of personal obstacles that can impact on disclosure:

- ❖ Cognitive awareness: in Sorsoli *et al*'s study, participants described a lack of cognitive awareness of the events during childhood, stating they had '*compartmentalized it*', blocked it out or they did not think to tell anyone (Sorsoli *et al.* 2008, p.339). This suggested their lack of cognitive awareness rendered them unable to disclose the abuse

- ❖ Intentional avoidance: a second cognitive barrier was where many of the men, in Sorsoli's study, described intentionally avoiding disclosure for a number of reasons. This included not wanting to think about what happened, therefore, putting it behind them.
- ❖ Difficulty approaching the topic/articulation: these two problems were experienced because the victims did not have the language to describe what happened, they were not being sufficiently verbal, or simply did not know how to approach the subject with someone else.
- ❖ Emotional readiness: Sorsoli *et al.* described emotions, in this context, as either originating '*from the experience of disclosure itself or as reactions to anticipated responses of others*' (Sorsoli *et al* 2008, p.240). Participants in their study described a feeling of not being 'emotionally ready' to disclose the abuse (ibid).
- ❖ Emotional safety: another aspect of emotion was that of emotional safety where the victim assessed the risks involved in disclosure, such as getting hurt. Where the risks are perceived by the victim as too high, disclosure would not happen.
- ❖ Shame: the participants in Sorsoli *et al*'s study described a sense of shame and potential blame as reasons not to disclose abuse. This included feelings of knowing it was wrong, that they were responsible for the abuse, or weak for allowing it to happen. A double bind of shame was described; that of the experience itself but also as a result of not disclosing at the time.

These are the distinct types of personal obstacles, that are either cognitively or emotionally driven, which can cause a male victim to erase experiences of childhood sexual abuse from his consciousness.



### *Relational domain*

The relational domain is defined as the victims' perception of '*what someone else would do if they (the male) disclosed, or what someone else needed to do, say, or allow in order for disclosure to occur*' (Sorsoli *et al.* 2008, p.339). The obstacles within the relational domain were:

- ❖ Fear of specific negative repercussions: this is described as concern about what others might do or say and a victim's perceived negative repercussions to disclosure. This can include potential accusations stemming from societal beliefs about the effects of abuse on males, resulting in, for example the fear of being labelled gay, if the perpetrator is another male.
- ❖ General relational disruptions/beliefs: some of the participants in the study by Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) described how they believed their abuse would have been difficult for others to hear, with the potential to make others feel guilty or sad, thus causing a variety of general relational disruptions. As a result, non-disclosure was seen as the preferable option. This can also involve the belief by victims that others know about the abuse but are either choosing to do nothing about it or, based on the non-response from others, believe the abuse to be normal.
- ❖ Isolation: isolation, as a barrier to disclosure, is described as a consequence of many factors related to societal engendered beliefs about the male gender; this includes the belief that boys are rarely victims. As a result, some of the males in Sorsoli *et al.*'s study described a '*relational chasm*' where no-one talked to them about the abuse; they were not taught to communicate about these experiences; or were told to keep it secret (2008, p.342). As a result, support structures were rarely available.

Each of these obstacles highlight how a gulf is created between the male victim of CSA and others, often as a result of, and reinforced by, personal and societal beliefs.

### *Socio-cultural domain*

In Sorsoli *et al.*'s (2008) study the socio-cultural domain referred to '*abstract rules about what was appropriate and normal for men to experience, feel and discuss*' (2008, p.339). This includes a lack of acceptance for males to experience or acknowledge their status as victims of sexual abuse, where they are given implicit and explicit messages that it is taboo to talk about experiencing sexual abuse. Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) claim it is this domain which best highlights the different risks and consequences for male victims of sexual abuse than those for young females.

Although Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) developed the domains model with a gender lens, concentrating on male victims of CSA, I believe it could also be applicable to female victims of CSE. However, my focus within this study is on its applicability to males, the subject of the following section.

### **3.4 Application of ecological systems theory and the three domains model to this study**

The first section above introduced ecological systems theory, defined each of the systems and provided a brief overview of its use and development. Section two introduced Sorsoli *et al.*'s (2008) three domains model and the categories within each which have helped illustrate barriers to disclosure. This section brings together characteristics from both ecological systems theory and the domains model to help inform and influence my theoretical framework for this study. The section is divided into three sub-sections: the personal/ontogenic system; the relational/micro-, meso-, and exosystems; and the sociocultural/macro system. At the end I will make brief mention of the chronosystem within ecological systems theory.

#### **3.4.1 Personal domain/ontogenic system**

The factors related to recognition of CSE in males examined within this sub-section are: age; gender; cognitive ability; intentional avoidance; emotional impact, readiness, and safety; shame and self-blame.

### *Age as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

With regards to victims of CSA, there are conflicting theories as to the age at which children are most or least likely to disclose. Authors such as Smith *et al.* (2000); Ungar (2009); Allnock and Miller (2013); and Collin-Vezina (2015) suggest the 'normalisation' of abuse is more likely to occur in younger children because of smaller social circles, allowing them fewer opportunities to gauge the inappropriateness of the abuse. Younger children are also less likely to possess sufficient vocabulary to name their abusive experience. With reference to cognitive awareness, referenced within the domains model and addressed later, socio-cognitive theory offers a theoretical basis for research findings that reveal lower rates of disclosure among older children. From a cognitive perspective, one may assume older children are more able to report their abuse due to increased ability to pay attention to the experience, having sufficient recall about it, and more able to adequately communicate it. However, the converse of this could be that, with increased cognitive abilities and social experience, children become more aware of the costs and benefits of disclosure. This may be particularly true for victims of CSE where there is an element of exchange (as discussed in the literature review), and a real or perceived advantage to not disclosing. Hecht and Hansen (1999) and Paine and Hansen (2002) suggest the hesitancy of boys to disclose CSA may also increase with age, rendering adolescent boys even less likely to disclose than girls. This concurs with the theory that the intrinsic roles of gender and masculinity may silence many more male than female victims of CSE.

Of significance to this debate is to whom victims of sexual assault are most likely to disclose, if they do at all, depending on age. Research shows victims are generally more likely to disclose to friends or peers than to formal authorities, and that a decision to formally disclose may be influenced by family or friends (Ullman, 2010; Sabrina and Ho, 2014). Bronfenbrenner's theory that the primary microsystem for an adolescent is usually their parents or guardians, followed by their friendship group, is an important consideration. However, others acknowledge this emphasis can shift as the adolescent grows, with friends becoming more influential (De Goede *et al.* 2009).

This sub-section has highlighted the divergent theoretical views regarding greater likelihood of disclosure of CSA amongst younger or older children. The concept of exchange within CSE, a phenomenon more likely to affect older children, may have a greater influence upon non-disclosure. To whom victims are likely to report, depending on age, is also significant when considering avenues of support available to male victims of CSE and which sources they are most likely to access. The influence of gender on disclosure may be less of a controversial issue; this is addressed next.

### *Gender as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

Gender is a second ontogenic characteristic profiled by ecological systems theory. This appears to correspond with factors within Sorsoli *et al's* (2008) personal domain, particularly those associated with perceived masculine norms: difficulty in approaching or articulating the subject of CSE, shame, and emotional readiness and safety. Added to this is a conclusion by Andersen (2013) who reported a traditional view of manliness also prevents men being taken seriously as victims of abuse and that this ideal can have considerable influence on both attitudes of individuals and institutions.

I briefly mention social construction theory here. Although not examined in this study, I mention it because it argues that masculinity depends on intersecting social conditions where social discourses construct gender rather than gender differences simply being a result of biology. This suggests gender differences result from nurture. This has sometimes been called the nature/nurture debate, deemed to be one of the longest-running debates in psychology (Garcia, 2013). It questions whether human attributes such as behaviours, personalities and attitudes are a consequence of innate biological or genetic factors (nature) or a result of life experiences (nurture).

Social construction theory argues that a society has the power to construct gender roles, align them with expectations, and make them intrinsic within that society. As a result, genders then perform according to these normative standards, and are reinforced by that society (Mahalik, 2000). The previous chapter, literature review, highlighted the masculine norms as cited by Levant *et al.* (1992). These include ideals such as the importance of winning, self-reliance, emotional control, the pursuit of status, being the initiators of sexual contact and the dominant partner. A corollary of this belief is that to be a victim is un-masculine; that males should not be dependent or submissive or indeed fail to defend themselves (Lisak, 1994; Briere, 1992). Mahalik *et al.* (2003b), however, added that, because masculinity is a socially constructed concept, it has the potential to vary according to different sub-cultures and sub-populations. This is critical in understanding inhibitors to recognition of CSE in males within various cultures.

Leading from this, within the context of the social psychology of men and masculinity, it is theorised that men's gendered identity and conformity to masculine norms can impede men's disclosure of abuse (Courtenay, 2000; Dorais, 2002). Alaggia (2005, p.464) states '*...men are strongly affected by prevailing attitudes about masculinity and what it means to be a man in a patriarchal, hetero-sexist society*'. Connolly (2006), one of the more prolific writers on masculinity, stated that the dominant discourse about masculinity is known to frame males as the domineering and aggressive gender, and damaging to females who are often the victims of the male aggressor. He also emphasised that this has had '*...a brutalising effect on boys*' (ibid:140). Irrespective of whether the issue of masculinity is more of a personal, relational or social issue for the young male victim of sexual exploitation, the dictum that men should be strong is a benchmark of Western masculinity which, according to Teram *et al* '*leaves many male survivors without direction about how to deal with their past*' (2006, p.508). This positioning of females as victims and male as perpetrators should remind us that patriarchy is just as harmful to men as it can be to women (Alaggia and Millington, 2008). In a similar vein, Pearce (2009) argues that the existence of a radical feminist theoretical perspective, which states that patriarchy is related to the

oppression and victimisation of women, positions women only as the victims of male violence. This demonstrates how the needs of boys and young men who are victims of trafficking and/or suffer violence may be overshadowed. This has parallels with the phenomenon of domestic abuse where the victim is traditionally viewed as female and the perpetrator as male, to the exclusion of male victims (Hall, 2012). This can be the result of several factors: professionals failing to identify males as victims through a lack of knowledge about male abuse, a lack of confidence in addressing it, or finding it too complex; a focus on the symptoms or fear of the consequences, for example, fear of re-traumatisation; or not viewing the issue as a priority (Mankind Initiative, 2016).<sup>10</sup> Holter states that ...*'men are refused (both by themselves and by 'culture') the position of being in need of help or of weakness'*, highlighting the links between the barriers for young males to disclose and the factors within his environment which inhibit the identification of the issue by others (Holter, 2003, cited in Andersen, 2013, p.236).

Seidler (2006) also offers an approach to aid our understanding of the concept of masculinity, and specifically sexually abused males, within the socio-cultural context. He acknowledges the power aspects of culturally dominant masculinities but emphasises the need to recognise the personal and emotional needs of human beings. He refers to descriptions of masculinity as a relational concept – a product of relationships with others, including institutions and social and political systems.

The above argument presents one example of the core basis of ecological systems theory: that of multi-dimensional systems and the interconnectedness between them. In this context, it is between masculinity as both a relational and socio-cultural concept: as a product of relationships with others and one that is shaped by social and political systems, as posited by Holter (2005). This illustrates the original argument for my thesis, that the recognition of CSE in males is inter-dependent on factors beyond the individual victim.

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<sup>10</sup> 13.2% of men state they have been victims of domestic abuse (DA) since the age of 16; this equates to 2.2 million males to 4.5 million females; 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men suffer DA in their lifetime: <http://new.mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/30-Key-Facts-Male-Victims-Mar-2016.pdf>

This sub-section has illustrated how factors emanating from the social construction of gender, but more specifically, masculinity and aligned expectations of it, create potential impediments to recognition of CSE. The next section moves to another aspect of the personal domain – that of cognitive ability.

### *Cognitive ability as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

Above I have focused on gender, as one of the ontogenic characteristics of human development within ecological systems theory, and the social construction of masculinity. Here I move to the cognitive ability in both victims and professionals to recognise CSA/CSE. Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) cite a lack of cognitive awareness of the abusive nature of what has happened to a victim, as a barrier to disclosure, arguing '*...awareness is clearly a pre-requisite for disclosure*' (2008, p.341). In their study of male victims of CSA, they described how a lack of cognitive awareness was manifested through the victim repressing or compartmentalising the abuse, believing it was normal, or simply not thinking they should tell anyone. In a similar vein, DePrince and Freyd (2002) state the level of social betrayal felt by the abuse victim may result in failure to recall the events; this may be a survival strategy and/or a means of self-protection. This is an example of where the pressure on males to suppress experiences of sexual assault can be seen to coincide with socio-cultural expectations on males to deny or, at least, minimise the abuse, as discussed above in the previous section and also in the literature review (chapter two).

Based on the work of Bandura in the 1960s, Bussey and Grimbeek (1995) offer a helpful and comprehensive model of the disclosure process in CSA derived from social cognitive theory. They note how this theory advances a '*...dynamic interactional model in which disclosure is multidetermined*' (Bussey and Grimbeek, 1995, p.175). It suggests '*...the course of disclosure will vary according to children's cognitive capabilities, social experience, and the particular situation in which they find themselves*' (Bussey and Grimbeek, 1995, p.186). In relation to the individual, social cognitive theory describes four socio-cognitive determinants in relation to

disclosure: not paying sufficient attention to it; insufficient recall; unable to adequately communicate; and unwilling to report it. An inability for a male victim of CSE to communicate his experience of exploitation and/or being unwilling to report it, can be manifested in his intentional avoidance of the subject, addressed later.

Allnock (2018) warns against the utility of social cognitive theory to understand contexts of CSE and warns against its primary application to familial contexts of abuse. Additionally, she highlights how it neglects to consider the concept of victim-perpetrator exchange, possibly as a result of early conceptualisations of CSE (as 'child prostitution') not featuring as a child abuse or child protection issue (ibid). Despite this caution, as illustrated above, I believe the theory has some utility in understanding barriers to recognition of CSE in males.

As Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) suggested, awareness is a pre-requisite to disclosure, I would argue that so too is awareness a pre-requisite for identification of the abuse by professionals. This is another demonstration of the interplay between systems, particularly between the personal and relational levels. Sidebotham *et al.* (2016) expressed concern regarding poor professional understanding of CSE and their responses to it. Pearce's (2013) social model for understanding abused consent offers a means of exploring and comprehending the failure of professionals to intervene in situations of sexual exploitation of males (and females). The elements included in Pearce's model are: condoned consent; normalised consent; survival consent; and coerced consent. The most relevant of these four typologies to this discourse is that of 'condoned consent'. This is where *'...professionals, either through lack of awareness or through purposeful action fail to recognise CSE as abuse and blame the child or the young person for consenting to the predicament'* (Pearce, 2013, p.66).

Pearce goes further to describe condoned consent in terms of being 'unconscious' or through 'professional negligence'. It is the first of these concepts, that of the unconscious, which is relevant to this part of the discourse in relation to cognitive awareness. This applies where



professionals do not possess the skills or ability, either as a result of poor or no training or lack of support, to recognise CSE. I address the second concept, that of professional negligence in the next sub-section.

### *Intentional avoidance as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

As discussed in the previous sub-section, intentional avoidance is a concept that can be applied to both young males and professionals in any discourse regarding recognition of CSE. I view intentional avoidance by the male victim of CSE as part of his cognitive functioning. It corresponds with one of the socio-cognitive determinants relating to disclosure, mentioned above – an unwillingness to report the abuse.

The males in Sorsoli *et al's* study (2008) described intentional avoidance as wanting to put the sexual abuse 'behind them' or wanting to forget about it and believing they could cope with what had happened. For young males, subject to CSE, this could be a manifestation of many factors, including the expectations they themselves, and others, place upon themselves to deny such abusive experiences. Intentional avoidance can also be the result of not being able to articulate their experiences. This illustrates an overlap with the young male's communication skills and emotional readiness to speak about incidents of abuse.

I would locate professional negligence, referred to above, in the realms of intentional avoidance, where professionals fail to identify CSE in males. The professional may have an attitude of acceptance (perhaps in relation to the age or gender of the victim, as discussed above), perceiving the young male to be consenting to the exploitation. Alternatively, the professional may hold an attitude of denial or resignation, thinking that the behaviour will continue despite their attempts to intervene. The professional's fear of responding to the situation may also result in avoidance, for example, their fear of being perceived as discriminatory or homophobic if they approach the subject of male on male exploitation. This corresponds with Pearce's concept of

‘professional negligence’ where professionals are ‘...*turning a blind eye to recognised exploitation of children*’ (Pearce, 2013, p.67).

The difficulty male victims face in approaching the subject of CSE or their struggle to articulate experiences of it can be an influencing characteristic to recognition, and therefore, may be one reason to intentionally avoid the subject altogether. The males in Sorsoli *et al*’s (2008) study referred to not knowing how to start the conversation or respond to the abuse experience, resulting in their silence. Whilst Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) did not identify a lack of communication strategies within any of the domains, I would suggest the unavailability of such strategies to young males may further exacerbate this barrier.

Using ecological systems theory and Sorsoli *et al*’s (2008) domains model, this sub-section has addressed the reasons for both male victims of CSE and professionals avoiding the subject. Demonstrating an interconnectedness between each of these dynamics impeding recognition, I now turn to emotional impact and readiness to disclose as two of those dynamics for young males and for professionals.

### *Emotional impact and readiness as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

I see connections between the emotional impact and readiness of a young male to disclose experiences of CSE, their difficulty approaching the subject or articulation of it, and consequent avoidance of it. It is possible that being comfortable speaking about the issue may, to some extent, be dependent upon the young male’s emotional readiness. It is posited that males are less likely than females to have either the emotional vocabulary or the emotional readiness to express their feelings as a result of abuse (Sorsoli *et al.* 2008). Whilst Coohey (2010) suggests there is mixed evidence in relation to the internalising behaviour of male and female victims of abuse, others state that, whereas girls tend to internalise emotional distress, boys tend to act out, often in a violent, anti-social manner (Bolton *et al.* 1989; Garnefski and Arends, 1998).

I see both emotional readiness and difficulty with approaching the subject as relating to a professional's ability to identify CSE in males on two levels. Firstly, the struggle of young male victims of CSE to communicate effectively about emotions can present them as being uncooperative and, as such, not perceived as emotionally vulnerable. Consequently, professionals may not be so inclined to respond to their victimhood. Secondly, the professionals' own personal ability to approach the subject, and their emotional readiness to address it, are critical to their capacity to identify the presence of CSE amongst males.

This sub-section has reflected upon emotional impact and readiness as influencers in the recognition of CSE in males, for young male victims and professionals alike. The next section draws on one emotional barrier for young males – that of shame. This, alongside the related concept of self-blame is addressed next.

### *Shame and self-blame as influencing characteristics to recognition*

Remaining with the personal domain of Sorsoli *et al.*'s (2008) model and the ontogenic development of ecological systems theory, this sub-section relates to some of the emotional barriers to disclosure of sexual abuse, the characteristics of shame and self-blame, where victims believe they have been complicit in the abuse in some way (Hershkowitz *et al.* 2007). These factors are also true for victims of CSE (Beckett *et al.* 2011; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014; Hallet, 2015; Lefevre *et al.* 2017). Beckett and Warrington (2015) stress how societal attitudes that place the blame more on adolescents than young children, serve to heighten what Collin-Vezina *et al.* refers to as '*internalised victim-blaming*' (Collin-Vezina, 2015, p.128). The myth that young males cannot be victims of CSE serves to reinforce this; a myth that can be held by the young victim, the professional and others, and reinforced one to the other. Campbell *et al.* suggest we live in a culture that '*propagates messages that victims are to blame for the assault, that they caused it and indeed deserve it*' (Campbell, 2009, p.226). Although they were speaking about female victims of sexual assault, I suggest the same is true of male victims of CSE, if not more so, given the level of responsibility placed on males to be self-protectors. Neville and

Heppner (1999) conceptualise self-blame, in particular, as a phenomenon within the macrosystem of ecological systems theory. This is, however, contested by Campbell *et al.* (2009) who argue self-blame is a multi-level meta-construct which *‘transcends any one level of the model, as it stems from...micro-meso/exo-, macro-, and chronosystem level processes’* (Campbell *et al.* 2009, p.229). Again, this underlines the complexities and interrelations between the systems involved in the recognition of CSE in males.

Regarding potential impediments to recognition of CSE in males, section 3.4.1 above has examined personal factors within both Sorsoli *et al.*'s (2008) three domains model and the ontogenic system within ecological systems theory. These factors related to age, gender, cognitive ability, intentional avoidance, emotional impact, readiness and safety, shame, and self-blame. I have demonstrated how these dynamics, to a greater or lesser extent, can impact both disclosure and identification. The following section examines application of the relational level of the three domains model alongside the next three levels within ecological systems theory, those of micro-, meso-, and exosystems.

### *3.4.2 Relational domain/micro-, meso-, exosystems*

The microsystem encompasses the informal support systems available to an individual such as face-to-face interactions with others within their immediate setting. As an individual spends more time in one microsystem this is then referred to the mesosystem. What happens in the individual's setting and how he/she is affected by this is known as the exosystem. Taking each of these systems and the relational level of the domains model, I will demonstrate how factors related to them apply to my study. The factors examined are: fear of negative consequences; relational disruptions/beliefs; and isolation. The first of these to be addressed is fear of negative consequences.

### *Fear of negative consequences as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

In Sorsoli *et al.*'s study (2008) the males' concern about what others might do or say and their perceived negative repercussions, inhibited their disclosure. Actual or perceived responses from professionals (and others) may stem from societal beliefs regarding the sexual assault upon males generally, as discussed above in relation to gender. Sorsoli *et al.* point to the fear of being labelled gay, if the perpetrator is another male, which is integrally related to the cultural ideology of what it means to be a man.

Disbelief and rejection by adults are common fears for victims of CSA. Summit (1992) suggests this may be more commonplace for the male than the female child, and what follows can be fear and confusion about whether to report and how much to disclose. Compounded with this is the sense of anger and betrayal in the male victim through his inability to properly communicate feelings. Two foundation elements of male socialisation, that of power and control, are now lost in this respect.

Teram *et al.* (2006) demonstrated that male survivors of sexual abuse expressed the belief that differential reactions to male and female survivors of CSA shaped their decisions as to whether to seek help, or how to do this. Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) reported men were not only less likely than women to disclose their abuse but also more likely to have received insensitive and harmful responses than females (Ullman and Filipas, 2005; Teram *et al.* 2006; Alaggia and Millington, 2008).

Professional's fear of negative repercussions for themselves could also be applied to aid understanding of their impediments to identification. The professional might fear appearing discriminatory or homophobic if the perpetrator is male, as described above. Similarly, fear of disrupting an otherwise good client/professional working relationship may influence the professional's decision not to enquire further about possible exploitative behaviour. This is discussed next.

### *Relational disruptions/beliefs as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

Similar to the fear of negative consequences, a victim may believe disclosure of their abuse may negatively impact their relationships with others and/or may be too difficult for others to hear (Sorsoli, *et al.* 2008). This involves avoiding negative repercussions for others, especially family members, highlighting the desire to protect others as well as a wish to evade relationship disruption. This may be particularly true in certain cultures or communities where negative attitudes towards male on male sex could present a risk of specific repercussions on families. Paine and Hanson (2002) mirrored social cognitive theory somewhat by classifying barriers to early disclosure for boys and young men into three categories. These were concerns about self, concerns about family and loved ones, and concerns relating to their abuser. This proposition reflects the interplay between the personal social cognitive dynamics involved, and those at the relational level, emphasising the complexities involved for a male victim of CSE in terms of disclosure.

The risk of relational disruption between the young male victim and perpetrator can be understood in terms of the concept of exchange. Leonard's (1996) social exchange theory offers a useful theoretical lens through which to further understand the impact of this exchange dynamic on disclosure of CSE by males. As a social psychological and sociological perspective, social exchange theory explains a process of exchange between parties, providing benefits to both and based on the comparison of alternative options. The rewards are the central elements to the theory; however, the potential for the use or abuse of power is also intrinsic to this exchange perspective (Leonard, 1996). The supposed 'benefits' for the young male victim, in the context of CSE, can include material or financial gain, status and emotional comfort. Social exchange theory is based on the premise that individuals will choose those relationships and interactions which they perceive to have the best pay offs for them and avoid relations which they perceive are a high cost to them.

The concept of exchange also relates to the social cognitive perspective discussed earlier, where it was argued older children may be in a better position to report abuse due to their increased attention to what happened, their ability to recall the abusive experience, and being more able to communicate it. However, with increased cognitive skills children become more aware of the costs as well as the benefits of disclosure.

As a strategy to not disclose abuse, Leonard (1996) proposes that the victim achieves 'psychological equity' by distorting the reality. In fact, research has demonstrated that, under the right conditions, both the exploiters and their victim are capable of convincing themselves that even the most inequitable exchanges are fair (Walster *et al.* 1978; Leonard, 1996). In doing so the victim convinces themselves that the experience is non-abusive; they minimise or rationalise it; or believe they deserve it, and in so doing, accommodate it. Julich and Oak (2016) propose such cognitive distortions can '*...generate a sense of false or pseudo agency in victim-survivors*' (Julich and Oak, 2016, p.53). Although this can apply to both males and females, I would suggest that attempts to distort reality must be all the greater for male victims of CSE. By distorting reality, they do not take on a victim persona or accept there is inequity of power in the relationship, thereby, maintaining the status quo of gender stereotypes.

The concept of 'accommodating' the abuse aids our understanding of avoidance techniques used by boys and young men in terms of disclosure of CSE experiences, and points to Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome (CSAAS). CSAAS was one of the first and most substantial theoretical influences, derived by Summit (1983), in the field of disclosure (Allnock, 2018). The five components of the syndrome are: secrecy; helplessness; entrapment and accommodation; delayed, unconvincing disclosure; and retraction. The first two components are identified as fundamental to the occurrence of sexual abuse while the remainder are noted to be complex sequential contingencies that may vary (Summit, 1983). CSAAS suggests psychological factors, including guilt, embarrassment, shame, and concern for or loyalty to the perpetrator, can inhibit disclosure. The concept of 'concern for their abuser', posited by several authors is relevant to this

discourse (Summit, 1983; Russell, 1986; Furniss, 1991; Lefevre *et al.* 2017). These authors suggest victims have reported reluctance to disclose their abuse for fear that their perpetrator would be incarcerated. Although this was not in reference to males only, I would suggest an assumed responsibility on males to protect others, as well as themselves, may increase the likelihood of this becoming a reality for young males.

It may be that where young males, in particular, appear to be 'accommodating' the abuser, professionals give up, seeing the young male as a 'willing participant' (condoned consent). Alternatively, in 'accommodating' the impact of the abuse, through fear of disclosing, what the professional might see is a child who is coping. Bolton *et al.* (1989) state children generally do adapt to the most malevolent forms of victimisation which can be mistaken as 'adjustment', often very much welcomed by those working with or caring for the child. Bolton *et al.* suggest 'the silent' reaction of the child victim or that of the *'too resilient'* adjustor is dangerous (Bolton *et al.* 1989, p.90). They also describe how the reluctance, frequently found in males, to provide information about their abuse as having the potential to give a *'...presentation of mixed and erroneous information about such events'* thus creating a *'self-victimization'* (Bolton *et al.* 1989, p.42). Whether this is reluctance or an inability to verbalise the experience on the part of the child or young person, it can lead others to minimise the impact the abuse may have had upon the male child. Bolton *et al.* (1989) suggest this can feed social needs to see such victimisation as less traumatic to the male child than the female child. The danger then is that sources of help may not be at hand when they are most needed.

Julich and Oak (2016) argue that CSAAS fails to explain why victims of CSA continue to remain silent into adulthood. Instead they offer the suggestion that grooming techniques used by the perpetrator can result in the phenomenon of traumatic bonding; otherwise known as Stockholm syndrome. Stockholm syndrome was coined as a concept in 1973 following a bank robbery in Stockholm, in which four hostages were held captive for six days. As happened in this hostage situation, having no control, in fear for their life, and dependent on their captor for survival, a



psychological response of the captive can be one of sympathy, protection and support for their captor, even to the point of developing with them an emotional bond. DeYoung and Lowry, although specifically referring to intrafamilial sexual abuse, define traumatic bonding between victim and perpetrator as '*...feelings of intense attachment, cognitive distortions, and behavioural strategies of both individuals that paradoxically strengthen and maintain the bond*' (DeYoung and Lowry, 1992, p.167). Given these dynamics, once the bond has developed, the relationship can persist. Any attempts to either release the victim from the abusive situation or demonstrate a primary punitive approach towards the perpetrator, is likely to meet with silence and/or resistance from the victim (Furniss, 1991). In this way the rescuer becomes the enemy in the eyes of the victim.

Julich and Oak (2016) propose that practitioners can also be exposed to some of the features of Stockholm syndrome. Applying the concept to how it might inhibit identification of CSE in males, the professional may see the victim who is resistant to help, contrary to how the abusive situation is described. A degree of ambivalence by the victim in taking support offered can result in the professional doubting if the young male is in fact being exploited. This becomes real when the professional succumbs to the impact of Stockholm syndrome by reframing exploitation as something different (Littlechild, 2008).

The aim of this sub-section has been to address fear of negative consequences and relational disruptions/beliefs as potential impediments to the recognition of CSE in males at the relational level of the domains model and applying them to ecological systems theory. I now move to consider isolation as a third factor.

### *Isolation as an influencing characteristic to recognition*

Many of the factors discussed above (and in the literature review, chapter two) that serve as barriers to disclosure, can result in isolation of the young male; the belief that boys are rarely victims; fear of becoming an abuser; and fear of a negative response. Sorsoli *et al.* concluded:

*'thus it seems likely that early demands for silence and stoicism intensify isolation...'* (Sorsoli *et al.* 2008, p.342).

As referenced in the sub-section on gender above, patriarchy can serve to position males, so they experience social isolation, with constrained spaces to express their emotions, particularly in relation to abusive experiences (Struve, 1990). This silencing of males is often discussed in relation to the concept of masculinity (Lew, 2004). At the same time, because relationships and intimacy are closely aligned with femininity, it is argued that men are trained to devalue them, thus decreasing the likelihood that they will develop the kinds of long term, emotionally intimate relationships in which disclosure could occur (Way, 2001).

The issue of social isolation, from both formal and informal support systems, is a further concern and etiological variable raised by Belsky (1980) who emphasises the influence of neighbourhood. Male victims of CSE can become particularly isolated within their neighbourhood or communities, thus removing them from formal and informal support systems. The literature suggests this is especially applicable to young males who are gay, bi-sexual, transgender or questioning their sexual orientation, and cannot, or do not wish to, access support (McNaughton Nicholls *et al* 2014).

In their study of sexual victimisation during incarceration, Kubiak *et al.* provide a useful analogy for male victims of CSE. They refer to the closed system of the prison as an environment of 'total control' (Kubiak *et al.* 2018, p.99). They state how a *'...closed system describes not only the mesosystem illustrated within institutional settings such as prisons...but also other similarly closed settings'* (ibid). I propose there is merit in comparing this to certain closed communities outside of institutions, where *'...people are cut off from a wider community'*. As Kubiak *et al.* suggest 'prisoners often adapt or cope within this mesosystem with a de facto 'code of silence' regarding abuse during incarceration in order to protect themselves' (ibid).

I believe there is value in considering the potential isolation of professionals in the field, as an impediment to identification of CSE in males. In a society that has traditionally denied the existence of CSE, especially the sexual exploitation of young males, this offers an opportunity to address the required support for professionals to work in an environment which encourages rather than isolates them in their attempts to uncover, what still remains, a relatively hidden issue.

Before leaving the application of the micro-, meso- and exosystems it is worth emphasising it may be within these systems where negative beliefs and social norms, associated with the sexual exploitation of males, may be reinforced. Such messages might include the myth that a young man was responsible for the exploitation, that males cannot be sexually exploited, or that the young man must be gay (if the exploitation was perpetrated by another male). Where family or friends have been indoctrinated with the same negative messages, this may determine the young male's decision about disclosure. Koss and Harvey (1991), amongst others, acknowledged the benefits of support systems to aid adjustment from the consequences of trauma. It may, therefore, be in recognising the roles of the micro-, meso- and exosystems, where positive change might occur for the victim, enabling disclosure. Facilitating disclosure is critically dependent upon supports available and appropriate responses to the young male victim. However, Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) ask how much the values related to masculinity permeate a society and organisations to the extent that it results in limited provision and resources for young males. It is the influence of such prevailing values and attitudes within a society to which I next turn in examining the role of the socio-cultural/macrosystem.

### *3.4.3 Socio-cultural/macrosystem*

The macrosystem within ecological systems theory corresponds with what Sorsoli *et al.* describe as the socio-cultural domain and refers to '*abstract rules about what was appropriate and normal for men to experience, feel and discuss*' (2008, p.339). This primarily highlights what is unacceptable in the eyes of a society. Collin-Ve-zine *et al.* (2015) suggest, in relation to CSA, the prevailing attitudes in society are most evident within the macrosystem.

Belsky suggests what happens in the micro- and exosystems arenas is '*...invariably influenced by prevailing cultural attitudes and values, as well as historical changes, which form the macrosystem*' (Belsky, 1980, p.330). Within this system consideration should be given as to how young male victims of CSE, and disclosure of their experiences, may be impacted by societal attitudes about masculinity and expectations of what it should mean to be male, as opposed to being perceived weak when victimised. This is similar to the arguments above with a noteworthy difference – even if young males have the ability to overcome personal and relational obstacles, societal obstacles at this macro level may still ensure he does not disclose. However, on a positive note, an integrated approach to young males places the responsibility on the larger community to ensure a climate of safety that aids disclosure. In their study of CSA, Alaggia (2010) reported how some of the males described adopting hyper-masculine behaviours to help refute accusations of being gay if they suffered from male on male sexual assault. These can often be maladaptive coping behaviours such as sexual promiscuity, the unplanned or unwanted fathering of children, or offending (Homma *et al.* 2012). The influence of factors within this macro/socio-cultural system has implications for the recognition of CSE in males and are discussed in more detail in chapter two – the literature review.

#### *3.4.4 Chronosystem*

As noted in the introduction of ecological systems theory, the chronosystem within Bronfenbrenner's theory, that which refers to the interactions between the individual and the environment being reciprocal, has not received as much attention from authors as his original four levels. I can see its relevance, however, in the opinions of authors such as Filipas and Ullman (2006) who state that repeated experiences of sexual assault result in greater self-blame and societal blame, as well as increased trauma systems. This concurs with Hunter's (2011) description of disclosure of traumatic events, as a very complex and life-long process, influenced by more than the victim or the abuse characteristics. Applying this to young male victims of sexual exploitation, there are at least two critical points: firstly, repeated experiences of sexual exploitation of the young male is likely to reduce the likelihood of disclosure, particularly in the

context of all the other factors already discussed. Secondly, it reiterates the position that responsibility for recognition of CSE in males lies beyond the individual victim himself. The significance of this level to the debate on professional non-identification of CSE is that failure to respond effectively to the sexually exploitative experiences of the young male, can result in secondary victimisation. This is examined in chapter two, the literature review.

### **3.5 Critique of ecological systems theory**

As previously mentioned, Bronfenbrenner was his own self-reflective critic at times, recognising the need to revise and extend his original theory. One such self-criticism was his earlier omission of the role played by the individual in his or her own development and focusing too much on context (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). However, he corrected this with his later addition of ontogenic development. According to Taylor (2016), the literature is limited in terms of a critique of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, mainly because it is considered relatively new in terms of developmental theories. The theory has many strengths which, I believe, also reflect the value of Sorsoli *et al's* three domains model. It enables consideration of factors beyond the individual, looking to the influence of the environment, as well as helping understand the potential of influences within diverse cultural contexts. It can be used in conjunction with other theories, as is evidenced in this chapter. In practice, this allows for holistic support systems to be created, based on ecological theory as an overarching approach. In this way the holistic ethos of the theory dismisses the 'one size fits all' approach to tackling issues.

The benefits of ecological theory must, however, be measured against its weaknesses. The consensus is that, despite the universal applicability of ecological systems theory, it may be difficult to implement in practice, for several reasons (Taylor, 2016). Firstly, the scope of the systems, the complexity of the theory and the two-way process it suggests, make it impossible to apply reductionist principles in order to make it operational. This brings with it challenges to intervening in a problem at a particular level. Secondly, the breadth of the model means almost every minutiae of the individual and their environment could play a role. It, therefore, questions

whether it is possible to measure this, especially when these systems are in constant interplay, and requires cognisance of any small variable that might change a system at any one time. Thirdly, the theory does not provide a notion of hierarchical importance and influence, which renders it difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain if one system is having a stronger influence than another upon a situation.

Having assessed both strengths and weaknesses of ecological systems theory, I would argue that, in terms of its application to my study, its strengths outweigh its weaknesses. It emphasises the need for a comprehensive understanding of various systems that can influence recognition of CSE in males, rather than the responsibility resting with the individual victim, which has been an identified problem in relation to CSE generally.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a theoretical framework upon which to base this study. It has offered a rationale for the use of ecological systems theory as an overarching theory to demonstrate three points:

- ❖ that the barriers to disclosure of CSE by young males are multiply determined by factors concerning the individual traits in the young male, interpersonal relationships, and other contextual factors such as community, environment, and culture;
- ❖ that the impediments to identification of CSE in young males are also multiply determined by factors concerning the individual professional, interpersonal relationships, community, environment, and culture;
- ❖ that there can be simultaneous causes for non-disclosure and non-identification of CSE in young males, creating connections between the two phenomena.

I have demonstrated application of this theory by using Sorsoli *et al*'s three domains model as a practical framework, enabling examination of barriers to recognition within each of the systems (or domains) at play, as well as the interplay between these. The chapter concluded with a critique of ecological systems theory.

Application of ecological systems theory has demonstrated the complexities involved in the recognition of CSE in males and proven that, to have a full understanding of the multi-faceted nature of this phenomenon, requires a critical appreciation of each of the levels of influence. The overarching benefit of the theory is its ability to integrate all levels of human ecology, moving away from the traditional approach of pathologising the young male victim of CSE, rendering him responsible for navigating the social and structural systems that act as a barrier to his disclosure. In relation to practice, application of this theoretical framework should call for greater social responsibility to create safer places and more effective systems for young males to disclose their experiences of CSE. It should also aid the development of a repertoire of assessment instruments and multiple intervention strategies (Siporin, 1980). Finally, this should help place, and retain, CSE firmly in the child protection arena, providing a basis upon which the young male, the professional, and the wider social system, including policy development, can understand the position of responsibilities in relation to recognition of CSE in males and create effective change.

## Chapter four: Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

The method of secondary data collection for this study is outlined in section 2.2 of the literature review. The literature review, chapter two, highlighted that, despite an increase in research into child sexual exploitation (CSE) since the mid-1990s, significant gaps in knowledge, understanding and research specifically in relation to the sexual exploitation of young males still exist (Jago *et al.* 2011; Berelowitz *et al.* 2013; Brayley *et al.* 2014; McNaughton *et al.* 2014; Beckett *et al.* 2017). This study provides a unique contribution to the scholarly literature in this academic field by exploring the applicability of impediments to the recognition of CSA in young males to that of CSE as a particular form of CSA. The specific aim of this study has been to address the potential impediments to the recognition of the sexual exploitation of young males under the age of 18 by:

- ❖ Identifying inhibitors to disclosure by young males and potential solutions;
- ❖ Identifying impediments to identification by professionals and potential solutions;  
and
- ❖ Exploring the existence of any relationship between inhibitors to disclosure and impediments to identification.

The purpose, aim, methodology, ethics, and time frame were set out in a research protocol – see Appendix 4.

This chapter is composed of three sections. The first section examines the methodological framework and study design chosen. It begins by demonstrating how the aim and objectives of the research helped inform the study design and methodological approach best suited to this study, that of mixed methods. Both the theory and advantages and disadvantages of the mixed



methods approach are explored, before providing the practical detail of using both quantitative and qualitative methods within this study.

Section two deals with the ethical considerations involved in a study of this nature. This includes the principal ethical issues I encountered, particularly during the initial consideration of the research topic and at the stage of seeking ethical approval. I then explore the risks and benefits for all study participants, including myself as the researcher. An explanation as to how consent was sought from the different participant groups is provided.<sup>11</sup> How I dealt with other ethical issues of confidentiality, anonymity and data storage are explained, as is the process for dealing with disclosures during the fieldwork stage.

In section two I highlight the challenges and limitations I experienced from the commencement of this study, through the different stages, before providing my reflections on the research methodology and ending with concluding remarks.

## **Section one**

### **4.2 Study Design**

To deliver the best outcomes for this study, I believed it was critical to have the research issue explored from a number of perspectives, achieving a valuable range of data. This necessitated hearing directly from professionals working within the field of CSE, or related fields; from young males who had experienced CSE or had knowledge of it in their past or present social circles; and

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<sup>11</sup> When reference is made to 'all participant or respondent groups' this includes: respondents to the professional survey; professional interviewees; young male interviewees; respondents to the Young Life and Times survey.

from young people within the general public. This range of data sources, obtaining both qualitative and quantitative information, informed the research design of this study – that of a mixed methods approach.

#### **4.3 Mixed methods approach – the theory**

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) describe how mixed methods emerged in the 1980s as a third methodological movement in the social and behavioural sciences. It is defined as a means of integrating quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Creswell, 2003), which can be done concurrently or sequentially (Bowen *et al.* 2017). The work of Creswell (2003) became my primary focus in determining a methodological framework for this study. He conceptualised three questions to develop framework elements and questions in relation to knowledge, inquiry, and writing, namely:

- ❖ Philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge claims;
- ❖ General procedures of research which constitutes the strategies of inquiry utilised; and
- ❖ Detailed procedures of data collection, analysis, and writing (methods).

Using these three elements I was able to determine that adopting a mixed methods approach, obtaining both closed-ended quantitative data and open-ended qualitative data, would achieve both breadth and depth to this enquiry. This was balanced with my time availability (undertaking this study on a part-time basis) and accessing participants across the UK.

Creswell (2003) posited that researchers begin a study with certain assumptions, not only about how they will learn but also what they will learn throughout the study. Lincoln and Guba (2000) refer to these as ‘paradigms’, or as Crotty (1998) describes them – philosophical assumptions, epistemologies and ontologies. Given my immersion as a professional in the field of CSE for

almost two decades, and now as a researcher on the subject, I came to this study with three primary assumptions: firstly, that the sexual exploitation of young males is child abuse and, therefore, needs to be tackled; secondly, that the sexual exploitation of males is not being adequately identified or reported – an issue that needs to improve; thirdly, that young people and professionals have a vital contribution to make to our understanding of the barriers to recognition and how these can be eliminated.

As shown in Table 4.1 Creswell describes four schools of thought in relation to knowledge claims which were useful in developing my study framework. I focussed on two which, I believed, related most closely to this study, those of 'Constructivism' and 'Pragmatism'. I also make brief reference to the relevance of 'Advocacy/Participatory' to this study. I did not view 'Post positivism' to have the same relevance. Although it involves examination of causes that influence outcomes, which is pertinent to my study, it is more concerned with developing 'numeric measures of observation and studying the behaviour of individuals' which is not an element of this study. (Creswell, 2003, p.7).

**Table 4.1: Alternative knowledge claim positions (Creswell, 2003, p.6)**

<b>Post positivism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determination</li> <li>• Reductionism</li> <li>• Empirical observation and measurement</li> <li>• Theory verification</li> </ul>	<b>Constructivism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding</li> <li>• Multiple participant meanings</li> <li>• Social and historical construction</li> <li>• Theory generation</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy/Participatory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political</li> <li>• Empowerment issue-oriented</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Change-oriented</li> </ul>	<b>Pragmatism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequences of actions</li> <li>• Problem-centred</li> <li>• Pluralistic</li> <li>• Real-world practice oriented</li> </ul>

### *Constructivism*

The position of ‘constructivism’ assumes that individuals seek an understanding of the world in which they operate, developing subjective meanings and interpretations of their experiences. As a result, there will inevitably be a variation of views from the different participant groups within this study: young male and female survey participants; young male interviewees; and professionals (survey respondents and interviewees). Furthermore, as Creswell argues:

*...often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically...they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others...and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives. (Creswell, 2003, p.8).*

The relevance of this concept to this discourse is that it affects how individuals choose to act or what they choose not to do.

By using a qualitative method, it was my intention to understand views of participants by interviewing them personally. For question design for interviews and surveys, it was necessary to maintain broad questions to enable participants to construct their own meaning. In particular, the use of open-ended questions in the interview design, for professionals and young males, was to enable participants to express their views as fully as possible. As described by Patton (2002), the use of open-ended questions permitted me to understand the world as participants saw it, without pre-determining their responses. Rather than begin with a theory, as 'Post Positivism' does, 'Constructivism' allows the researcher to develop theory from the multiple meanings of individual experiences.

### *Advocacy/Participatory*

It was important for this study to refer to the 'Advocacy/Participatory' position referred to by Creswell (2003), having some potential relevance to it. This position was developed by researchers who felt the constructivist approach did not go far enough in terms of advocating for social change as part of a study – social change for those who were particularly marginalised. Some of these theoretical perspectives include 'queer theory' (Gamson and Moon, 2004); critical theory (Fay, 1993); and feminist theory (Olesen, 2000). The relevance of this position to my study was demonstrated in my attempts to provide a means by which young males could voice their experiences and opinions in relation to barriers to recognition of CSE in males, thereby, strengthening awareness of an insufficiently recognised issue.

## *Pragmatism*

The position of pragmatism derives from the work of Peirce (1905); James (1981); and Dewey (1917), (cited in Cherryholmes, 1992, p.13), the focus of which is on looking for solutions to presented problems. As a result, researchers tend to use ‘...*all approaches to understand the problem*’ (Creswell, 2003, p.11). This attempt to use various methods to find solutions provides the philosophical underpinning for a mixed methods approach. This provided what Creswell referred to as ‘*a theoretical lens that is reflective of social justice*’ (2003, p.12), leaving me free to choose the methods of research that were most applicable to the purpose.

Both positions of ‘constructivism’ and ‘pragmatism’ connect with the theoretical lens used in this study, that which acknowledges the social, historical, political, and other contextual systems involved in such a phenomenon as CSE (see chapter three – theoretical framework).

### *4.3.1 The benefits of the mixed methods approach*

There are several benefits to a mixed methods approach to research. The variation of data collected can help offset any biases inherent in any single method, leading to greater validity. One such bias can be the potential for pre-existing assumptions as a researcher influencing the data, as described above in 4.3. Creswell (2007) argues that quantitative findings do not provide a context, nor truly allow, for the voice of participants to be heard. Whilst qualitative methods may cancel out some of these weaknesses, one of its deficiencies is the potential influence of personal interpretations by the researcher. In addition, qualitative methods are more time intensive. Furthermore, because qualitative research usually involves relatively small numbers of participants, one could argue this limits the application of findings to a larger group. By using a mixed method approach I found that one method helped inform the other (Greene *et al.* 1989), for example, the criteria used to choose professionals for interview as described in 4.4.1 below. This is described as ‘sequential procedures’ allowing expansion on the responses in one method, i.e.

the survey, to the interview. Despite the time commitment afforded to using a mixed methods approach, one of its appeals was the structure of the quantitative element and the flexibility and degree of autonomy afforded by the qualitative element. In the findings (chapters six to nine) I analyse how the quantitative method used either converged or departed from the findings gained through the qualitative method.

I now move to consider my rationale for utilising each of the methodologies and target participant groups.

#### **4.4 Quantitative method**

Two different surveys were used to provide quantitative data: one for professionals and one for young people in the general public – see Appendices five and six. The professionals' survey was designed and distributed by myself as the researcher – discussed further in 4.4.1. Quantitative data from young people was elicited through placing questions in an existing survey platform known as the 'Young Life and Times' (YLT) survey – discussed further in 4.4.2. Both surveys also enabled the gathering of qualitative data. Choosing to conduct the two surveys was:

*...an appropriate and useful means of gathering information under three conditions: when the goals of the research call for quantitative data, when the information sought is reasonably specific and familiar to the respondents, and when the researcher themselves has considerable prior knowledge of particular problems and the range of responses likely to emerge. (Warwick and Lininger, 1975, p.109).*

The use of the surveys, as a self-report instrument, was a relatively cost effective and quick way to obtain large amounts of data from a significant number of people. The professionals' survey was administered to those who had some prior knowledge of, or experience of, working within the

area of child sexual exploitation. The YLT survey was administered to all eligible 16 year olds within the general public (in NI). As the researcher for this study, having prior knowledge of this issue helped inform appropriate design of the surveys and achieve relevant data.

#### **4.4.1 Professionals' survey**

##### *Design and process*

I designed the professionals' survey and information sheet – see Appendices five and seven.

The following definition was used in the information sheet to explain what was meant by CSE:

*Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. (SBNI, 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).<sup>12</sup>*

The professionals' survey consisted of four sections. The respondents' demographic data was sought in section A - the sector in which they were based and length of service in their current post. Section B sought their opinion and experience in relation to gender patterns of CSE: their experience of CSE in their current role; the prevalence of CSE amongst males compared to females; the main age range of young people affected by CSE; if/how the sexual exploitation differs for young males compared to females and if/how the impact differs for males compared to females. Section C focussed on potential barriers to disclosure for young males. This consisted of a pre-prescribed set of eight factors based on generic reasons for non-disclosure drawn from the literature. Respondents were asked to indicate if a factor was more of a reason for non-disclosure

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.safeguardingni.org/professionals>



for a male or female. They were then provided with a pre-determined list of 11 reasons that might inhibit disclosure of CSE by males, plus an 'other' option. Again, the reasons were drawn from research indicating specific reasons why young males are less likely than young females to disclose their experiences of being sexually exploited. The last section (D) focused on potential impediments to identification by professionals, using the same format described for barriers to disclosure.

Additional questions invited respondents to indicate if there were particular groups of young males less likely to disclose, and to give their opinion on what could be done to both encourage disclosure by young males and improve identification by professionals.

Both the professionals' survey and information sheet were piloted with three professionals to test the flow and understanding of the questions, and the length of time for completion so to inform potential respondents of this in the information sheet. The survey was a self-administered questionnaire, available in both electronic and paper form. Professionals and organisations approached to complete it were known for their potential knowledge/experience of the issue of CSE. They were from a range of professions across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and throughout the four nations of the UK.

In NI the survey was sent to a local collaborator in each of the two Health and Social Care Trusts.<sup>13</sup> Within these Trusts, the survey was disseminated to professionals working in, or having management responsibility in, the fields of:

- ❖ Child protection;
- ❖ Intensive support/adolescence;
- ❖ Looked after children and young people; and

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<sup>13</sup> Health and Social Care Trusts are the NI equivalent to Local Authorities.

❖ Leaving and after care/16 plus.

Other statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations within NI were also approached from my existing networks. These organisations included the Youth Justice Agency, Department of Education, Education Authority (specifically child protection support services), Youth Service, and the Police Service of NI. The voluntary and community organisations chosen to participate in the survey were those known to work with young males who may present as vulnerable.

Within England, Scotland and Wales the survey was sent to all Barnardo's Children's Services Managers whose services' remit included work with children and young people vulnerable to, or were experiencing, CSE. To achieve a wider reach within the four nations, the survey was also offered to professionals via the NWG for CSE.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout each of the four nations, a snowballing approach was used. Respondents were asked, as they completed the survey, to forward a blank survey to other professionals for whom they considered it relevant. The intention was to extend the reach further, and to move beyond existing networks. In total, the survey was sent directly from me to 64 professionals across the UK's four nations. A total of 91 surveys were returned; 90% via email and 10% via post. The demographics of respondents can be found in chapter five.

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<sup>14</sup> 'The NWG (formerly The National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People) is a charitable organisation formed as a UK network of over 10 000 practitioners who disseminate our information down through their services, to professionals working on the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and trafficking within the UK. The Network covers voluntary and statutory services and private companies working in this field'.

### *Coding and analysis*

To analyse the quantitative data from the professionals' survey I developed a database on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), inputting all the questions. I set up a coding system for the responses. This consisted of 128 variables. The majority of codes were pre-existing, based on the survey questions and pre-determined responses. However, some new codes were created as they emerged from the data, examples of which included: a lower and upper age at which professionals believed males and females were sexually exploited (Question 3); a 'yes and no' response regarding whether the ways in which CSE happens differs between males and females (Question 4); a 'yes and no' response as to whether the impact of CSE differs between the two genders (Question 5). In addition to pre-determined coding for the rating of each prescribed barrier to disclosure (Question 7), new coding was developed to show the most to least frequently chosen barrier. The same new coding was developed in relation to the most to least frequently chosen impediment to identification (Question 11).

All data deriving from the professional surveys was inputted onto this SPSS database as and when I received the completed surveys. This system enabled greater statistical and thematic analysis showing where inhibitors to one might reinforce inhibitors of the other, from the perspectives of professionals.

As this was a mixed methods study, a decision was made to restrict the statistics being used to run frequencies for each variable. However, the data collected does allow for further analysis in future work, including crosstabulations and statistical tests to assess the significance of variations in the data.

The professionals' survey contained three open-ended questions. Seven further questions invited either additional comments to pre-determined options or requested reasons for given responses.

The amount of free text provided in each of these questions was sufficiently manageable to enable it to be manually coded and analysed by myself.

#### *4.4.2 Young peoples' survey*

##### *Design and process*

This method of data collection was a series of questions placed in the ARK Young Life and Times Survey (YLT) 2015, in NI. The questions I placed in the survey were jointly funded by Barnardo's NI (my employer at the time) and the Police Service of NI. This method was chosen because I, as the researcher based in NI, was familiar with this survey as providing a means of accessing the views of some young people within the general public.

YLT is an existing survey platform, a constituent part of ARK, providing access to social and political information in NI. ARK is a joint resource between the two NI universities: Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. It is considered that the opinions of young people are often ignored when decisions are made about many of the issues involving them (Berliner and Conte, 1990; Warrington, 2010; Warrington, 2013; Lansdown, 2014; Beckett *et al.* 2015). Thus, the aim of the YLT survey is to record the views of all eligible 16 year olds in NI on a range of issues such as community relations, health, politics, sectarianism, and education. Its single goal is to make social science information on NI available to the widest possible audience, believing knowledge-based policy is key to the success of NI's devolved legislative assembly.

My specific aim of placing questions in this survey was to provide an insight into the opinions of young people, both male and female and not identified as at specific risk of CSE, in relation to the recognition of male CSE. The focus was upon their awareness of male CSE, gender differences in relation to the reporting of it, the impact of it, and opinions on professionals' response to it.

A definition of CSE was provided to recipients of the YLT survey; one that could be understood by most 16 year olds. I constructed this from existing definitions.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that, to maintain simplicity, this definition only covered gain for the young person, and excluded gain for the perpetrator as is included in other definitions. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

*Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of abuse in which children or young people are tricked, bribed, or persuaded to take part in sexual activity in return for something they want or need. This can happen online or offline. The things young people might be given in return can include attention, affection, food, cigarettes, money drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. The sexual activity might include sending or viewing sexual images, sexual conversations, or some kind of physical sexual contact. The person getting the young person to do this may be an adult or someone of a similar age to them.*

It is interesting to consider if including a reference to 'perpetrator gain' may have produced any differentiation in responses from respondents to the YLT survey. It is likely that its exclusion made little or no difference to responses. Alternatively, by not including 'perpetrator gain', and therefore, giving an incomplete picture of how CSE is defined, this may have impacted on some respondents' understanding and subsequent response to the survey questions. It is feasible that its inclusion may have prompted some respondents to recall their own or others' experience of CSE or affected their view of the issue. With hindsight, the inclusion of 'perpetrator gain' probably would not have complicated the issue and might have added additional depth to the data.

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<sup>15</sup> The 2009 statutory guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation* derived from the NWG for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People; and, SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI.

As the researcher, I designed the questions to be included in the survey. There were 12 questions in total. The number of questions submitted was determined by funding available. Nine of these were accompanied with a set of predetermined responses from which respondents were asked to select their answers. Some questions included an 'other' option should the predetermined options not apply. Three questions gave respondents the opportunity to provide free text.

As an introduction to the topic, respondents were asked three questions regarding their knowledge of CSE: the degree of their knowledge; who they believed it happens to in relation to males and females; and the ages of any males when it first happened to them (if they knew of any). In relation to the reporting of CSE, respondents were asked four questions: to compare how difficult they thought it was for young males and females to report experiences of CSE; how likely they would be to report an experience of this; if they did report it, to whom would they report; and what would prevent them from reporting. The term 'reporting' was not explicitly defined in this question. However, the question as to who they would report to, suggested this could be done either officially or informally to family or friends.

Turning to the identification of young males as victims of CSE, participants were asked if they thought professionals were likely to view sexual exploitation more seriously when it happens to young males or young females. For those respondents who thought professionals were more likely to view the sexual exploitation of females more seriously, they were given four options as to their reasons. Those respondents who thought professionals viewed CSE more seriously for males, equally serious for males and females, or did not know, were asked to skip the following question that asked for reasons why.

Towards the end of the survey respondents were asked to name three things each that they thought would help young men and young women, separately, to report sexual exploitation,

followed by an opportunity to say anything additional about the sexual exploitation of their own gender.

The administration of the mail out for the YLT survey was undertaken by an independent mailing company on behalf of ARK. An initial letter was sent in September 2015 to all eligible 16 year olds in NI which introduced the survey.<sup>16</sup> The entire survey consisted of seven topics, of which CSE was one.<sup>17</sup> Recipients were advised of a draw for five prizes of £100 to which all respondents were eligible. As an additional incentive, recipients were informed that the first 100 online entries would receive a £10 shopping voucher. The overall sample of eligible respondents was 3753.<sup>18</sup> The survey achieved a 31 per cent response rate, yielding a total of 1,158 responses.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 4.2: Mode of YLT survey completion by survey version**

	<i><b>N</b></i>	<i><b>%</b></i>
<i>Surveys sent out</i>	3,853	100
<i>Addressee unknown/return to sender</i>	101	3
<i>Base</i>	3,752	97
<i>Paper</i>	979	26
<i>Online</i>	179	5
<i>Total/response rate</i>	1,158	31

#### **Technical notes (Young Life and Times Survey, 2015)**

<sup>16</sup> The survey sample includes all 16 year olds with February and March birthdays.

<sup>17</sup> The other topics included: young carers; community relations; sports and physical activities; school experiences.

<sup>18</sup> 3,853 names of eligible respondents were on the database of child benefit recipients; however, 101 letters or surveys were returned because the addressee had moved or was unknown at the address.

<sup>19</sup> 42% male; 58% female; 58% lived in urban setting; 42% lived in rural setting.

ARK coded all responses into an SPSS database which was subsequently analysed by myself. I then entered responses from the free text onto NVivo for further analysis (see chapters six to nine).

### *Coding and analysis*

ARK coded all responses into an SPSS database which was provided to me and subsequently analysed by myself. The majority of free text in response to the latter two questions in the YLT survey where respondents were asked: to name three things they thought would help young males and females to report CSE; and if there was anything else they would like to say about the sexual exploitation of their own gender. I then inputted this free text onto NVivo, a computer data analysis programme that enables the organising and analysis of qualitative data, for further analysis under the three primary categories within the survey:

- ❖ Knowledge;
- ❖ Reporting of the sexual exploitation of young males;
- ❖ Identification of the sexual exploitation of young males.

I used word frequencies to determine some of the most significant issues named by young males and young females, in relation to their own gender and the opposite gender. Some of the most frequent words emerging included: support, anonymity, stigma, shame, weak, blame, school.

The coding of respondent's narratives, by gender, can be viewed in Appendix 8. The results of the YLT survey can be viewed in chapter five, and analysis of the findings are embedded within chapters six to nine.



## 4.5 Qualitative method

The qualitative element of this study consisted of two different sets of interviews – one with professionals and one with young males. In section 4.3 of this chapter I highlighted the benefits of open-ended and broad questions forming the separate semi-structured interview schedules. My existing knowledge of this subject was sufficient to allow me to develop these questions in advance for both types of interview. Rosenthal (2016) refers to six primary kinds of open-ended questions, namely:

- ❖ Experience or behaviour;
- ❖ Sensory;
- ❖ Opinion or values;
- ❖ Knowledge;
- ❖ Feeling;
- ❖ Background or demographic.

I utilised several of these questions in the construction of the interview questions with both cohorts, with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences – past and present; opinions or values to elicit their understanding of the issue and of what their experience had been, and factual knowledge about the subject matter.

### 4.5.1 Interviews with professionals

Respondents to the professionals' survey were asked to indicate if they would be agreeable to be considered for interview, of which a small sample would be undertaken. By couching it in these terms I was implying that they may not be chosen for interview. I did not explicitly state I would advise them if they were not chosen. Sixty per cent (n=55) of respondents agreed to be interviewed and 40% (n=36) declined. The target number of professionals to be interviewed was

15-25, therefore allowing a reasonable sample from the 55 who agreed to it. Of those who agreed to be interviewed, the decision on whether to interview them was based on two factors:

- ❖ Comments made in the survey which required further exploration;
- ❖ Those who illustrated a depth of knowledge on the issue.

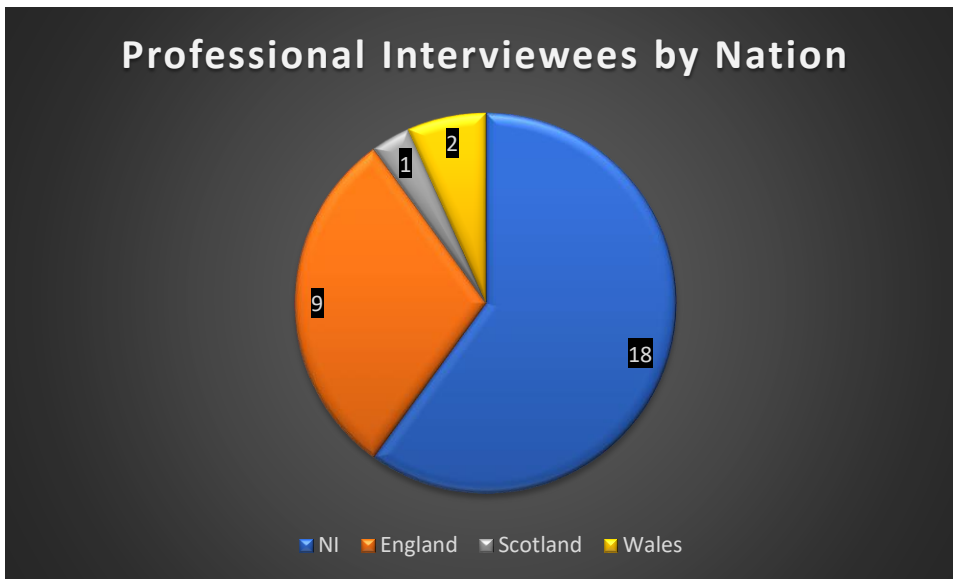
These criteria were applied by reviewing the respective surveys of those who agreed to interview to ascertain if it was likely that they had further information requiring exploration. Of the 55 respondents who agreed to be considered for interview, 44 appeared to fit the criteria for interview. From this number, a total of 29 interviews were conducted with 30 professionals,<sup>20</sup> chosen to ensure contributions from across a range of professionals within the statutory and voluntary/community sectors and inclusive of all four nations within the UK. It was also based on the time I had available for interviews.

The demographics of professional interviewees by nation and sector are presented below.

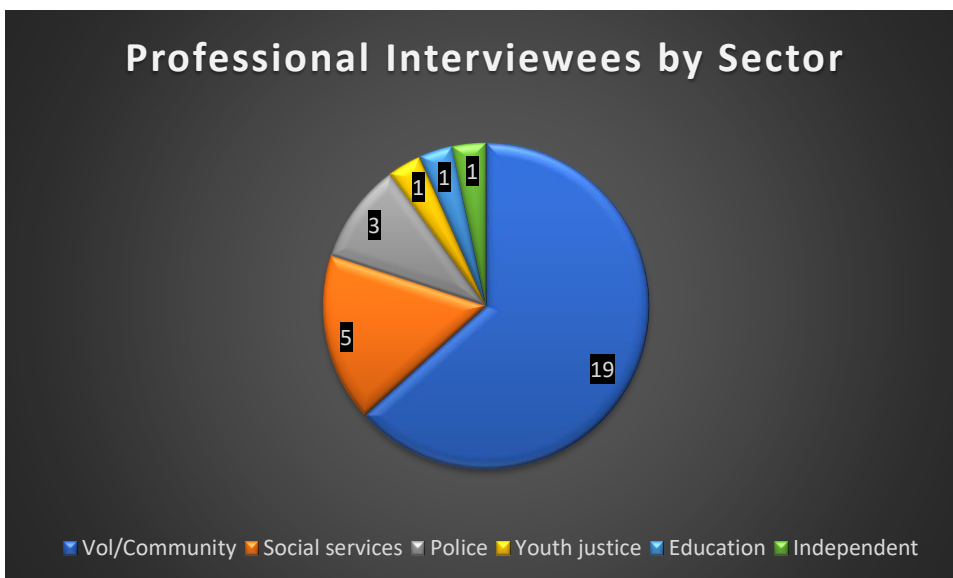
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<sup>20</sup> One interview included two professionals.

**Figure 4.1: Number of professional interviewees by nation**



**Figure 4.2: Number of professional interviewees by sector**



### *Design and process*

This study began with the hypothesis that the existence of certain 'issues' inhibits both the identification of CSE in young males by professionals and the disclosure of CSE by young males. The aim was to test this overarching theory and various propositions within it. As noted earlier, the creation of themes for both surveys and both sets of interviews were informed by my existing knowledge and pre-existing research in the field of CSE, thus permitting comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

The interview schedule and information sheet for professionals - see Appendices 9 and 10 - were subject to piloting prior to use. This was necessary to check the flow and understanding of the questions, and the length of time for completion. It was incumbent upon me to be able to advise potential participants how long completion would take for them to make an informed decision regarding participation. The same definition of CSE was used in this information sheet as that for the professionals' survey.

The semi-structured interviews with professionals were conducted by telephone or face to face, at a time/location convenient to them. Fourteen were conducted by telephone, 13 of which were outside of NI, my country of residence. Fifteen were conducted in person. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, depending on the contribution of the interviewee.

During interviews with professionals, questions were asked in essentially the same order; however, the design of open-ended questions allowed for a deeper level of enquiry, and therefore, I was able to supplement the questions with planned or unplanned probes. As noted previously, professionals chosen to be interviewed had already demonstrated, in the survey response, a certain depth of knowledge about the issue, leading to my assumption they would have something of significance to say on the matter.

Interviewees were asked about forms of CSE of which they were aware and how this differed between young males and females. They were then asked to comment on the impact of CSE on young males and if/how this differed from the impact on young females. Two primary areas of questioning related specifically to recognition. Interviewees were asked if they thought young males were more or less likely than females to disclose sexual exploitation, and, if so, what factors created this difference. If they believed males were less likely to disclose, they were asked about barriers to this. Interviewees were asked, if possible, to share anonymous case studies and their opinion as to what would aid disclosure.

In relation to identification of CSE in males, interviewees were asked how it is identified and what they considered to be inhibitors to this, if any. Taking this a step further, they were asked what happens after identification and if, overall, the response differs to that of young females or the age of the male.

I was interested to learn about who responds to the issue and what the positives and inadequacies in response were, the use of legislation and policies/procedures, and any differentiation in application between young males and females. Interviewees were invited to speak about the challenges in responding to CSE in males and asked to consider what would aid better identification and response.

To move beyond the problems, it was important to ascertain from professionals, what they considered to be the needs of males in relation to CSE, how these can be best met, and examples of good practice, upon which other practice could be built.

Rosenthal (2016) stated that the quality of the data is reflected in the quality of the interview questions. The intention, in this study, was to produce interview questions which built upon the professionals' survey questions. After conducting the first two interviews, several of the interview questions appeared too similar to some of the survey questions. This had the potential to reduce the amount of additional fresh data gained from professional interviewees. However, the semi-structured nature of the interview permitted my utilisation of follow up questions to allow a deeper enquiry.

All interviews were tape-recorded, where permission was granted, and transcribed verbatim by myself as the researcher, before coding and analysis.<sup>21</sup>

### *Coding and analysis*

Once transcribed, I read and manually coded each of the printed transcripts in the first instance, initially based on the areas of questioning. It was my experience that manual coding allowed me, as a novice researcher, researching such a sensitive subject area, to remain closer to the data. Each interview was then also uploaded to NVivo which helped manageability and viewing of the data. This significantly complemented the initial manual coding.

Within NVivo I created pre-determined nodes for each of the areas of questioning; several examples of these included: (a) level of knowledge/experience of CSE; (b) forms of CSE; (c) groups of young males at particular risk; (d) gender differentiation regarding impact; (e) stereotypical assumptions; (f) feelings of males inhibiting disclosure. Several examples of child nodes relating to pre-determined nodes (a), (b) and (c) above included: As a result of the semi-

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<sup>21</sup> All except one interviewee (a professional) gave consent for their interview to be recorded. However, they did permit me to take written notes. This interview was conducted over the telephone; therefore, I believe, any disruption to the interview due to note-taking during it, was minimized.

structured nature of professionals' interviews the majority of child nodes, created to show responses, were not pre-existing, but rather, emerged from the data. Several examples of child nodes relating to nodes (a), (b), and (c) above included: (a) minimal knowledge and experience of CSE amongst males; experience mostly concerning CSE amongst females; experience of working with both males and females affected by CSE; (b) LGBTQ young males; CSE through use of technologies; CSE through gaming; (c) males with learning difficulties; those involved in crime; those from BME communities.

Given the semi-structured nature of the professionals' interview I expected the emergence of new nodes and child nodes from the data. Two examples of new nodes created as they emerged from the data were: (a) youth offending and (b) influences of paramilitary gangs. Within these nodes, examples of new child nodes included: (a) manifestation of trauma; misinterpretation of behaviour; focus on males as perpetrators of crime; (b) fear; control; status; gains; coercion; normalisation.

#### *4.5.2 Interviews with young males*

The recruitment of young males for interview was dependent upon professional participants in the study initially identifying them, and later, assessing risk and needs, obtaining consents, and facilitating engagement. Section 4.7 reflects the ethical considerations given to the direct inclusion of young males in this study, concluding that their voices were imperative to the authenticity of this research. The targeted number of interviews with young males was between eight and ten. The small number was decided upon for five reasons:

- ❖ The sensitivity of the subject matter;
- ❖ The anticipated limited number available, based on the already low numbers of males identified as at risk of CSE;
- ❖ The anticipated low number who may agree to be interviewed;

- ❖ The inclusion and exclusion criteria for interviewing young males as specified below; and
- ❖ The reliance upon gatekeepers to identify and co-ordinate these interviews.

Ethical considerations were the basis of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for involving young males. The inclusion criteria were that the young male had to:

- ❖ Be aged 14-25 years;
- ❖ Have currently or previously accessed support from a CSE service, a statutory service, or another voluntary/community service in relation to CSE;
- ❖ Have identified concerns of CSE for them or deemed to have knowledge of male CSE within their social circles, past or present; and
- ❖ Be risk assessed by a support worker known to him.

The rationale for choosing this specific age group is explained in sub-section 4.7.2 below.

The exclusion criteria were minimal, specifying that the young male should not:

- ❖ Be involved in any current legal investigation in relation to a current abuse case
- ❖ Be in current receipt of treatment.<sup>22</sup>

This latter criterion was added later as an additional requirement by the Office for Research Ethics Committees Northern Ireland (ORECNI), whose responsibility it was to provide full ethical approval for this research to be undertaken with health and social care staff and young people in NI. The Committee required ‘a mechanism should be put in place to ensure young people receiving active treatment are not invited to take part’. Although ORECNI approvals did not have applicability to the rest of the UK, to ensure consistency of good and ethical practice throughout this study, I chose to apply this criterion to all potential young male interviewees.

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<sup>22</sup> Treatment referred to clinical treatment by a therapist and not therapeutic support in the broadest sense.



Ten males were interviewed, aged between 14 and 33 years. Although the original upper age had been set at 25 years, one male, aged 33, expressed his wish, through his support worker, to participate and speak of his experiences of CSE from the age of 14; this was agreed.<sup>23</sup> The remainder of the males were under the age of 25. Seven of the males were from England, facilitated by the police (two young males) and the voluntary sector (five young males). The other three young males were from NI, facilitated by the voluntary sector. The priority and focus for these interviews were on achieving in-depth information rather than breadth of engagement.

Each young male was informed that a young person's summary of the research would be made available to them at the completion of the research. Each one received a £10 voucher as a thank you for their participation; however, they were not informed about this in advance, so that it did not become an influencing factor in their decision as to whether to participate.

### *Design and process*

The information sheet and consent form for young males were also subject to piloting to ensure appropriateness of language and that sensitivities to the subject matter were addressed. They were piloted with four young people, aged 15-17 years. Two of these young people were service users of a CSE service and two were non-service users. Suggestions were minimal, recorded in my notes and amendments made accordingly. This piloting took place prior to ethical approval as I wanted to ensure suggested amendments were made to the documents after consultation with young people and prior to seeking ethical approval. The piloting of the interview questions with young males did not take place purposely because the questions related to the vignettes I developed (discussed below). The vignettes contained information which was sensitive and of a sexual nature which, in my opinion, rendered them unsafe and inappropriate to pilot without

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<sup>23</sup> The decision to interview a male aged 33 was made in consultation with my academic supervisors.

ethical approval. In retrospect, however, the interview questions could have been piloted safely, post ethical approval.

All young males were interviewed in person, given the sensitivity of the subject matter and to help ensure their well-being during interview. It was anticipated interviews would last between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the contribution of the participant; all lasted between 45 minutes to just over one hour. All interviews were held at a time/location convenient to each young male.

Questions were primarily based on the participant's knowledge of the sexual exploitation of young males, his opinions, and feelings about this – see Appendix 11. The degree to which experience was discussed depended on whether each individual wished to share their personal experiences or reflect on the experiences of other males through a third person lens; vignettes were constructed for this purpose.

A study specific protocol was produced to address potential distress of the young male during interview given the sensitive nature of the topic – see Appendix 12. The aim of this protocol was to minimise any intrusion, embarrassment, coercion, anxiety, or distress for research participants. Despite being a novice researcher, I was experienced in working in an environment with sensitive issues and with vulnerable groups, including males who have experienced CSE. The safeguards put in place helped minimise the potential for distress. These included:

- ❖ Young males not being directly asked to speak about their own experiences of abuse;
- ❖ The welfare of the young male interviewees remaining the paramount consideration at all times;
- ❖ Enabling the young male to have a supporter present if desired;
- ❖ Remaining alert to signs of potential distress or discomfort throughout contact with a participant, and appropriate action taken should this occur;

- ❖ Ensuring supports for young males were on hand during all interviews;
- ❖ Debriefing with young male interviewees and ensuring follow up support was available.

No young male interviewee was asked directly to speak about his own experiences; however, nine out of the ten chose to do so, after I introduced a vignette (discussed below). Except for the youngest interviewee (aged 14), all other young males choose not to avail of the option of having their support worker present in the room with them. The young male who did choose to have his worker present, did so, not through distress or anxiety, but expressly because he wanted his worker to hear about the progress he had made and what he had learned since receiving support.

### *The use of vignettes*

Vignettes are stories about individuals or situations generated from a range of sources, including previous research findings or experience. The important factor is that the stories refer to issues relevant to the study in terms of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, with the intention to elicit responses to typical scenarios (Barter and Renold, 1999; Renold, 2002; Bolt *et al.* 2014). My rationale for using this technique was, as Hughes argues, a way in which participants are offered the time and space to provide a '*discursive interpretation within the context of a vignette*' (Hughes, 1998, p.383). The aim, in this study, was to provide an opportunity for young males, if they did not wish to discuss their own experiences, to respond to issues in the vignettes, in a depersonalised, third-party manner which could be less threatening. This approach had the potential to enable young males to unpack and explore their own personal beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes; especially useful for young males who might feel more uncomfortable than females in discussing their experiences (Renold, 2002).

Two previous examples of the successful utilisation of vignettes within CSE and CSA specific research were 'Not a World Away' (Beckett, 2011) and the Making Noise Project (Warrington *et*

*al.* 2017). The former was used in a study to ascertain the nature and scope of CSE in NI; the latter, to help understand participants' experiences of recognition of CSA in family environments with a view to improving processes surrounding it. In both examples, vignettes were used to allow participants to offer informed comment via third-party scenarios if they chose not to share their own personal experiences. One supervisor of my study was involved in both pieces of research, therefore, allowing for discussion as to how vignettes might work.

### *Development and administration of the vignettes*

Seven distinct vignettes were produced and gained ethical approval as part of the young male's interview schedule, prior to their use in interview. The scenarios were based on a combination of my experience working in the field of CSE and some of the most recent research at the time on boys and young men (Brayley *et al.* 2014; Cockbain *et al.* 2014). As posited by Barter and Renold (1999), the skill in constructing vignettes was to achieve sufficient context for participants to understand the situation while, at the same time, having a degree of vagueness that encouraged them to respond with additional information. Each vignette categorised the young male as the victim. The following scenarios were included:

- ❖ Online – a male perpetrator befriending a young male online;
- ❖ Exchange of sex in return for goods; the gender of perpetrator unspecified;
- ❖ Female perpetration of a young male;
- ❖ Homelessness - male perpetrator offering a young male somewhere to stay in return for sex;
- ❖ House party – where male perpetrators exploit young males whilst under the influence of alcohol;
- ❖ Criminal activity – coercion into criminal activity, followed by sexual exploitation by male and female perpetrators;

- ❖ Homosexuality – a young male questioning his sexual identity, going onto gay internet sites to seek support and exploited by a male perpetrator.

The same eight questions were produced for each of the scenarios, necessitating name changes only. The choice of vignette/s to be used with each young male was determined after my consultation with his support worker. The rationale for this was to avoid use of a scenario that was too similar to the young male's experiences, yet one to which he could relate.

Each young male interviewee was told in advance that approximately two scenarios would be shared with him. The number used depended on the level of participation of the young male during interview; the greater their level of engagement, the more opportunity there was to share more than one scenario. I was cognisant of striking a balance between ensuring the participant did not tire of the one scenario but maintained his interest, whilst not confusing him with too many different vignettes. One of the benefits of using more than one vignette is that it can explore various issues in respect of age, gender of perpetrator, sexual identity and different context including homelessness, crime, and the concept of exchange as well as perceived levels of responsibility. During interviews I used one vignette with nine of the young males, because they progressed to speaking about their own experiences after some initial questions based on the vignette. For the tenth young male I used two different vignettes; he chose not to speak about his personal experience as such but did speak about some of the manifestations of it.

### *Benefits and limitations of using vignettes*

Given the emphasis placed on the use of this technique, within this study, it was important to consider both the benefits and limitations of its use. One of the criticisms levelled at the use of vignettes, highlighted by authors such as Hughes (1998) and Finch (1987), is the potential for respondents to be more detached from the situations than they might be in real life and, therefore, responding differently. What is clearly omitted from the vignette situation is the interaction and

feedback that would happen in real life. It is argued that, in real life '*... people are right in 'the thick of things' ...whereas they are always detached or detachable from stories they read*' (Parkinson and Manstead, 1993, p.310).

If participants provide their own accounts, it could be argued that richer descriptions of their own experiences are achieved. I acknowledged this as one potential limitation in using this method within my study; however, nine of the ten young male interviewees did decide to talk about their own experiences. I also acknowledged the potential, as is human nature, of people responding in accordance with what they feel should happen or what they should think rather than what does happen or what they genuinely think. However, I would argue many research methods may have this inherent potential.

Parkinson and Manstead (1993) warn the emotions that can potentially be created in the use of a vignette cannot be applied to real life experiences. Whilst I agree any emotion aroused by narrative of the vignette may not replace the '*...real-time causation of emotion*' (Parkinson and Manstead, 1993, p.301), my experience in this study was that the young male interviewees were very articulate and expressive in their accounts. The sensitive nature of the subject matter, combined with the fact that all young male participants were chosen based on their experience or knowledge of the subject, it could be argued the divide between real life and vignettes in this study was minimised.

Hughes (1998) highlights the potential of participants taking the researcher in a different direction while using of vignettes. Whilst this may be construed as a negative, I would suggest it also has the benefit of enhancing the discourse as well as providing a greater focus for the interview, for both the researcher and the participant. This was demonstrated by one young male interviewee

where he raised the subject of CSE within paramilitary controlled communities, thus bringing new and relevant data to the discourse.

Two other potential problems were presented in my use of the vignette technique – the use of written narrative posing a problem for participants with reading difficulties and the use of vocabulary. To overcome any reading challenges, it was possible for the scenario to be read to the young male, which each young male was content for me to do. This also provided the opportunity for me to read it in a way that demonstrated an absence of embarrassment whilst creating an openness to discuss the issue.

Aware that young males may not understand the behaviours described in the term ‘sexual exploitation’ or given they may have felt uncomfortable or resistant to the term, it was not used with any young male under the age of 18 unless they decided to use it themselves. It was important to frame the issue using terms that were familiar, understandable, and inoffensive. Discussions were, therefore, framed around a range of the behaviours/scenarios as described in their information documentation. This still enabled the substantive issues to be addressed.

From a positive stance, researchers such as Rahman (1996), Neff (1979), and Finch (1987) argue, if vignettes have been constructed from hypothetical stories where characters and the situations appear real and relevant to the participant, this can reduce the potential for them to seem ‘make believe’ (Neff, 1979, p.109). The story lines for the vignettes were chosen from my experience, knowledge, and observations of working in the field of CSE for 13 years, and from previous research. For some participants it can be liberating and enabling for them to hear of other situations experienced by other young people. Initial use of a vignette can enable them to gradually introduce their own experiences, if they so wish, helping them experience greater control over the interaction with the researcher. At the same time, by using vignettes, I was also

mindful of two other issues: not to give the young male the message I did not want to hear about, or was unable to listen to, their own experiences; and the potential that hearing these real-life situations could cause distress for the young male interviewee. I was confident my experience and skills in working in the field of CSE would enable me to deal with this, as was my intention that, should the young male show sufficient openness, and I measured the situation to warrant this, his feelings were explored.

### *Coding and analysis*

All young male interviews were tape-recorded, with consent gained to do so, and transcribed verbatim by myself as the researcher, before coding and analysis. Similar to the process used with the professionals' interviews, once transcribed, I read and manually coded each of the printed transcripts in the first instance, initially based on the areas of questioning. Each interview was then also uploaded to NVivo which helped manageability and viewing of the data.

As stated above, nine of the then young male interviewees chose to speak about their own personal experiences following the use of one vignette. As a consequence, whilst it was possible to create some pre-determined nodes based on the questions aligned to the vignettes, given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, and the degree to which most of the young males spoke about their own experiences, new nodes emerged from the data. Several examples of pre-determined nodes included: (a) does CSE happen to males; (b) thoughts and feelings of a young male who is sexually exploited; (c) should young male victims disclose; (d) barriers to disclosure; (e) differentiation in response to male and female victims. Several examples of child nodes relating to pre-determined nodes (a), (b), and (c) above included: (a) yes it happens to males; people do not think it happens to males; (b) shame; guilt; that it is normal; lack of choice; (c) yes he should disclose; he should not disclose because no-one will believe him; people do not believe it happens to males.



Three examples of nodes created as they emerged from the data were: (a) protection of self and others; (b) influences of paramilitary gangs; (c) values within different cultures. Within these new nodes, child nodes created included: (a) survival; expectation of others; self-expectation; role of masculinity; (b) control; status; gains; coercion; normalisation; fear; protection of others; (c) homophobia; blame; norms; BME.

The creation of pre-determined and new nodes emerging from the data from interviews with both professional and young males, demonstrated to me that coding does not simply rely on pre-meditation but is a '*reflexive and reflective activity*' (Basil, 2003, p.149).

#### **4.6 Reflections on research methodology**

As discussed above, whilst there were advantages to my familiarity with the subject area, I did not want this to narrow the focus of my methodological exploration and decision. From commencement of this study I was cognisant of the potential for my own experiences, working in the field of CSE, to influence the design of methods used, as well as my engagement with participants and my interpretation and reporting of the research findings. With regards to the construction of the surveys for professionals and young people, I was mindful that my knowledge helped shape the pre-determined responses, albeit potential valid responses. Whilst I acknowledge my influence in the design of the possible responses, this was offset against the availability of 'other' options and the opportunity for respondents to provide free text. In my opinion, particularly in relation to interviews, and especially with regards young male interviewees, I believe participants' awareness of my familiarity with the subject area enabled them to be more forthcoming in their responses.

Within my work role, having lobbied for over a decade for improvements to the recognition of child sexual exploitation, and experienced some resistance, I assumed even greater challenges in highlighting the lack of recognition of males as victims of CSE. With this assumption, it harnessed my determination to hear, if possible, from young males, in order to reflect the lived reality for them as victims of CSE.

As acknowledged in chapter four, the methodology, there were limitations in the approach taken to the analysis of both surveys. Statistical tests to assess the significance of variations in the data were not conducted. The collection of quantitative data through the surveys was one element of this study and as such, taking a multi-method approach, I was not seeking to establish statistically significant patterns. Instead, a descriptive analysis was undertaken using frequencies. Although several crosstabs were also run on some of the variables within the professionals' survey, these were not utilised within the study, mainly as a result of time constraints in writing up as well as word count limitations. The collection and existence of this data, however, does allow for statistical analysis and crosstabs to be run for future research papers based on this study.

## **Section two**

### **4.7 Ethical considerations**

As a study involving human subjects and a sensitive topic of investigation, strict ethical procedures had to be followed. The ethical protocol followed in the research was developed in accordance with the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care in NI and Barnardo's Statement of Ethical Research Practice. The research received full ethical approval from ORECNI, and the two Health and Social Care Trust (HSC)<sup>24</sup> Research and Development

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<sup>24</sup> Health and Social Care Trusts are the NI equivalent to Local Authorities.

Offices chosen to participate in the research; the South Eastern and Northern Trusts. During this process an application also had to be made to Research Gateway in NI, where Executive Directors of the Health and Social Care Board granted Governance approval.<sup>25</sup> (For evidence of approvals see Appendices 13 to 18).

The study also received ethical approval from the Institute of Applied Social Research Ethics Committee (IASREC); University Research Ethics Committee (UREC); and Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee (BREC). The research was overseen by supervisors within the Professional Doctorate programme at the University of Bedfordshire. Ethics remained a living issue for the duration of this study and was kept under review with my supervisors throughout. The ethical considerations for my study will be discussed in this section.

#### *4.7.1 Assessing risks, needs and benefits*

##### *For professionals*

From the outset it was anticipated the benefits to be gained from participation in the research would offset the time commitment required from professionals completing a survey and/or taking part in an interview. To minimise any potential burden in terms of the impact on their time and already busy schedules I ensured the following:

- ❖ Participants were fully briefed in advance of what was requested of them;
- ❖ I worked around their schedules as much as possible;
- ❖ Instructions were clear and only pertinent questions were asked;
- ❖ Participants had my contact details regarding any questions or concerns.

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<sup>25</sup> ORECNI approval was not applicable to England, Scotland and Wales; however, ethical approval from the University of Bedfordshire and Barnardo's Ethics Committees was applicable to these nations.

I also acknowledged the onus placed on professionals in the recruitment of young males to be interviewed, however, the small number of young males targeted helped minimise this burden, as did the voluntary nature of this facilitation role.

I was conscious not to assume that, because professionals may be used to dealing with the issue of CSE in their daily work, they would not be adversely affected by research participation, either by way of the subject or in terms of reflecting upon their own practice. Through experience in working in the field of CSE, many professionals had already expressed to me varying levels of embarrassment and regret at, in their view, previously failing to identify and respond to males affected by CSE. I was, therefore, particularly vigilant as to any potential negative impact on them and any degree of self-blame that may come to the fore. This was easier to determine when interviews were conducted face to face; less so when interviews were conducted via the telephone or via surveys.

The provision of the follow up information sheets, post survey and interview, were aimed at giving professionals a source of support – see Appendices 19 and 20. The post survey follow up sheet advised help could be sought by contacting the support services within their local organisation. The post interview sheet suggested support could be accessed by contacting me, at which point this would be organised. The professional was also provided with the contact details of my supervisor who they were advised to contact should they feel unhappy about how they had been treated while taking part in the research.

I predicted that participation in the survey and interview might increase or reinforce practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the issue of CSE amongst young males and, therefore, equip them to better identify risks for young males in their care. Unsolicited feedback from some professional interviewees demonstrated the survey alone had offered them the opportunity to think more about the issue and their own responses to males at risk of CSE.

### *For young male interviewees*

From the outset, it was my intention to seek permission to involve young males who had experience of CSE. As stated in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child it is important for children and young people to have their views and opinions heard and to have their say on matters that concern them. The involvement of young males in this study was predicated upon this principle whilst also viewing it as a potential opportunity for them to turn what has been a negative experience into a positive one.

I recognised that directly involving young people in research of this nature was not without risks and a critical dilemma was ever present, that of balancing their need to be protected from re-traumatisation with their rights to be consulted on matters affecting them and that might impact their future and that of their counterparts. It is important to state that the comparison between the levels of distress felt during research participation and daily life distress is not made (Newman and Kaloupek, 2004). There is a difference between the traumatic sexually exploitative experiences of the young male interviewees in my study and their participation in the study. That difference involves the lack of control they may have had within the sexually exploitative situation, compared to the control they hopefully experienced through participation in this research, especially their ability to terminate participation at any stage. I believe it is the research approach which ultimately determines whether participation in the research process is empowering or disempowering. At all times the research objectives of this study remained secondary to achieving safety for all participants. Here I provide a brief reminder that all names used for young male interviewees involved in this study have been removed and replaced with pseudonyms.

Given the particular vulnerabilities of this group of young males, I was conscious that their level of vulnerability within the research may be increased due to extrinsic social, cultural, and environmental factors, and intrinsic factors inherent in a child, such as, cognitive, emotional, and

sensory deficiencies – some of the factors that may initially render a child more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. These ethical dilemmas can be managed when we, as researchers, adopt strategies which reduce the risks and empower the informed participation of young people. I aimed to achieve this by noting the individual characteristics and vulnerabilities of each participant, based on the knowledge of, and completion of a risk assessment by, their respective support worker – see Appendix 21. This, combined with the inclusion and exclusion criteria for interview, discussed above, enabled safer recruitment and more meaningful involvement. I believe risks were also reduced and empowerment increased by ensuring the young male had sufficient capacity to understand the information provided to him, including the limits to confidentiality; that appropriate consents were gained; and with the assurance of anonymity.

It was important to create and use a young person-centred environment conducive to the interview – a safe space where they would feel listened to and permitted to take time to respond. This included practicalities such as having the room set up to help create this environment, with the provision of refreshments. There were however, certain limitations to this as it was a condition of ORECNI that I interview young males in a formal setting. This was defined as one of three settings:

- 1: In the office where the researcher was based which had rooms conducive to such interviews;
- 2: In another agency setting with which the young person was familiar and felt safe;
- 3: In a third-party neutral venue where the young person felt safe.

Within these preconditions, each of the interviews with the young males took place in a setting of their choice, one with which they were familiar, and having the option of having a supporter present.

During interviews with young males I was vigilant in anticipating distress and ensured that appropriate supports were available throughout the process, including offering rest breaks. I was conscious of pacing the interview to allow the young male time to think, whilst permitting me to remain tuned into him as an individual.

Being experienced in direct work with children and young people under the age of 16, I was able to ensure all interaction with these young people took cognisance of power differentials between me as researcher and the participant, minimising any impact this may have. There was no evidence that any of the young males experienced interview engendered distress. However, I ensured a post-interview debrief along with contact details should they have any questions or concerns and wanted to contact me. In addition, details of follow up support were provided should this be required – see Appendix 22. The information provided also reminded the interviewee of his right to withdraw his consent to his information being used by notifying me of this decision. The young male was also provided with the contact details of my supervisor in case of his dissatisfaction about how he had been treated while participating in the research. (Also see complaints procedure, Appendix 23).

A sense of empowerment through participation in the research, and a desire for their participation to help other young males was reflected in a sample of the comments from the young males:

*If it got out there it would take such a massive weight off my shoulders because it would make me feel like I'm making a difference; I don't have to hide it. I do feel that it's a weight lifted; helping you is just amazing. I would happily do this again if you needed it. (Darren, aged 17).*

*I'm glad that you can make use of it – it's not an inconvenience for me to help.*

(Connor, aged 18).

*Yes, I'm very honoured. I have told [named worker] that it would be an honour for me to speak to other people who have experienced the same thing as me and be able to tell them that it's okay; it's nothing to be ashamed of...* (Malcolm, aged 14).

I hope, through involving young males directly in this research study, I have somewhat achieved what Warrington suggested regarding young people's participation in the CSE agenda:

*...accessing and sharing these voices is vital if we are committed to challenging discrimination and exclusion...there is a need to continually reflect on whose voices remain unheard and seek to redress this.* (Warrington, 2010, p.72).

### *Young people (respondents to the Young Life and Times survey)*

Widening this topic to other young people (albeit in NI only) provided a forum for their views on the issue to be heard. This also provided a platform to collate the views of young females as well as males. An additional potential benefit for these participants was to raise their awareness of CSE, if they were unfamiliar with it.

Having no direct contact with respondents to the YLT survey, any potential vulnerabilities were unknown to me, as was any negative impact suffered as a result of completing the survey.

However, the survey did include a statement suggesting if respondents were personally affected by some of the questions, and wanted to talk with someone about it, they could contact the CSE



service in NI. The name and phone number of the service were provided. The questions regarding CSE were within one section of the wider YLT survey, therefore, respondents also had the option of completing the other sections without completing this one. I was not made aware whether any respondents chose to do this.

As explained in 4.4.2 above, there was a financial incentive to encourage young people to complete the YLT survey. I recognised the potential for this to be a sole motivator for some young people to complete it; however, I believe the volume of comments given in response to the open-ended questions demonstrated a genuine desire to contribute to this subject. The financial reward was not dependent on the completion of this particular module of the survey.

### *Researcher*

All three ethical committees giving approval for this research<sup>26</sup> posed a question on risks to the researcher for this study. It was crucial to have an awareness of potential risks to me, both physically and emotionally. Personal safety was a consideration when meeting research participants, especially at research sites unfamiliar to me, and as a sole researcher. To minimise this risk sufficient information was collected in relation to potential risks and plans made to conduct all fieldwork in a neutral, safe location. For further information, see 'Lone Working Protocol' in Appendix 24.

I recognised the validity of Coles and Mudaly's (2010) point stating that, when researchers engage with participants under sensitive subjects, they will inevitably be exposed to emotional and perhaps distressing information through data collection, transcription, coding the data and even through presenting the findings. Drawing on the work of Lee (1993) it was useful to

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<sup>26</sup> Office for Research Ethics Committees NI; Ethics Committee of the University of Bedfordshire; Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee.

recognise three issues he suggests create a concern about sensitivity, which I, as the researcher, felt compelled to consider. The first of these is if the issue is considered private, stressful, or scared. I considered my research to be both private and potentially stressful given the subject matter. I viewed it as my responsibility to help all participants feel relaxed and safe in imparting their knowledge and experiences. This did not negate any emotion I felt as they recounted their experiences of CSE, either as victims or working in the field. It was during transcription of some interviews with professionals and young males, that the reality of accounts appeared even more significant, without being overwhelming.

A decision was made to leave time between interviews in order to avoid saturation or burnout and this was achieved. This tactic also permitted time to reflect upon the interview whilst transcribing it. Whilst the subject area of this work was familiar to me, I was alert to the potential for a more concentrated period of time on the topic to negatively affect me. Given the research was undertaken on a part-time basis it produced a feeling of having 'lived with' the data for a significant period of time and, therefore, immersed in it. I believe this applies whether one is familiar with the sensitive subject matter or not. The use of journal notes to help me reflect on issues which I felt were impacting upon me emotionally and otherwise, helped alleviate them emerging as significant issues. One such issue related to more than one account by young males where it emerged there was no intervention by professionals. My response to dealing with this was to remind myself of the purpose of this research – to mitigate against such failures in the future, increasing capacity for recognition.

Other safeguards for myself, as researcher, mitigated any negative emotional impact. Despite being somewhat of a novice researcher I was older; I was experienced in the field under study and I had good support mechanisms in place should I need to avail of them. These consisted of: sessions with an external consultant as and when required; supervision and support from

supervisors at the University of Bedfordshire; and access to an Employee Assistance Programme through my employer.

The second issue Lee (1993) suggests creates concern about sensitivity is if the topic causes stigmatisation or fear. These were potential issues, particularly for young male interviewees rather than myself as researcher, yet something that could have had repercussions for me during questioning.

The third consideration is where the subject being researched could potentially cause social conflict or controversy. I presumed my research would cause neither social conflict nor controversy at a micro level. However, given this study was addressing the potential failures of professionals in identifying CSE in males, I was mindful this could cause a degree of controversy, of which I would need to take cognisance in my approach to disseminating the research findings, whilst remaining true to the data.

Taking time to consider and anticipate the potential of both physical and emotional impacts of this research on myself, I was better prepared and thus better able to respond to the needs of both the participants and myself as researcher.

#### *4.7.2 Gaining informed consent*

This research was based on the principles of informed and voluntary consent of all participants involved in this study. For the professional survey and the YLT survey, this was implicit in their completion of the survey. For the professional and young males' interviews, consent was explicitly sought in writing from all relevant groups:

❖ Professionals:

❖ Young males:

Parents/carers, where required to provide additional consent for their child;

Young males aged 14 to 18;

Young males with a learning difficulty aged 14 to 25; and

Males aged over 18.

The information sheets provided to all participants ensured the purpose, process, and anticipated outcomes of the study were clearly articulated to all, irrespective of capacity or any other barriers. Questions were actively encouraged questions from participants at all possible stages.

Consent of all participants was viewed as an on-going process, that could be revoked or amended as the research progressed (Cashmore, 2006). The initial intention was that the parameters for withdrawal of consent were to be up to four weeks from participation. However, following a requirement by the University of Bedfordshire ethics committee no specific time span was given. All professional and young male participants (with the exception of the YLT survey) were advised of this in the respective information sheets and verbally at commencement of interview.

Each interviewee was asked to sign a consent form on the day of the interview and prior to the interview commencing. By doing so they were confirming they had read the participant information sheet, had the opportunity to ask any questions and was satisfied these were addressed. This also confirmed they understood the limits to confidentiality and that anonymity was offered. Interviewees were also giving their consent for the information they shared to be used in a report, presentations, or articles related to the research, in which they would not be identifiable. They confirmed they were voluntarily agreeing to participate in this research and

understood they could withdraw their consent at any time during the interview or afterwards without any negative repercussions. If they wished to be informed of the results of the research they were asked to consent for their details to be held until then. At this stage participants were also asked if they consented to the use of audio recording. If they agreed, the interview was recorded, however, if they disagreed, written notes were made by myself during the interview.

### *Professionals*

Professionals were informed in the survey information sheet that by completing the professionals' survey they were consenting to the points above. If after completing the survey, a professional indicated agreement to be interviewed, and was chosen to be interviewed, they were sent a letter requesting this – see Appendix 25, alongside an information sheet outlining consent issues – see Appendix 26.

### *Young males*

Reflecting on the risks, needs and benefits to young male interviewees, discussed above, one of the tensions is that of giving consent and the young person's autonomy to do so, balancing their welfare and their right to participate in research (Briere, 1992; Morrow and Richards, 1996; Finkelhor, 1997; Mudaly and Goddard, 2009). A child's vulnerability is an inherent part of development, based on developmental needs and dependence on adults. As such, I was conscious of the need to ensure that no young person felt compelled to participate at any stage of their involvement. Tymchuk (1992) argues children can only assent to participation in research because of their age, competence, and legal status, and therefore, parents with the legal responsibility have the power to consent on their behalf. However, I agree with Alderson and Morrow (2004) who maintain this has the potential to disempower and/or exclude children and young people who may have a great deal to contribute to research. Moreover, within my study, with the exception of one young male aged 14, the remainder were aged 17 and above.

Autonomy is highlighted by Newman and Kaloupek (2004) as an important principle in ensuring the wishes of those who are able to give informed consent whilst protecting those with impaired abilities. This was an important consideration given the issues highlighted in 4.7.1 regarding risks to young male interviewees associated with their experiences of trauma. Newman and Kaloupek state there is no evidence that having experienced trauma impairs one's ability to make an informed choice about research participation. Furthermore, they state that *'pre-emptory use of someone's exposure to trauma as the basis for withholding the opportunity for research participation would violate this principle'* (Newman and Kaloupek, 2004, p.393). If consideration was applied only to the safety aspect in this study the participation of young males would have been absent. This would have negated their right to be involved in the research and to have their voices heard, consequently ignoring rich data. If the voice and opinion of the child fails to be sought, *'research, like practice, risks misperceiving the wishes, needs and interests of children'* (Hill *et al.* 1997, p.172). As legitimate recipients of services and as subjects in a matter which remains somewhat hidden, it was my intention that they were consulted, as key experts with valuation information (Berliner and Conte, 1990).

Given my knowledge of the grooming techniques of perpetrators and the vulnerabilities of children and young people, I was eager to ensure the absence of any perceived control, persuasion, or manipulation by myself as the researcher or those parents or professionals facilitating interviews with young males. I did this by providing sufficient information in advance to the young person, allowing them adequate time to decide whether to take part, and by reminding them, at the beginning and end of interview, of their right to withdraw consent at any time. Ensuring the young male's understanding of the limits to confidentiality, and hence what he decided to divulge during interview, optimised the control he had over the interview.

As MacNaughton and Smith (2005) highlight, to enable a child or young person to make as informed a decision as possible whether to participate, they should be provided with sufficient information and that which is appropriate to their level of understanding. Three different

information sheets were provided for young male interviewees – the same information but presented as closely as possible according the level of understanding of the age group and/or ability: for those aged 14 to 18 years – see Appendix 27; for those aged over 18 years – see Appendix 28; and for those with a learning disability – see Appendix 29. All information sheets were provided in a question and answer format with headings. The difference in the headings for the different ages/abilities demonstrates my intention to maximise their understanding. I chose to put a photograph of myself as the researcher on the one for those with learning difficulties to help demystify the process and to help them identify with me better, although none of the young males eventually interviewed had a learning difficulty. Care was taken to explain that participation was voluntary and adequate time given for individuals to decide if they wished to participate. The first two of the three information sheets were utilised given that male interviewees ranged in ages from 14 to 33; none had a learning disability.

It was intended that parental/carers consent would be sought for males under the age of 16 and for those with learning difficulties. It was my initial intention to adopt an 'opt-out' approach with parents to the recruitment of young males for interview. This decision was based on several reasons: firstly, potential young people could be considered being Gillick competent; secondly, that not all parents/carers of these young people may be in a position to give permission or, thirdly, that, to do so, may compromise the young person. It was intended the support worker would act as liaison between parent/carers and researcher and ensure the process was understood. This opt-out approach did not proceed as ORECNI considered it necessary for parents to actively consent to the participation of those aged under 16. Therefore, when a young person, under the age of 16, was identified by a professional as a potential candidate for interview, parental consent was sought, via the professional, to approach the young male regarding interview, unless this was not feasible and/or contrary to the best interests of the child. The purpose of the research was explained to the parent/carers by way of an information sheet and letter – see Appendices 30 and 31.

The consent form enabled the parent/carer to confirm they had been given, read (or had read to them), the information sheet about the research and had the opportunity to ask any questions and raise any concerns. This was their consent for their son<sup>27</sup> to be approached and, if he consented, to take part in the research. This also confirmed they understood their son's name would not be used, and the voluntary nature of their participation, and that of their son. The parent/carer was also asked to indicate if they wished their son to be informed of the results. During the fieldwork, only one parental consent was required for one male aged 14 years; this was granted.

It was essential to provide sufficiently clear information yet, at the same time, not use terminology that would be insensitive, harmful, or confusing to the young male. As stated previously, the term 'child sexual exploitation' was not used because young people are often uncomfortable or resistant to the term, but instead gave a clear explanation as to what the nature of the interview was about:

*We know that there are situations where adults, or other young people, take advantage of young males sexually, for example:*

- ❖ *when they are under the influence of drink/drugs*
- ❖ *getting them to engage in sexual activity in return for things such as drink/drugs, cigarettes, money, somewhere to stay etc.*

*There can be other reasons why young males may feel forced into such situations. Any of this might happen over the internet, in person or both. (Information sheet for males aged 14-18 and over 18 years).*

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<sup>27</sup> 'Son' was to be changed according to the relationship between the young male and the adult with parental authority.



*Sometimes boys can be tricked into doing sexual things and are given things in return for this, but it can be hard for them to talk about this.* (Information sheet for young males with learning disabilities).

This was explained in the information sheet and reiterated at the start of the interview.

Once any required parent/carer consents were obtained, the young male, and all others over the age of 16, were asked, by the professional, to participate. The professional was provided with full information – see Appendix 32 - to talk through and leave with the young person, in the form of the respective information sheet and consent forms – see Appendices 33, 34, and 35.

### *Young Life and Times survey*

The approach to consent for respondents to the YLT survey was that of a passive (opt out) one. An information sheet was sent to the young people. This contained information about the survey, how their address was accessed, the reason for this, how the data would be treated, and an invitation to opt out of the survey. If they opted out of the process, there was no further contact from ARK Life and Times. If they did not opt out, they received the survey questionnaire alongside further information. This contained another invitation to opt out. At this point all respondents who complete the YLT survey are regarded as having consented. In addition to this, each respondent has the opportunity to decide whether or not to complete the various modules within the survey.

#### *4.7.3 Confidentiality, anonymity, and data storage*

Having obtained an honorary contract with each of the two Health and Social Care Trusts in NI,<sup>28</sup> participating in the research, there was agreement to follow their policies/procedures in relation to confidentiality of data. This was in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, which underlined the management of all other primary data collected for this study.

All information sheets to participants (and parents, where applicable) were explicit in stating information would remain confidential unless it needed to be passed on and the process involved, including the accurate recording of information and the clear lines of responsibility. This would happen if I became aware a child or young person was being harmed, or at serious risk of immediate harm or if there was a wider public protection issue. It was made clear that, in such situations, confidentiality could not be maintained to ensure the protection of the person.

Information sheets also explained issues surrounding anonymity and data storage. All data was anonymised and coded by myself, with identifiers securely stored in an electronic folder on my laptop within my employers' secure server system which was password protected, and to which I had sole access. On leaving my place of employment (March 2018) all information was removed from this secure server system and inputted onto a password protected Universal Serial Bus (USB) which is kept securely at all times.

It was made clear that when data was to be used publicly (in research reports, presentations etc) any data that might make an individual identifiable would be removed – pseudonyms used, and place names/locations anonymised. This was explained to research participants prior to the collection of any data and consent for use of data under these conditions was obtained. It was

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<sup>28</sup> To undertake the research within NI, the researcher chose two Health and Social Care Trusts to participate. Ethical and governance procedures had to be adhered to for both.

stipulated that professionals would be identified by professional group only. During interview with the young males they were given the option of choosing a pseudonym. Some chose to do so while others preferred me to choose a name.

As noted in 4.7.1 above, I did not have access to any identifying information in relation to respondents to the YLT survey. Arrangements between ARK and HMRC ensured the safety and security of personal data, including the safe transport and storage of the files as well as destruction of the address file after completion of the data collection. Any open responses to questions that were deemed as compromising the anonymity of respondents were not made available as part of the downloadable dataset but would appear as a list of all responses in the results section of the YLT website.

#### *4.7.4 Dealing with disclosures*

Given the issue under consideration, it was anticipated that new safeguarding issues may have come to the fore during the course of the research. As a practitioner and manager in the field of social care for 28 years, and specifically in the field of CSE for 16 years, I was experienced in dealing with disclosures from children and young people.

A study specific protocol was produced to deal with disclosures – see Appendix 36 – which set out the ethical framework that guided my conduct in relation to disclosures by research participants. The protocol made explicit the circumstances in which confidentiality would need to be broken and subsequent actions; this included both current and historical allegations. Protocols were also agreed with each service/agency facilitating the research as to how disclosures would be dealt with should they arise. Within NI these were in line with the requirements established by the Area Child Protection Committee policy and procedures. For services/agencies outside of NI participating in the research, their local policies and procedures were followed. I ensured I had

the details of a named person in each research site with whom child protection concerns should be raised, the contact details of the local duty social work team or NSPCC service.

During fieldwork for this research, however, no new disclosures were made. The professionals providing information in relation to the sexual exploitation of specific young males already had service involvement and awareness of the young male's circumstances. Information provided by young male interviewees was already known to the statutory authorities, with the exception of two cases. With regards these two cases, the young males were now adults, the information they disclosed was solely in relation to their own experiences. They did not share any identifying information with regards their respective perpetrators or any other children or young people who had been, or were currently at risk, which would have required reporting to the statutory authorities.

## **4.8 Challenges and limitations**

### *4.8.1 Insider research*

It was necessary to consider whether the term 'insider research' was applicable to my study. The term is used when the researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research setting (Robson, 2002), often where the researcher is undertaking a research role in addition to their usual functional role within the setting. I concluded the concept had methodological relevance to this study as almost half (47%; n=14) of the professional participants were either employed within the same organisation or known to me through their daily functional role, albeit, employed within different organisations. This section briefly considers some of the ethical dilemmas and potential biases incorporated with insider research, as well as the advantages.

Having worked in the field of CSE in NI, and as part of a larger UK organisation, my position gave me access to established and relevant contacts and a variety of organisations. Additionally, one of the benefits of having access to professionals for interview within the same local organisation was the convenience element of not having to travel.

In addressing the concept of insider research, Maykut and Morehouse, pose an interesting position stating that:

*...the qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others...and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand.* (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.123).

My understanding of the subject area and pre-existing issues aided construction of the research instruments for this study. Possessing such insight helped direct the focus of the research into specific areas that required addressing. However, I was conscious of potential bias in this.

Working in the field did influence who was approached initially to participate in the study, which could be classified as a biased sample. Participants' knowledge of me may also have influenced their decision to take part in the research, wanting to assist me. I was also mindful that participants' familiarity with me, or knowledge of me, may have influenced what they shared.

Having lobbied on the subject of CSE for many years within NI, some participants may have either wanted to convince me that progress had been achieved or may have wished to confirm my preconceived assumptions regarding gaps in the systems to protect young males.

Another assumption I brought to this research included my ability to engage with all participants, particularly those with whom I was having direct contact, either in person or via the telephone. I believed this was so because of the knowledge, understanding and experience I possessed

about CSE generally, and more specifically regarding the sexual exploitation of young males. My observations were that, making participants aware of my experience, particularly interviewees, and especially young males, put them more at ease during their participation. I do not believe this would have been the case for a researcher who was unfamiliar with the subject matter. However, it is only prudent to note that professionals' awareness of my familiarity with the subject may also have been a negative, perhaps withholding certain information either on the assumption that I already knew it or fearful of sounding less knowledgeable than me.

Having existing contacts in the field of CSE, within NI and across Barnardo's CSE services in the rest of the UK, assisted with accessing participants. I recognised that professional participants' knowledge of me may have influenced their decision to be involved in the research. Similarly, it may also have influenced their responses, in either the survey or the interview. With regards the young male interviewees, all verbalised their positive experiences with services that helped and supported them, and for them, this was their reason for participating in this research.

#### *4.8.2 Study sample and accessing participants*

The majority of respondents to the professionals' survey were from NI. This was probably a result of my location and existing contacts. This increased my accessibility to professional interviewees in NI. Similarly, working for a UK children's charity with over 20 CSE services across the UK, I had access to these, at least via email and telephone. With the majority of its CSE services positioned in England, this is a possible explanation for a higher participation rate, overall, from England than Scotland or Wales. One third of respondents were from England and the data from them concurred with that obtained from NI respondents.

Young male interviewees all originated from England (n=7) and NI (n=3). Unfortunately, it was not possible to access any young males from Wales or Scotland. Neither was it possible to access

young males in NI through the two Health and Social Care Trusts. Being reliant upon Trust staff to identify young males for potential interview, I was unaware as to the reasons why none were available for interview. It is important, therefore, to highlight the sample of young males interviewed could not be considered representative of young males who have experienced CSE. The identification of young males for interview was determined by support workers based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, addressed in 4.5.2, and the young males' willingness to participate. This bias will have excluded young males who have not been identified or reported experiences of CSE or excluded from participation for other reasons; their voices remain absent from this study. Whilst they may have provided additional insight into the barriers to recognition, to protect the welfare of the young males, and given the sensitivity of the issue being addressed, the inclusion and exclusion criteria could not be avoided. Moreover, it is important to recognise the valuable perspectives of those whose voices are often hidden.

The professional sample for this study focused on those with some knowledge of CSE generally; therefore, it could be argued this was not necessarily representative of the wider field of professionals, i.e. those who have less or no knowledge of CSE, or more specifically, that related to young males. This may have produced very different data; however, it would have been difficult to determine who would have been targeted for this. Given the focus of this study, some level of knowledge was required to respond to the questions in both the survey and interview.

Minimal input from the youth justice sector was a limitation of this study. Given the more recent literature highlighting links between CSE and youth offending amongst males (Pearce, 2009; Cockbain and Brayley, 2012; Smeaton, 2013), I considered it critical to receive input from the youth justice sector, within any of the four countries. I pursued this with my contacts within youth justice in NI, and, as a consequence, received two survey responses and one professional interview from this sector.

Although the scale of the study may be considered small in some respects, and therefore viewed as a limitation, the data collected from participants was rich in quality. The limited number of participants also allowed sufficient time to be committed to each interview and in-depth analysis of the findings to achieve my research objectives.

#### *4.8.3 Differential definitions of CSE*

One of the challenges I encountered early in the study, during the literature review and in preparing participant information sheets, was the varying definitions used by three of the four UK nations – Scotland, NI and England/Wales. The main challenge was in understanding the nuances between each of the three, communicating this within the study and choosing one to use in professional participants' documents. A clear definition of CSE was critical to ensuring consistent understanding of the meaning of it across the four nations. Given my base as NI, I chose to use that produced by the Safeguarding Board NI, 2014, and adopted from the CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI. Two slightly different 'explanations' of CSE, derived from this definition, were used to communicate its meaning to young people responding to the YLT survey and to young male interviewees. It should be noted, similar to the definition given in the YLT survey, these explanations were used in order to maintain simplicity, and therefore, only partially describe CSE; they refer to gain for the young person but exclude gain for the perpetrator, as is included in other definitions. As noted above, I reflected if including a reference to perpetrator gain may have produced any differentiation in responses from respondents to the YLT survey. I concluded it may not have influenced the data significantly, if at all, however, in retrospect, inclusion of the term 'perpetrator gain' may not have complicated the explanation of it.

#### *4.8.4 Ethics requirements*

Gaining ethical approvals from six ethics committees was challenging in terms of time commitment, as was responding to the queries and requirements of each committee, and



ensuring amendments were added to respective documents. One particular challenge by ORECNI was in relation to the environment in which young males were to be interviewed, as discussed above in sub-section 4.7.1. The committee mandated they should be seen in a formal setting and not in public places such as cafes. Whilst recognising and accepting the need to ensure safeguards and confidentiality for them, I believed this was contrary to what young people consider safe and conducive spaces to speak, particularly about sensitive issues.

It was imperative that my study should not interfere with any therapeutic input in which a young male interviewee was in receipt of. This presented both a challenge and a limitation. It was anticipated most, if not all, males who may be potential participants were going to be in receipt of some form of current therapeutic support given it was a condition they also had to have a support worker available to them. I was concerned this would exclude most from the process. I was able to overcome this challenge by being clear the criterion was 'active treatment' of a clinical nature by a therapist as opposed to therapeutic support in the broadest sense.

Whilst presenting challenges, gaining ethical approvals was a positive learning curve for me as a novice researcher. Overall and in retrospect, the process helped me question and clarify the ethical considerations necessary for a study of this nature.

#### *4.8.5 Part-time and prolonged nature of the study*

I commenced this post doctorate study, on a part-time basis, in October 2013, with fieldwork beginning in June 2015 and ending in June 2017. Undertaking a UK wide study, whilst also working full-time, presented challenges regarding time commitments. However, setting, and regularly reviewing, timeframes assisted with this. In addition, deciding upon sample sizes which were manageable and realistic also made this achievable.

I recognised the inevitability of an increasing evidence base during the period of my research, given the prolonged nature of it and the increased focus on the issue during this time. This resulted in greater recognition of new and emerging issues in relation to CSE generally, and some specifically relating to young males (McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014; Thomas and Speyer, 2016; Hooper, 2018; Moynihan *et al.* 2018). Knowledge of this was necessary to ensure my study remained relevant and current.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the methodological approach taken to determine the potential barriers to the recognition of CSE in males. I have provided my reasoning for the methods used and description of the instrument designs which was my attempt to achieve a range of valuable data, and hence, best outcomes for this study. Some of the theoretical positions of the mixed methods approach, particularly those of constructivism and pragmatism, connect with the theoretical framework upon which this study is based, acknowledging the social, historical, political, and other contextual systems involved in the sexual exploitation of young males. For me, this confirmed the relevance of my chosen methods.

I have illustrated some of the complex ethical considerations and breadth of governance processes encountered in a study of this kind, involving human participants in a sensitive topic of investigation. This was a valuable learning curve for me as a novice researcher. Notwithstanding the constraints described in the body of this chapter and the specific sensitivities of involving young people, having the opportunity to harness the opinions of young males who have had experiences of CSE, has been particularly significant and enriching to this study. This is demonstrated in the findings which emerged from the fieldwork, presented in chapters five to nine.

## **Chapter five: Overview of Survey Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of the findings from the quantitative method used in this study's primary data collection. This consisted of two surveys - the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey and the professionals' survey. As explained in chapter four, the methodology, the YLT survey was an existing survey platform, within NI, in which I placed a series of questions whereas I constructed and administered the professionals' survey.

The first section relates to the YLT survey and comprises a brief outline of the nature of the survey (see chapter four, the methodology, for greater detail). Details regarding response rate and demographics of respondents are provided. The survey results are categorised under the three primary areas of questioning in the survey: level of knowledge of CSE; reporting of it; and how respondents perceive professionals view it.

Section two relates to the professionals' survey, providing details regarding response rate and demographics of respondents. The survey results are categorised under two primary areas of questioning: reasons for non-disclosure of CSE in males and reasons for non-identification of it.

This chapter does not contain a discussion of the findings; that is contained in chapter ten.

## Section one: Young Life and Times survey

### 5.2 Introduction

As described in chapter four, the methodology, this survey comprised a series of questions placed in the YLT survey, 2015, distributed to all 16 year olds in Northern Ireland. The findings are presented below.

### 5.3 Levels of knowledge of respondents to YLT survey

Presented with the response options outlined in Table 5.1, the majority of respondents reported knowing a little about CSE (64%; n=735). There was minimal difference between males and females regarding level of knowledge, except for slightly more males than females stating they knew nothing about CSE (male 14%; n=161; female 8%; n=92).

**Table 5.1: How much do you know about the sexual exploitation of children and young people?**

<i>Level of knowledge</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>A lot</i>	195	17	15	18
<i>A little</i>	730	63.6	62	65
<i>Nothing</i>	119	10.4	14	8
<i>Not sure</i>	104	9	9	9
<i>Total</i>	1148 <sup>29</sup>			

Provided with the response options presented in Table 5.2, the most frequent response was that CSE happens more to young females than young males (47%; n=537), with less than 1% (n=6)

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<sup>29</sup> Ten did not answer this question.

believing it happens only to females. These six young people were all male. However, there was still quite a high number who believed it happened equally to young males and young females (39.5%; n=453).

**Table 5.2: Who do you think child sexual exploitation happens to?**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>More often to young males than females</i>	13	1.1	2	1
<i>Equally often to young males and females</i>	453	39.5	36	41
<i>More often to young females than males</i>	537	46.8	42	50
<i>Only to young females</i>	6	0.5	1	0
<i>Don't know</i>	139	12.1	19	8
<i>Total</i>	1148 <sup>30</sup>			

Respondents were asked, if they knew any males this has happened to, what age were they when this first happened to them. They were asked to tick all that applied. These results are shown in Table 5.3. An equal number of males and females (10%; n=103) reported knowing a

<sup>30</sup> Ten did not answer this question

male to whom this had happened. Of the 102 respondents where age of the victim was known the patterns were:

- ❖ 2% (n=24) knew males under the age of 13 years;
- ❖ 5% (n=47) knew males aged 13 to 15 years; and
- ❖ 3% (n=31) knew males aged 16 to 17 years.

**Table 5.3: Knowledge of males this happened to by age**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>Under 13 years</i>	24	2.3	3	2
<i>13-15 years</i>	47	4.6	4	5
<i>16-17 years</i>	31	3.0	4	3
<i>No male I know</i>	754	73.4	69	76
<i>Don't know</i>	172	16.7	20	14
<i>Total</i>	1,028 <sup>31</sup>			

## 5.4 Reporting of CSE by males and females

Presented with the response options presented in Table 5.4, the majority of respondents (58%; n=666) believed it to be equally difficult for young males and young females to report CSE. There were 10% more females than males choosing this as an option. There was a substantial difference between the number of respondents who believed it was harder for young males to report CSE and those who thought it was harder for young females to report (29%; n=329 as opposed to 4%; n=48), a pattern observable across both male and female respondents.

<sup>31</sup> 130 did not answer this question.

**Table 5.4: Difficulty in reporting by gender**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>Harder for young males than females</i>	329	28.6	28	29
<i>Equally hard for young males and females</i>	666	57.9	52	62
<i>Harder for young females than males</i>	48	4.2	4	4
<i>Don't know</i>	107	9.3	16	5
<i>Total</i>	1,150 <sup>32</sup>			

Respondents were asked 'if someone tried to take advantage of you sexually, how likely would you be to report this?' This terminology was used rather than 'CSE' because the question was personal to the respondent.

Presented with the response options presented in Table 5.5, the majority (82%; n=941) said they would 'definitely' or 'probably' report it if someone tried to take advantage of them sexually. A total of 11% (n=126) stated they would 'probably not' or 'definitely not' report it. There was an almost equal gender split in the combined percentage who said they would 'definitely' or

<sup>32</sup> Eight did not answer this question.

‘probably’ report it. However, of some interest is the fact that a higher percentage of males (60%) than females (51%) stated they would ‘definitely’ report it given respondents previously stated it would be harder for males than females to report it. One explanation for this could be this question was personal to them whereas the previous one was abstract.

**Table 5.5: Likelihood of reporting personal experience of CSE by gender**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>Definitely</i>	624	54.4	60	51
<i>Probably</i>	317	27.7	23	31
<i>Probably not</i>	100	8.7	8	9
<i>Definitely not</i>	26	2.3	2	2
<i>Don't know</i>	79	6.9	7	7
<i>Total</i>	1,146 <sup>33</sup>			

For those respondents who stated they would ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ report it if someone tried to take advantage of them sexually, they were asked a third question and presented with multiple options as to whom they would report it; see Table 5.6. They were asked to select all that applied to them. Both young males and females chose ‘parent/carer’ as their top choice as to who to tell; the next most likely for males to report to was ‘police’; and the next most likely for females was ‘friends’. Females were much more likely than males to tell a sibling. There was more than one third less males in percentage terms (39%) than females (64%) who chose ‘a friend’ as an option to whom to report an experience of CSE. At the same time, there was a 10% difference between males and females, with more males stating they would report their experience of CSE to the police.

<sup>33</sup> Twelve did not answer this question.



**Table 5.6: Who they would report to by gender**

<i>Report to:</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>Friend</i>	439	53.0	39	63
<i>Parent/carer</i>	577	69.4	69	70
<i>Teacher</i>	198	23.8	24	24
<i>Youth worker</i>	105	12.6	13	13
<i>Sibling</i>	166	20.0	14	25
<i>Police</i>	502	60.4	66	56
<i>Helpline</i>	217	26.1	25	27
<i>Confidential website</i>	96	11.6	10	13
<i>Other</i>	15	1.8	1	2
<i>Not sure</i>	21	2.0	3	1

For those respondents who had replied they would 'probably not', 'definitely not' or didn't know if they would report it if someone tried to take advantage of them sexually (18%; n=205), they were asked why they would not report it. Presented with the response options in Table 5.7 they were asked to select all that applied to them.

**Table 5.7: Reasons for not reporting by gender**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Male</b>	<b>% Female</b>
<i>Not wanting to be seen as a victim</i>	345	34.4	36	33
<i>A feeling of shame</i>	499	49.8	43	55
<i>A feeling of helplessness</i>	300	29.9	24	34
<i>Previous poor negative response</i>	118	11.8	9	14
<i>Difficult to explain</i>	495	49.4	41	56
<i>'I should be able to protect myself'</i>	372	37.1	40	35
<i>No-one will believe me</i>	288	28.7	21	35
<i>Other</i>	55	5.5	6	5

Females and males chose the same top three reasons, although with slight variation in order:

- ❖ A feeling of shame: A larger percentage of females (55%) chose this as a reason for not reporting compared to 43% of males, however, it was the category most often chosen by males.
- ❖ Difficulty explaining what happened: This category was chosen more often by females (56%) while 41% of males said they would have difficulty in explaining what happened.

- ❖ 'I should have protected myself': A greater percentage of males (40%) chose this category while 35% of females also believed they should be able to protect themselves and that this would prevent them disclosing.<sup>34</sup>

Also of interest, in the context of the wider findings from this study, is the fact that more females than males felt they would not be believed. The 'other' common reasons respondents stated they would 'probably not', definitely not', or did not know if they would report it if someone tried to take advantage of them sexually, included fear of:

- ❖ Others knowing and looking at me differently/my family would be disappointed;
- ❖ The consequences of disclosing;
- ❖ Being judged;
- ❖ The embarrassment;
- ❖ People thinking, I did it willingly;
- ❖ What would happen to the perpetrator;
- ❖ Feeling it was my fault/that I was weak;
- ❖ A poor response from professionals;
- ❖ Causing a fuss – it's less painful to ignore it than report it.

The gender of these respondents was unknown.

## **5.5 How seriously CSE is viewed by professionals**

Presented with the response options below, Table 5.8 shows just over half of respondents believed that professionals view the sexual exploitation of both young males and young females equally seriously (51%; n=573), however, two fifths (39%; n=435) believed professionals view it

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<sup>34</sup> Females made an equal choice with 'no-one will believe me'.

more seriously when it happens to young females, with only 1% believing the converse. There is no noticeable difference in the gender of respondents.

**Table 5.8: How seriously CSE is viewed by professionals**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>Young males – more serious</i>	16	1.4	1	2
<i>Young females – more serious</i>	435	38.7	37	40
<i>Equally serious for both</i>	573	50.9	51	51
<i>Don't know</i>	101	9.0	11	7
<i>Total</i>	1,125 <sup>35</sup>			

Table 5.9 details that for those respondents who thought professionals were more likely to view the sexual exploitation of females more seriously, the belief that males are seen as abusers rather than victims of CSE was thought to be the main reason professionals viewed the sexual exploitation of females more seriously than that of males (80%). The view that ‘boys can’t be victims’ was seen to be the second most likely reason (54%). Females rated both reasons higher than males (by 6% and 8% respectively). Thirty-nine per cent of respondents believed professionals may view the sexual exploitation of males less seriously because, if the abuser is female and the victim male, it is seen as a ‘conquest’. Males rated this reason slightly higher (by 4%) than females.

<sup>35</sup> 33 did not answer this question.

**Table 5.9: Reasons why professionals might view CSE less seriously for males**

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>% of those who chose males</i>	<i>% Male</i>	<i>% Female</i>
<i>Boys can't be victims</i>	204	53.7	49	57
<i>Males seen as abusers rather than victims of CSE</i>	304	80.0	76	82
<i>Seen as 'conquest' if abuser is female and victim is male</i>	148	38.9	41	37
<i>Other</i>	21	5.5	4	6

The 'other' common reasons respondents believed professionals viewed the sexual exploitation of young females more seriously than that of males included:

- ❖ Commonly thought boys should be immune to this;
- ❖ Males are seen as more able to defend themselves/seen as stronger/shouldn't be overpowered by a girl;
- ❖ Society views females as weaker/more vulnerable/need to be protected;
- ❖ People assume males will always enjoy sexual activities.

The gender of these respondents was unknown.

This first section has presented an overview of the findings from the YLT survey. An analysis of these findings will be presented in chapters five to eight of this thesis. Section two now turns to an

overview of the findings from the second quantitative approach used, that of the professionals' survey.

## **Section two: Professionals' survey**

### **5.6 Introduction**

As described in the methodology, chapter four, the professionals' survey was administered to professionals, across the UK, who had some prior knowledge of, or experience of, working within the area of child sexual exploitation. This section presents the findings.

### **5.7 Demographics of respondents**

A total of 91 surveys were completed by professionals. Just over half (51%, n=46) of respondents were from NI, and just over one third from England (35%, n=32), with the remainder from Scotland and Wales.<sup>36</sup> The more significant number of respondents from NI is explained by my base being there, and thus me having a greater number of contacts with relevant agencies. The higher percentage of respondents in England, as opposed to Scotland and Wales, is likely to be a result of the larger number of specialist CSE services across that nation, with whom I had contact.

The sectors represented by survey respondents included:

- ❖ almost two thirds from the voluntary/community sector (63%; n=57) of which just over half were from specialist CSE services (36%; n=33);
- ❖ less than one quarter from social services (22%; n=20);
- ❖ police (9%; n=8);
- ❖ youth justice (3%; n=3);

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<sup>36</sup> 6% (n=5) respondents were from Wales; 3% (n=3) were from Scotland; 5% (n=5) were unknown.

- ❖ education (2%; n=2); and
- ❖ sexual health (1%; n=1).

The length of service of survey respondents in their current post ranged from less than three months to more than ten years:

- ❖ Less than one-fifth (17%; n=15) had been in service for less than one year;
- ❖ Just over two-fifths were in service between one and four years (42%; n=37 cumulatively);
- ❖ Over one-quarter (27%; n=24) had been in service between four and ten years;
- ❖ Less than one-fifth (15%; n=13) had a length of service of over ten years.<sup>37</sup>

The gender breakdown of survey respondents was as follows:

- ❖ Three-fifths (60%; n=55) were female;
- ❖ Over one-fifth (22%; n=20) were male;
- ❖ Less than one-fifth (18%; n=16) were unknown.

## **5.8 Professionals' opinions on gender patterns of CSE**

All professionals stated they had come across CSE as an issue in their current role. The vast majority (88%; n=80) reported having come across it as an issue for both males and females in the current role. A minority of respondents reported having come across CSE in relation to males only (4%; n=4) and females only (8%; n=7).

Respondents reported on how prevalent they thought the sexual exploitation of young males was compared to young females:

- ❖ Almost two-fifths (38%; n=35) thought it was equally prevalent for both genders;

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<sup>37</sup> Two per cent did not respond to this question.

- ❖ Two-fifths (40%; n=36) believed it was less prevalent among young males;
- ❖ Over one-fifth (22%; n=20) said they did not know;
- ❖ No respondent said they felt it was more prevalent for males.

Respondents believed CSE happened to young males and females, ranging from ten to 25 years. The most common ages of both males and females believed to be affected by CSE was 12 to 18 years.

Respondents were asked if they believed the ways in which young males are sexually exploited differ from that of young females. Presented with the response options of 'yes', 'no', and 'don't know':

- ❖ Almost half of respondents (47%; n= 43) believed there were differences in the way in which young males and females were exploited;
- ❖ Just over a quarter (27%; n=25) believed there was no difference;
- ❖ Just under one quarter (23%; n=21) stated they did not know if there were any differences.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of the impact of CSE differing for young males to that of young females, and presented with the response options of 'yes', 'no', and 'do not know':

- ❖ Approximately two fifths (41%; n=37) believed the impact did not differ between young males and females;
- ❖ Over one third (37%; n=34) believed the impact did differ between the two genders;
- ❖ Less than one-fifth stated they did not know if the impact differed between males and females (19%; n=17).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Three per cent answered 'yes and no' to this question.

<sup>39</sup> Three per cent did not respond to this question.



## 5.9 Reasons for non-disclosure

Presented with a list of generic reasons, taken from the literature, as to why young people, both male and female, might find it difficult to disclose experiences of sexual exploitation, respondents were asked to indicate their opinion as to whether each factor was more of a reason for non-disclosure for a male than a female, equally as likely, less likely, or do not know. These responses are detailed in Table 5.10.

From the pre-determined reasons provided to respondents, the three most frequently chosen to be more of a reason for non-disclosure for males than females were:

- ❖ A feeling of shame (69%; n=62);
- ❖ A lack of communication strategies (50%; n=45); and
- ❖ Having no available or appropriate service (49%; n=44).

Of these three reasons, shame was the factor where there was thought to be greatest difference (41%; n=37) between it being more likely and equally likely for males and females.

There was only a 3% difference between the number who believed a lack of communication strategies was more likely and equally likely to be a reason for non-disclosure for young males and females.

The top three reasons perceived to be equally likely to inhibit disclosure by young males and females were:

- ❖ Mistrust of others (75%; n=67);
- ❖ Sense of helplessness (72%; =65);
- ❖ Self-blame (65%; n=59).

There were only a small number of respondents who chose some of the factors to be less likely as reasons for males not disclosing over females. Of these, the two most frequently chosen reasons were:

- ❖ Previous negative response re disclosure (8%; n=7); and
- ❖ Self-blame (7%; n=6).

Self-blame, therefore, featured as one of the main reasons thought to be equally likely responsible for non-disclosure by young males and females, yet was also believed to be one of the main reasons less likely to inhibit disclosure by males than females, albeit chosen by a substantially smaller number of respondents.

**Table 5.10: Factors more of a reason for non-disclosure for males than females**

<i>Reason</i>	<i>More likely</i>	<i>Equally likely</i>	<i>Less likely</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
	%	%	%	%
<i>Shame</i> <sup>40</sup>	69 (n=62)	28 (n=25)	0	3 (n=3)
<i>Self-blame</i> <sup>41</sup>	22 (n=20)	65 (n=59)	7 (n=6)	6 (n=5)
<i>No available/ appropriate service</i> <sup>42</sup>	49 (n=44)	35 (n=31)	5 (n=4)	11 (n=10)
<i>Doesn't view self as victim</i>	36 (n=33)	58 (n=53)	4 (n=4)	2 (n=2)
<i>Sense of helplessness</i> <sup>43</sup>	20 (n=18)	72 (n=65)	3 (n=3)	5 (n=4)
<i>Previous negative response re disclosure</i> <sup>44</sup>	20 (n=18)	61(n=55)	8 (n=7)	11 (n=10)
<i>Lack of cognitive awareness to name abuse</i>	29 (n=26)	58 (n=53)	3 (n=3)	10 (n=9)
<i>Mistrust of others</i>	22 (n=20)	75 (n=67)	1 (n=1)	2 (n=2)
<i>Lack of communication strategies</i> <sup>45</sup>	50 (n=45)	47 (n=42)	1 (n=1)	2 (n=2)

<sup>40</sup> One per cent did not rate this option.

<sup>41</sup> One per cent did not rate this option.

<sup>42</sup> Two per cent did not rate this option.

<sup>43</sup> One per cent did not rate this option.

<sup>44</sup> One per cent did not rate this option.

<sup>45</sup> One per cent did not rate this option.

Provided with a list of generic reasons, based on findings from research, which may inhibit disclosure of CSE by young males specifically, respondents were asked to select all that applied, rating the reasons in order of most to least likely. The top three factors which they believed were most likely to inhibit disclosure for males were:

- ❖ I should be able to protect myself (68%; n=47);
- ❖ Fear of being labelled gay (if the abuser is male and the victim is heterosexual) (60%; n=40);
- ❖ People don't believe it happens to males (52%; n=34).

'Fear of being viewed as a potential perpetrator' was considered to be the least likely reason for non-disclosure amongst young males, chosen by only 6% (n=3) of respondents as one of the top three reasons.

**Table 5.11: Reasons most likely to inhibit disclosure of CSE by young males**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>% as one of top 3 chosen</b>	<b>% who did not rate option</b>
<i>I should be able to protect myself because I'm male</i>	68 (n=47)	24
<i>People don't believe this happen to males</i>	52 (n=34)	28
<i>Perceived threat to masculinity (if abuser is male)</i>	48 (n=30)	31
<i>Fear of being labelled gay (if abuser is male &amp; victim heterosexual)</i>	60 (n=40)	26
<i>Fear of homophobic response</i>	28 (n=16)	37
<i>Lack of emotional vocabulary</i>	18 (n=11)	34
<i>Perceived threat to sexual identity (if abuser is male &amp; victim heterosexual)</i>	22 (n=12)	41
<i>Confusion over sexual identity (if abuser is male)</i>	27 (n=16)	34
<i>Fear of being viewed as a potential perpetrator</i>	6 (n=3)	48
<i>If abuser is female, the male views this as a 'conquest' for the male</i>	11 (n=6)	39
<i>If abuser is female, society views this as a 'conquest' for the male</i>	19 (n=11)	35

Showing the number of respondents who chose each option as one of their top three reasons for non-disclosure illustrates the importance placed on each option as a barrier to disclosure for young males. Similarly, the percentage who did not rate the respective options at all is noted in this way to demonstrate the lack of importance respondents placed on them as inhibitors for young males.

Respondents were asked if they thought there were any particular groups of young males who were less likely to disclose than others. This was an open question without pre-determined choices. Over half of respondents believed there were particular groups less likely to disclose (60%; n=55), while only 10% (n=9) believed there were not. Just under one third (30%; n=27) did not know if there were particular groups less likely to disclose.

Of the 60% who believed there were particular groups less likely to disclose experiences of sexual exploitation the three groups most frequently mentioned were:

- ❖ Those involved in criminality (13%; n=12);
- ❖ Those with a learning disability (11%; n=10); and
- ❖ Those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities (11%; n=10).

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text on what could be done to encourage young males to disclose their experiences of sexual exploitation. The top three suggestions were:

- ❖ More awareness raising amongst young males about the sexual exploitation of young males (40%);
- ❖ Target schools to raise the issue of the sexual exploitation of young males and enable schools to be a place that helps facilitate disclosure (15%);
- ❖ Media exposure and campaigns to demonstrate young males can be victims of CSE (13%).

### **5.10 Reasons for non-identification by professionals**

Presented with a list of generic reasons, taken from the literature, as to why professionals may not identify sexual exploitation as an issue for young people, both male and female, respondents were asked to indicate their opinion as to whether each factor was more of a reason for non-

identification for a male than a female, equally as likely, less likely, or do not know. These results are in Table 5.12.

There were only two factors respondents believed were more likely to impede identification of males than females. These were:

- ❖ No available/appropriate service to disclose to (49%; n=45);
- ❖ Professionals' personal discomfort talking about the issue (47%; n=43);

**Table 5.12: Factors more of a reason for non-identification for males than females**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>More likely</b>	<b>Equally likely</b>	<b>Less likely</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Personal discomfort talking about the issue</i>	47 (n=43)	42 (n=38)	9 (n=8)	2 (n=2)
<i>View victim as a willing participant</i>	42 (n=38)	42 (n=38)	14 (n=13)	2 (n=2)
<i>Lack of confidence in talking about the issue</i>	46 (n=42)	48 (n=44)	5 (n=4)	1 (n=1)
<i>Too complex to deal with</i>	36 (n=33)	59 (n=54)	4 (n=3)	1 (n=1)
<i>Fear of re-traumatising the victim</i>	11 (n=10)	71 (n=65)	10 (n=9)	8 (n=7)
<i>No available/appropriate service to deal with it</i>	48 (n=44)	35 (n=32)	9 (n=8)	8 (n=7)
<i>Minimises the impact of the abuse<sup>46</sup></i>	32 (n=29)	49 (n=45)	8 (n=7)	8 (n=7)

<sup>46</sup> Three per cent did not rate this option.

The second set of questions related specifically to young males. Provided with a list of generic reasons, based on findings from research, respondents were asked what may inhibit identification of CSE in males by other professionals. They were asked to select all that applied, rating the reasons in order of most to least likely.

From the pre-determined reasons provided to respondents, as in Table 5.13, the top three factors which respondents believed were most likely to inhibit identification for males were:

- ❖ A lack of knowledge about the exploitation of males (73%);
- ❖ Criminal behaviour can mask their victimhood (64%);
- ❖ Thinking males are the perpetrators rather than victims (49%).

The three reasons least often chosen by respondents were:

- ❖ Bias against homosexuality (if abuse is male) (20%);
- ❖ If abuser is female, this is viewed as a 'conquest' for the male (22%); and
- ❖ Thinking males should protect themselves (26%).



**Table 5.13: Reasons most likely to inhibit identification of CSE in young males**

<i>Reason</i>	<i>% as one of top 3 chosen</i>	<i>% who did not rate option</i>
<i>Fear of appearing discriminatory or homophobic (if abuser is male)</i>	28 (n=14)	45
<i>Thinking males are the perpetrators rather than victims</i>	49 (n=27)	40
<i>Thinking males can cope better than females</i>	35 (n=16)	49
<i>Thinking males cannot be victims</i>	36 (n=17)	48
<i>Thinking males should protect themselves</i>	26 (n=13)	45
<i>Criminal behaviour can mask their victimhood</i>	64 (n=40)	31
<i>A young male abuse by a female is not viewed as seriously as abuse by a male</i>	32 (n=18)	37
<i>Bias against homosexuality (if abuse is male)</i>	20 (n=9)	49
<i>A lack of knowledge about the exploitation of males</i>	73 (n= 46)	31
<i>If abuser is female, this is viewed as a 'conquest' for the male</i>	22 (n=10)	49

Again, showing the number of respondents who chose each option as one of their top three reasons for non-identification illustrates the importance placed on each option as an impediment to identification. Similarly, the percentage who did not rate the respective options at all is noted in this way to demonstrate the lack of importance respondents placed on them as impediments.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text on what could be done to help professionals identify CSE in males. The top three suggestions were:

- ❖ Training for professionals on the sexual exploitation of young males (67%);
- ❖ An increase in challenge to professionals regarding their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs surrounding the sexual exploitation of young males (19%); and

- ❖ Raise awareness generally with all specifically regarding the sexual exploitation of young males (15%).

## **5.11 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an overview of the findings from the quantitative method used within this study – a survey of young people using the YLT survey and a survey of professionals. The findings revealed levels of commonality and dissonance between the views of young people and professionals in relation to what they believed to be the most and least relevant barriers to disclosure and impediments to identification; this entails consideration of gender of young person. Further analysis of these findings, together with the qualitative findings in this study, will form the basis of the following four chapters – six to nine.

## **Research Findings**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this study was to achieve a valuable range of data which would deliver the best outcomes for this study: to identify potential impediments to the recognition of males under the age of 18. The methodology, chapter four, provided a description of and explanation for the methods chosen to achieve this, highlighting the significance of involving both professionals and young people. Following an overview of the quantitative findings presented in chapter five, this part of the thesis explores in more detail both the quantitative and qualitative findings from all participant groups.

The underpinning theme throughout this thesis is consideration of the impact of masculinity upon the recognition of CSE in males. Chapter six examines stereotypical assumptions based on masculine ideology and their influence upon recognition of CSE in males. This leads into chapter seven, exploring current understanding of CSE in the wider context and specifically in relation to young males. In light of both ideological assumptions regarding masculinity and levels of awareness surrounding CSE, I then consider what this means, in terms of recognition, when the perpetrator is one gender versus another; this is the focus of chapter eight. Remaining with the underlying theme of masculinity, chapter nine examines co-presenting issues of youth offending and paramilitarism in the context of recognition of CSE amongst young males.

In the overview of the findings, chapter five, it was noted where respondents to the two surveys did not rate pre-determined options. The quantitative findings referred to throughout these chapters are, therefore, based only on those who did respond to the questions. Quotations from respondents to the professionals' survey will be referred to as 'PS', followed by the number of their survey and sector (if provided). Quotations from professional interviewees will be referred to

as 'PI', followed by the number of their interview and agency. An explanation of the categories used for respondents to the YLT survey can be found in Appendix 8.

## **Chapter six: Stereotypical assumptions regarding masculinity and the impact on the recognition of CSE in young males**

### **6.1 Introduction**

As highlighted in chapter two, the literature review, much of the literature surrounding a lack of recognition of, and silence amongst, young males as victims of sexual assault, suggests significant influencers to be societal ideologies of gender construction and aligned expectations of masculinity. Acknowledging himself as a victim of sexual exploitation, therefore, has the potential for the young male to be perceived, by himself and/or others, as failing to live up to the expectations of this masculine ideology; perceptions which can deter disclosure of abuse. In a similar manner, stereotypical gender constructs can also negatively impact professional identification of young males as victims. Shame, self-blame and a sense of helplessness are three primary concepts highlighted in the literature as associated with the consequences of CSA on males. Recognising these as feelings also relevant to young female victims of sexual assault, a comparison between both genders permits an exploration of their particular influence on a young males' disclosure.

### **6.2 Not the victim...**

There can potentially be a number of reasons why the concept of 'victim' is seen to infringe all that is stereotypically 'male'. The YLT and professionals' surveys considered the impact of the young male as a victim on two levels: others' views of him as a victim and the young males' own view of himself as a victim. Both will be addressed in turn.

### *Others' views of the young male as a victim*

Almost three quarters of professional survey respondents (72%; n=66) thought a barrier to disclosure for young males would be the belief of others that CSE does not happen to males. The degree of importance placed on this as a barrier to disclosure was evident in their rating of it; over half (52%; n=34) rated it as one of the three most likely reasons for non-disclosure. In comparison, of the 18% (n=205) of young people who stated they would probably not, definitely not, or did not know if they would disclose, over one-quarter (29%; n=288) stated their reason for hesitancy was their perception that no-one would believe them. Interestingly, it was rated as the third most important reason by females (35%), and the sixth most important by males (21%). It should be noted that young people were responding to what they would do in this situation as opposed to what someone else would do. This may help explain the difference in how relevant young people saw this as a barrier to disclosure for them, and in particular young males, and how professionals perceived it as a barrier to young males. The YLT results somewhat challenge the stereotypical assumption that, fear of not being believed, may be more of a barrier to disclosure for young male victims of CSE than females.

Although 40% of respondents to the YLT survey believed young males and females experience similar levels of CSE, 47% believed it happens more to females than males. These results do not necessarily suggest respondents are more likely to view young females than males as victims, but simply that they viewed CSE as happening more often to females. Thirty-nine per cent of the young people believed professionals take the sexual exploitation of females more seriously than that of males. They viewed a professionals' belief that 'boys cannot be victims' as the second most likely reason for this, chosen by over half (54%; n=204) of respondents; males seen as abusers rather than victims was thought to be the most likely inhibitor. Proportionately more females than males rated this as a reason (a difference of 8%).

Darren, one young male interviewee, speaking about the investigation into his alleged sexual exploitation, expressed his disappointment that it did not proceed to prosecution, only because he wanted to prove CSE happens to males:

*I do wish it had gone through because it would have been a wake-up call because so many people try to brush it off, 'oh it doesn't happen to males'. (Darren, aged 18).*

Fifty-one per cent (n=47) of professionals rated the same belief, 'thinking males cannot be victims' as a reason for non-identification of CSE. However, opinion was divided amongst professionals as to the influence this had on non-identification with 36% (n=17) rating it as one of the three most likely reasons and the remainder viewing it as having less influence. Therefore, professionals and young people shared a similar view on this issue.

The quotes below from respondents to the YLT survey suggested a need to challenge the misperception that young males cannot be victims of CSE. These comments were offered in additional text at the end of the survey.

*People need to be made aware that males are exploited just as much as females.*

(YLT, Male 6, Category 1)

*Males can be seen as victims just as much as women can.*

(YLT, Male 8, Category 1)

*I believe it is unfair to young males who are victims of CSE to not be given as much attention and care if it happened to them as a female would. Both genders should be treated equally in all manners especially early sexual exploitation - no gender is weaker or stronger than the other, mentally. (YLT, Female 2, Category 2).*

There was variation in the narratives from professional participants regarding the status of young males being recognised as victims, and consequently responded to. Some professionals reported improvements:

*It's improving. When you see police attendance at meetings and you hear what is being said, there is much more chance now of boys being seen as victims as well. So, it's not equal but it is improving. (PI 4, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*...from my perspective I think the legislation and procedures are sufficient and used in the same way. We utilise CAWNS, child abduction warning notices, for young males and young females where there is a concern. It's being more tuned in and aware that this can apply to both genders. (PI 7, Police).*

A minority of professionals appeared less assured of equity in terms of identification and response to young males and females, as exemplified in the quote below:

*Where there has been a disclosure I think legislation is probably used in the same way, but I think where there is only suspicion, for example, where you might use a harbouring notice,<sup>47</sup> I'm not quite sure people would automatically do that with boys because there seems to be an attitude that unless CSE is disclosed there is still a tendency to think that boys are just being boys, they are being naughty boys. (PI 6 Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Where positive procedural developments were seen to have happened generally for victims of CSE, specific concerns remained regarding males' identification as victims:

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<sup>47</sup> A harbouring notice is another term for a child abduction warning notice (CAWN).



*I think there have been a lot of developments in terms of multi-agency partnership working ... my only thing about them is...there seems to be a higher level of young females referred...into the meeting – they seem disproportionate to young men...you can't tell me that out of all these services sat around here there isn't a boy or young man that you are working with where there aren't these potential risks. (PI 2, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*I know there have been some areas where they've had large rings of boys being exploited... and I've said, 'well we've never had any of those referrals' and they look at me blankly and say 'no we wouldn't refer the boys'; so, I'm not quite sure who they refer the boys to, if anybody... (PI 6, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

A minority of professional interviewees gave a view on what response a young male victim might receive:

*There are some services that focus on adult males selling sex and we've known some young males under the age of 18 and 16 being referred to those services – I mean, what does this say to young males? ...Other times they are sent into the sexually harmful behaviour services; rarely seen as victims of CSE... (PI 4, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

A professional interviewee provided an observation on when concerns regarding young males should be pursued:

*...some young men may not present as that high level of risk because they are just being picked up on the periphery of other things, where someone just has a suspicion or worried about it...that's what we are missing, low level work, and maybe we should be working with those low-level concerns... (PI 1, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Other factors were highlighted by professional interviewees as influencing the recognition of males as victims of CSE, such as, the physiological reaction of the male to sexual touch. They questioned how this might result in the young male, or others, questioning his victimhood, irrespective of the gender of the perpetrator, or his own sexual identity. Two participants illustrated the potential implications of such misconceptions for disclosure by young males:

*I have worked with men who have been raped and it did go to court but, because it came out that they did get an erection, the defence just slaughtered them saying 'you must have enjoyed it because you got an erection'. (PI 27, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*If they have been raped and experienced the symptoms of arousal it can then force them to consider, are they gay, and can set off a whole series of questioning and feeling insecure in their sense of self and what they believed, so that can be an added complication. (PI 21, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

This theme is addressed again later, in chapter eight, as an inhibitor to the recognition of CSE in males.

The findings reported above represent the views of professionals and young people in relation to the perceived failure of others to see young males as victims of CSE, and the impact of this upon recognition. Professionals viewed this as more of an inhibitor to disclosure for young males than young people viewed it, particularly young males. However, young people and professionals shared a common view that others' failure to view males as victims was a significant impediment to identification. There were also mixed responses in accounts from professionals as to how they viewed this situation improving. I now turn to consider to what extent the young males' view of himself as a victim of CSE was regarded as a barrier to his disclosure.

### *The young males' view of himself as a victim*

As discussed above, of those participants in the YLT survey who stated they would probably not, definitely not, or did not know if they would disclose (18%; n=205), they were asked the reasons for this. Just over one-third (34%; n=345) of those respondents stated that 'not wanting to be seen as a victim' would be a reason for not reporting the experience. There was no significant difference in males and females choosing this as a reason (36% and 33% respectively). Despite the small difference between males and females, cognisance should still be taken of the fact that this was perceived by males as the fourth most significant reason and the sixth most significant by females.

Respondents to the professionals' survey were asked to compare whether the young person 'not viewing him/herself as a victim' was more of a reason for non-disclosure amongst young males than females. Over half (57%; n=52) of respondents to the professional survey believed this was equally likely to be a reason for non-disclosure for both males and females. However, over one third (35%; n=32) thought this was more likely to be a reason for males not disclosing. This suggests that, although professionals viewed this as a relevant factor in prohibiting disclosure of CSE by both genders, it was perceived as being of greater significance for young males.

It should be noted that the above two factors, 'not wanting to be seen as a victim' and 'not viewing him/herself as a victim', are not the same; a young person may view him/herself as a victim yet not wish others to believe this of them.

The quantitative findings in relation to the perception of the young male as a victim, and the impact of these views on recognition, varied somewhat between the two respondent groups – young people and professionals. Young people did not hold to the perception that 'others will not believe them' as a significant barrier to disclosure. Furthermore, this was seen as even less important by males than females. Contrary to this, professionals believed a young males' belief of others thinking CSE does not happen to males, to be a significant barrier to his disclosure.

In terms of identification, again there was some dissonance between the perception of young people and professionals. Young people thought professionals' belief that boys cannot be victims could significantly impede identification of them as victims. Whilst professionals held the same opinion about other professionals, opinion was more divided. I now turn to consider the second part of the victim/perpetrator divide and the impact upon recognition of CSE in males.

### **6.3...The perpetrator**

The literature review, chapter two, highlighted the assumption that often makes a causal link between a male survivor of CSA becoming a perpetrator of it. Moreover, males are also generally seen as perpetrators of other crime rather than victims, irrespective of previous abuse. Three questions posed within the two surveys inferred this related to sexual perpetration, using the words 'predator', 'abuser', and 'perpetrator'. However, my data does not assume it is a victim becoming a perpetrator.

The main reason young people believed professionals view the sexual exploitation of young males less seriously than females was because males are seen as abusers rather than victims (80%; n=304). The comments below demonstrate the view that such a perception of young males only as perpetrators needs to change:

*Males are seen as abusers rather than victims of CSE, but this isn't true, and this belief needs to change (YLT, Male 28, Category 6).*

*...I believe focus needs to be put on solving genuine cases rather than perpetuating the idea that all men are abusers/all women are victims. (YLT, Female 33, Category 2).*

Darren, a young male interviewee, reiterated this:

*I feel that we are seen as the people that do it, but males are also the victims. (Darren, aged 17).*

Almost half (49%; n=27) of professionals perceived other professionals' belief that 'males are the perpetrators rather than victims' to be one of the three most likely reasons to inhibit identification. Overall, it was rated the third most likely reason for non-identification.

There was specific reference, by the majority of professionals, to how the real or perceived sexual harmful behaviour of young males overshadowed attempts to respond to them as victims of CSE. For young males who did perpetrate sexual harm against others, professional participants perceived there to be minimal regard to or questioning of the potential origins of the behaviour, or the potential for dual status:

*Finding themselves being, not so much as a victim, but potentially going down the criminal route or being referred to a harmful sexual behaviour service... (PI 2, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

The following comment reiterates this point, but perhaps suggests there may have been some progress in the recognition of males as potentially being both victim and perpetrator:

*...for lots of boys I worked with then, who were described as perpetrators of sexual harm or sexual abuse, but actually lots of those boys were being exploited themselves or were vulnerable to being exploited...those who sexually harm can also be vulnerable victims. (PI 22, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

The same professional provided a case example of professional misperception and inappropriate response regarding a 15 year old male, demonstrating the challenge to achieve recognition of the dual status of a young male as both victim and potential perpetrator:

*He has spoken about being befriended by a number of adult males who we knew to be of concern...But when we wanted to raise the vulnerabilities for this lad - and he is 15 but he's six foot, he's quite heavily built, he's got a learning difficulty - but no-one wanted to see him as being vulnerable or being exploited, and were seeing him as a perpetrator only. ...there are those definite risks [as him posing a risk] but equally, this is a boy we now know was being picked up of evenings, by adults of concern, taken from one area to another area and not being returned home until three or four in the morning with nobody reporting him as not being home. It took quite a lot of advocacy from the service to get people to accept this was a lad who is vulnerable as well as posing a risk... (PI 22, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

One specific case example illustrated how, even in the absence of perceived harmful behaviour, a presumption of guilt can still exist regarding the young male victim of CSE:

*...we've had some contact with the Roma community. There is an example of a 12 year old lad where he and a young girl were both being sexually exploited by adults, but the language used about him was that he was a perpetrator. The girl involved, who was also being exploited by the adults, was marginally older and she was seen as a victim, but both had been exploited. He was seen as facilitating it...as sexually harmful rather than being seen as vulnerable to sexual exploitation too. (PI 4, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

One young male interviewee spoke of a similar experience where, despite he and his female friend being exploited together, others perceived him as exploiting her:

*People were saying I was pimping her out because I went with her and I felt like absolute crap; it was horrible because still to this day, if I mention her name people still say, 'oh weren't you pimping her out?' (Connor, aged 18).*

Professionals' believed 'fear of being viewed as a potential perpetrator' was not a strong barrier to disclosure for young males, with less than one-tenth (6%; n=3) choosing this as one of the three most likely reasons for non-disclosure.

This sub-section has demonstrated the views of all participant groups on the extent to which the propensity to view young male as perpetrators of abuse rather than the victim of it, represented a potential impediment to recognition of CSE in males. There was a common belief from participants in both surveys that this assumption was a significant potential impediment to identification. However, professionals did not estimate the young males' fear of being viewed as a perpetrator to be a critical barrier to disclosure. The stereotypical assumptions of males and impact on recognition continues with consideration of males as the 'protector' of self and others.

#### **6.4 The male as protector of self**

One of the traits inherent in masculine ideology, as examined in the literature review, chapter two, is that of protector of self and others. To be perceived as a victim of sexual assault is seen to contravene this concept and was, therefore, relevant for inclusion in this study. Of the respondents to the YLT survey who said they would probably not, definitely not, or did not know if they would disclose (18%; n=205), the third most common reason chosen by both males and females (37%; n=372), was the feeling 'I should be able to protect myself'. Interestingly, only slightly more males (40%) than females (35%) selected this option. The professional survey did not allow for a comparison to be made between this being a barrier for young males and females. However, it did produce a response specifically in relation to young males. Professionals viewed the young males' belief that he should be able to protect himself, as the most likely barrier to disclosure, with over two-thirds (68%; n=47) choosing it as one of the three most likely reasons for non-disclosure. This finding correlates with that of the YLT survey indicating a shared perception of this as an important inhibitor to disclosure for males.

The comments below demonstrate how the stereotypical ideology of the male as strong may prevent disclosure of his experience of CSE:

*Males are seen as stronger and may have a harder time convincing someone that they were hurt. (YLT, Male 29, Category 6).*

*Need to remove the 'alpha-male' stereotype; boys who feel they shouldn't let themselves be victimised may be more unlikely to ask for help. (YLT, Male 27, Category 6).*

*I feel many males do face sexual exploitation, however, due to...maybe pride, and a sense of being strong they are less likely to report this. (YLT, Female 17, Category 2).*

The belief that young males should be able to protect themselves was viewed by professionals as having some influence on their non-identification as victims of CSE. However, professional survey respondents were divided in their opinion as to the significance of this as an impediment, with just over one-quarter (28%; n=14) choosing this as one of the three most likely reasons.

The concept of the male as 'protector' featured as a common theme amongst both professional and young male interviews in terms of identification, perceiving professionals to be either unable or unwilling to conceive of males as being weak. There was a perception young males had to adhere to a pre-existing stereotype of masculinity, able to protect themselves from abusive situations. There was also a perception that such myths resulted in disparity in professionals' responses between young male and female victims:

*... a young lad maybe 15/16 goes missing, maybe three or four times in a month ...They (professionals) think nothing of it because he's a bloke and he can look after himself. A girl*



*goes missing for one or two days and it's all over Face Book, it's all over [name of country] online, it's out there...* (P23, Voluntary CSE specialist).

*I think there's still an attitude that lads can look after themselves.* (P6, Voluntary CSE specialist).

One interviewee suggested these inherent societal preconceptions, regarding a young male's ability to self-protect, can influence professional assessment of risk to young males, thus affording them less protection:

*whilst we all try to be impartial and non-judgemental, I think we are naïve to think it doesn't influence us on some level.* (P16, Social Services).

The potential for this belief to influence identification of a male as a victim of CSE was reflected by a young male interviewee. He drew the following comparison from his own experience as a victim, and how his perception of others' response may have influenced his decision not to disclose:

*...if a man does something to a woman it's seen as massive...it's like 'you're a young girl, you're fragile, this wee thing that has to be protected...but young male... you're a man, not seen as vulnerable... 'you should be able to sort this out yourself...how did you get yourself into that?'* (Sammy, aged 21).

Despite the prevailing view in society that males are generally considered physically stronger than females, one interviewee aptly explained the irrelevance of this when it involves sexual assault and associated trauma:

*...it doesn't account for the sense of paralysis that sets in once you are experiencing terror. (P21, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

Findings from this study's quantitative data suggest that both professionals and young people believe expectations that young males should protect themselves to be a significant barrier to disclosure. Whilst professionals did not view this as significant an impediment to identification, the qualitative data clearly demonstrated its relevance to non-identification. Related to the concept of the male as self-protector, further qualitative data from professionals and young males illustrated an additional feature of the male as protector, that of self-preservation. Next, I address participants' views on the potential impact of this on recognition of CSE in males.

### *The expectation of self-preservation*

Although not posed as a question to participants, 'survival sex' was one descriptor as a route into CSE for males where the need to survive was seen, by professional and young male participants, to supersede the decision to disclose abusive experiences. Pete's experience was a case in point:

*Obviously, I didn't want to do it. I did it because it was a way of surviving; I needed money; I was homeless...this other bloke always put it that they were helping me out because I was homeless, and he was finding people for me... It's just something you get into and it's a way of surviving and sometimes you've just got no choice but to do the dirty things just to get on in life. (Pete, aged 30).*

One professional interviewee also provided a case example of 'survival sex' which, like Pete, became normality for the young man about whom they spoke:

*I worked with a young male who spends a lot of time sleeping rough and when it gets really cold and he just can't face another night out, or he can't break into a car for that*

*night for somewhere to sleep, he actually said to me 'you know well when I just can't bear being cold again I go stay at this flat and I know I will just have to take it up the bum but that's just what I've got to do sometimes'. (P24, Independent).*

Both examples above show how the inhibition to disclose can be strengthened by the young males' belief in the perpetrator as his route to survival. However, it is known from the literature that this is also common for female victims of CSE. Pete recognised his exploitation ceased because his body was no longer 'currency' for survival:

*I think I was just exploited because I was young, and I had a nice slim body...and a baby face and the older men like that...And when I started getting older they weren't as interested as when I was younger. (Pete, aged 30).*

The relevance of this to disclosure is that, even after Pete became less attractive to his perpetrators and the exploitation ceased, his choice not to disclose was reinforced by his belief that these men had helped him survive. His previously acquired dependence on one particular perpetrator for survival created a complexity of feelings for Pete, including a sense of guilt and loyalty to his main perpetrator:

*I felt a bit guilty as well that he [perpetrator] was being charged because...he was helping me. When he went to prison I felt ever so guilty because he was old, and I didn't want him to go to prison... I did feel really bad. (Pete, aged 30).*

Consideration should also be given to how the young males' apparent 'accommodation' of the exploitation may lend itself to the inaction of professionals in terms of identifying him as a victim. Rather, what can be perceived is a young male who is coping or acting as a 'willing participant', exemplifying the concept of condoned consent (see the literature review). The absence of

physical distress, in Pete's example above, is an appropriate illustration of this and reinforced by a professional interviewee:

*I also come across an attitude from...family and professionals, that when the young man says he's coping and he's alright there's no pressure to encourage them to accept help...whereas when a girl has been abused or raped everybody seems to rally round and encourage her... (P6, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

This sense, by a minority of professionals, that males can cope better than females could be applied to several aspects of discourse throughout this study. However, I will address it at this juncture. Professionals were divided in their opinion as to whether others' view that young males can cope better than females is an impediment to identification of CSE in males. Over one-third (35%; n=16) of respondents rated it amongst the three most likely reasons for non-identification of males, although no-one chose it as their number one option. This correlates with young peoples' perception that professionals take the sexual exploitation of males less seriously than that of females.

Any notion that males can cope better than females, and act as an impediment to identification of CSE in males, perhaps has correlations with a minimisation of the impact of the abuse on males. This theme is addressed later regarding female perpetrators. More generally, respondents to the professionals' survey were asked to indicate whether 'minimising the impact of the abuse' was more of a reason for non-identification of male than female victims. Almost half (49%; n=45) perceived this to be equally likely a reason for non-identification of CSE in young males and females; however, almost one third (32%; n=29) believed it to be more of an impediment to the identification of males.

As Pete intimated above, a decision not to disclose experiences of CSE can also be predicated upon a young males' compulsion to protect others, whether this emanates from himself or others, or indeed societal expectations of the male. It is this aspect to which I now turn.

## **6.5 The male as protector of others**

Qualitative data from professionals and young males revealed a perception of the young males' need to protect others as well as himself, and the potential impact of this upon disclosure of his own victimhood. Several professional participants provided examples of this. Although the following examples may not be peculiar to young males, they demonstrate the responsibility young males experience in attempting to protect others:

*...it can be drilled into young people from a very young age, this is how we speak, this is how we present...there's a fear there...a whole range of issues that young males have spoken to me about and said, 'I couldn't possibly tell my parents because it won't look good on them'. (PI 11, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

The second example depicted a young male who was sexually exploited from the age of 12, yet adamant he could not risk hurting his mother by disclosing:

*He was very, very concerned about his mum. 'My mum lives in there and if my mum knew...it would devastate her, and all the neighbours would be looking at her'. (PI 8, Voluntary non-CSE specialist).*

For some young male victims, the need to protect family from even greater physical consequences was evident:

*One of the other barriers is that sort of manipulation that goes on – 'if you tell anybody about this...I'm going to kill you; your family is going to get it as well'. So, young men think*

*'I can't say this...I'm okay, I can do this...I'll just be abused as long as my mother, as long as my father, as long as my granny, as long as my brothers and my sisters are perfectly fine; I can shield them from this'; and maybe it's back to the masculinity issue – I can protect my family by just getting on with it.* (PI 29, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).

The fear of repercussions for others (and self) if young males disclose was particularly evident where they resided in paramilitary controlled communities in NI, as documented in chapter eight. Such paramilitary controlled communities were seen to create a level of connectedness between individuals within the community which heightened the young males' need to protect family, thus functioning as an inhibitor to disclosure. One young man described to his worker how, disclosure of his exploitation and who was responsible for it, would metaphorically be like the collapse of a 'house of cards'; a risk he was not prepared to take:

*...his mum lived in that estate, granny lived in that estate and everybody would be talking, and it would just fall to pieces and he was never ever going to be the one who was going to do that – he would never be the one who would bring that down because the consequences were just far too high for him.* (PI 8, Voluntary, non CSE specialist).

There was a strong perception of a wish not to burden recipients with the information or feel that the potential recipient is too emotionally unstable to receive the information about the exploitation. The potential consequences of the young males' perceived failure to live up to the expectations as protector of self and others are feelings of shame, self-blame and helplessness. All three concepts were posed as questions in the professionals' and YLT surveys (with the exception of self-blame not being addressed in the YLT survey), the findings of which are presented below.

## *Shame*

Respondents to the YLT survey most often chose shame as the reason they would not report an experience of CSE. More females than males chose this as a reason (55% as opposed to 43%), however, it was the category most often chosen by males as a reason for non-disclosure.

The professional survey also produced results comparing respondents' views of shame as an inhibitor to disclosure for young male and female victims. Over two-thirds of respondents perceived shame to be more likely to inhibit disclosure for males than females (69%; n=62), whilst just over a quarter (28%; n=25) believed it to be equally likely an inhibitor to disclosure for both genders. The results of both surveys show dissonance between how young people and professionals view shame as an inhibitor for young males, perhaps challenging stereotypical assumptions regarding the potential for males to experience greater shame.

The following three quotes from professionals signify, to some extent, the strength of feeling amongst professional respondents as to why shame is perceived by them as a significant factor for male victims of CSE. They reflect how they perceive some of the implications of shame, and in one example, how manifestation of it can link to the theme around criminality:

*We find the sense of shame held by young men is more often not overcome and young men will become entrenched in substance misuse and alcohol to manage feelings of shame. (PS, 51, Police).*

*I don't think we should under-estimate the impact of shame... shame...for 'letting it take place', but for some young males, where their CSE is perpetrated by a male, then you can have all those levels of shame and then you can have 'actually this was a man that did this to me'... (PI 24, Independent).*

*I think some of our young men are so ashamed that they are actually dangerous...their antenna for disrespect is so sensitive, because of what their trauma has been, that they*

*are inclined... towards more extreme violence in terms of abuse of themselves and others...in terms of substance misuse, alcohol, involvement in fights and aggression. I think potentially some of the young people we would experience as most dangerous are most shame filled, and shame fuelled. (PI 6, Youth Justice Agency).*

A sense of shame was also acknowledged by some of the young males during their interviews:

*I feel like just ashamed and it's wrong because I'm a male and it doesn't happen to males, but it does. (Darren, aged 17).*

*Yea, I felt like a bit of a mug; I felt used; I felt a bit dirty, a bit ashamed. I did feel guilty; I did feel really bad...It doesn't make you feel good about yourself...men feel more ashamed and dirty about it. (Pete, aged 30).*

Two female respondents to the YLT survey acknowledged the impact of shame on male victims of CSE and conveyed the importance of males feeling safe to report without feeling ashamed:

*We are not the only victims...young boys are sexually exploited and never come forward due to shame or if people might laugh at them. (YLT, Female 26, Category 2).*

*... I worry that males may suffer in silence due to embarrassment and that they feel it is just them as other males can't be sexually manipulated. (YLT, Female 38, Category 5).*

Based on the quantitative data there was a level of dissonance between how young people and professionals viewed shame as a barrier for both genders. However, respondents from each participant group gave accounts of how they viewed shame as a barrier to young males' disclosure and a young males' response to shame, with references to self-blame as a cause of it.



### *Self-blame*

As noted above, self-blame did not feature as a question in the YLT survey. However, almost two thirds (65%; n=59) of professionals believed self-blame to be equally likely an inhibitor to disclosure for males and females, with just under a quarter (22%; n=20) believing it to be more of a barrier for young males than females. This relates to earlier the discussion regarding self-preservation and the concept of 'survival sex' where the young male views the exchange of sex as a currency for survival. In Pete's case a sense of self-blame was apparent in his expression of guilt at the sentencing of his perpetrator.

As explored later in chapter eight, self-blame may also be evident in a young gay male victim who believes his homosexuality caused the exploitation (if perpetrated by another male). For example, Darren had thought his homosexuality had possibly caused him to be sexually exploited. This following quote portrays an element of self-blame after his exploitation had been discovered:

*So, told my step mum and I burst into tears and I text my mum and my gran to say I've been involved in this 'please don't think less of me'. (Darren, aged 17).*

Blaming oneself as a victim of CSE may result in acceptance of the exploitative situation and thereby, a sense of helplessness to change it.

### *Sense of helplessness*

A sense of helplessness featured as an issue in both surveys, although no further explanation was provided as to its meaning in this context. Having a sense of helplessness was the fourth most frequently chosen reason by young people for non-disclosure, with almost one third (30%; n=300) selecting it. Ten per cent more females than males reported this as a reason why they may not disclose (34% as opposed to 24%). Similar to the concept of 'shame', I find this latter

result somewhat surprising, given the strength of opinion by young people that a greater barrier to disclosure for males than females is the young males' belief that he should be able to protect himself. One would suppose if the male believes he has failed in protecting himself, his sense of helplessness would be greater.

Almost three quarters of professional respondents (72%; n=65) believed a sense of helplessness to be equally likely a reason for non-disclosure for males and females, with one quarter (20%; n=18) believing a sense of helplessness to be more likely a reason for non-disclosure amongst young males.

Whilst both young people and professionals recognised a sense of helplessness as a barrier to disclosure for both genders, there was a level of dissonance as to the significance both groups placed on this for males and females. While more young females than males reported it as a barrier to disclosure for them, professionals tended to see it as a greater barrier for males. Whilst these issues allowed for comparisons to be made regarding the impact on recognition of males and females, the following sub-section addresses a potential barrier specific to male victims of CSE, that of a threat to their masculinity.

## **6.6 Threat to masculinity**

The concept of masculinity underpins much of the discourse in relation to the sexual abuse of males. My findings showed there to be quite a strong perception amongst professionals that a young males' perceived threat to his masculinity is a factor influencing non-disclosure. Sixty-nine per cent (n=63) of professional respondents believed this to be the case, with almost half (48%; n=30) of those rating it as one of the three most likely reasons for non-disclosure. Quantitative data was not sought from young people in relation to threat to masculinity as a barrier to disclosure.

The quotes below reflect how a minority of young males and professionals perceived the impact of CSE on a males' sense of masculinity and the subsequent influence on disclosure:

*Boys aren't going to tell because it's going to make them feel...immasculine...it will make them feel weaker. (Adam, aged 17).*

*I think the feelings of emasculation and shame associated with a boy disclosing that abuse is an additional barrier to disclosing really. (Greg, aged 22).*

*...for a boy it's much worse because men/boys are meant to be strong and that might make them feel physically inside that they are weak and unable to defend themselves.... (Malcolm, aged 14).*

*...the expectations of masculinity which CSE kind of rocks to the core... (PI 10, Social Services).*

*...for a boy there is the risk that they will be seen to lose their masculinity and if a boy feels he has lost his masculinity...the whole thing about masculinity that girls don't necessarily have to deal with. (PI 6, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*I think one of their biggest fears...is their loss of masculinity...and 'I'm a man'. These communities are all built on strength and power and the size of your muscles, and to say those things out loud... is to take away from all of that never mind then if a report is written about it or the police get involved or these things start to get unpicked and that loss of masculinity is terrifying – terrifying to the point where I do believe young men would take their own lives before they would actually disclose that. (PI 8, Voluntary, non CSE specialist).*

It was evident from the quantitative data from professionals and qualitative data from young males and professionals that both recognised the cost of disclosure to a young males' sense of masculinity, irrespective of his sexuality. Many of the barriers discussed above can be impacted by, as well as impact the ability of young male to communicate about their experiences. For this reason, it is critical to understand and to dispel any myths surrounding the communication strategies of young males. This forms the concluding sub-section of this chapter.

## **6.7 Communication strategies**

As explored in the literature review, chapter two, one of the stereotypical assumptions surrounding males generally is that of a diminished capacity to communicate about matters of an emotional or sensitive nature, compared to females. As presented in chapter five, half (50%; n=45) of professional survey respondents believed a lack of communication strategies was more of a reason for non-disclosure by males than females. However, less than one fifth (18%; n=11) of professionals also rated a lack of emotional vocabulary amongst the three most likely reasons for inhibiting disclosure by males. This suggests their lack of communication strategies were potentially a result of other factors.

Overall, YLT survey respondents stated their second most likely reason for not reporting would be their difficulty in explaining what happened (49%; n=495). Interestingly, however, 15% more females than males (56% as opposed to 41%) indicated this as a barrier to disclosure. This finding might appear to contradict the finding that YLT respondents believed it was more difficult for young males than females to report CSE (29% as opposed to 4%). However, their response regarding 'difficulty explaining' related to them personally, whereas the former related to young people generally. Further research, contextualising the reasons why both males and females have difficulty explaining their experiences of CSE, may reveal if there is any divergence in the reasons for this. (See recommendations, chapter eleven). Johnny described how he saw this divergence:

*...a boy wouldn't really come forward about it as such because they are meant to be 'oh I've no feelings; I hold my feelings', but there comes a point where you can't hold your feelings. (Johnny, aged 18).*

A minority of professional interviewees compared how young females and males traditionally talk about sexual issues, such as CSE, with a suggestion as to what young males require, for example:

*They need the space and opportunity to talk about it. And I think that is different because girls probably grow up, whether it be CSE or other areas of sexual things, they grow up around people talking about it, being encouraged to talk about it, whereas for boys, there is much more shame around it...boys know if we aren't comfortable talking about it with them. (PI 4, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

This data demonstrates some of the difficulties young males may experience in communicating their experiences as victims of CSE; these may be inherent to their gender or a result of gender socialisation. Irrespective of the reason, it is important to take cognisance of a cautionary appeal from one professional interviewee not to allow conjecture, regarding young males' reluctance to disclose, to influence practice and to silence young male victims:

*Let's not make assumptions about gender because there is a bit of a stereotype that boys don't like to talk the way that girls do. Well, lots of boys don't, but lots of boys do. (PI 24, Independent).*

It is also pertinent to consider how a professionals' communication with young males might serve as an inhibitor to disclosure. One potential factor is a young males' perception of a previous negative response to disclosure from a professional. As presented in chapter five, both male and

female YLT survey respondents rated a previous poor response to disclosure as the least likely reason for non-disclosure. Professionals believed the opposite, with one-fifth (20%; n=18) believing this to be more of a reason for males' non-disclosure than females. Despite the lack of significance young people placed on this, two young male interviewees gave their perception of negative responses from professionals which contain learning in terms of how such responses could potentially impede disclosure:

*the police were horrible to me, the education and welfare officers...they were horrible to me; my social worker didn't understand me...no-one...I just wanted to not be judged...the police would come round to do a de-brief every time I went missing. I went missing 47 times and every time they came to do the de-brief they would normally come at two in the morning when I was sleeping and wake me up and tell me how much I'd wasted their time...just a bad kid and I've got loads of police looking for me while I'm out having fun. It was just unbelievable really, the sheer lack of interest the police had in my welfare and well-being. (Greg, aged 22).*

Malcolm referred to his experience of professionals' communication with him regarding his sexual exploitation:

*They [police] barely spoke to me and that was bad. They should have spoken to me more and asked me how I was feeling and how I thought about the situation, instead they were just 'did it happen, did it not?' (Malcolm, aged 14).*

One of the consequences of receiving a previous poor negative response to disclosure can be potential mistrust of others. Mistrust can, of course, also be the result of other factors. As presented in chapter five, almost one-quarter (22%; n=20) of professional survey respondents perceived mistrust to be more of a barrier for young males than females. A perceived lack of action from professionals' following his initial disclosures resulted in Simon's mistrust of them:

*And when I told them the carer was abusing me they wouldn't listen. They protect their own, don't they? I believe, as well, everybody has a hidden agenda. (Simon, aged 21).*

Greg was able to portray two similar situations he experienced which received two different responses from staff in the same agency – an A&E unit. The first response shows a lack of professional curiosity and concern; the second, an inquisitive and considerate response:

*I went to A&E twice with injuries from the perpetrators of the abuse they had caused... the first time I told them I was in a fight and they just said, 'you shouldn't be getting into fight, we have lives to save'. Everyone just told me how much I was just a useless waste of time really. But the second time I went to A&E a triage nurse said 'I don't believe you were in a fight; I think there's people that are doing this to you and I suspect you're not going to tell me but if you do then I will have to pass it on. And I just said 'well look, you know...' because of her warmth and just her display of interest in my life and my welfare and, even though I'd only met this woman I did, I told her everything I said, 'yes, I got beaten up by people and they make me have sex with them...' (Greg, aged 22).*

Other factors were evident within this study as having the potential to impact a professionals' ability to communicate on issues pertaining to the sexual exploitation of young males. These included, personal discomfort in talking about sexual issues; a lack of knowledge about male CSE; and a lack of confidence in talking about the issue. These are addressed in chapter seven of this thesis.

## 6.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings in relation to societal ideologies of gender construction, particularly those pertaining to the concept of masculinity, and their impact on recognition of male sexual exploitation. Variations on the concept that 'males cannot be victims' were explored with participants, including their own view of this, their perceptions of others' views. Young people perceived this as a primary reason why professionals might view the sexual exploitation of males less seriously than that of females. However, professional participants did not appear to place the same level of significance on this as an impediment to identification. They did, however, see how this belief being endorsed by other professionals would act as a barrier to disclosure for young males.

Young people, in particular young males, did not perceive the concept of 'no-one will believe me' as an important barrier to disclosure for them. Moreover, males believed this to be even less significant than females did. This showed a level of dissonance with how professional participants viewed it as a barrier to disclosure.

The physiological composition of the male and his physiological reaction to sexual touch was highlighted as one reason for the minimisation of victimhood of young males; that is, if he visibly appears as, or talks of, having been aroused, it is assumed he cannot have been abused. This also highlights a significant difference between the potential for males and females being viewed as a victim in that the same physiological reactions cannot be used to argue she is not a victim.

The expectation of the male as being able to protect himself was viewed as having a degree of influence over identification of males, however, opinion was divided. Both male and female young people did, however, view it as an important influencer over their disclosure. Qualitative data also permitted an analysis of expectations of self-preservation and the protection of others as negatively impacting on a young males' disclosure. The findings regarding feelings of shame,



self-blame and helplessness, as potential consequences of the young males' perceived failure to live up to his own expectations, and that of others, as protector of self and others were presented. Whilst being seen to influence non-disclosure of CSE in males, they somewhat challenge stereotypical assumptions of these as more critical barriers to disclosure for young males than females.

A perceived threat to a young males' masculinity was viewed by both professionals and young people as having a significant impact on the disclosure of CSE. Whilst there was similar concern for a young males' communication abilities impeding his disclosure, there was dissonance between how professionals and young people saw this differing between the two genders. It points to the importance of not allowing stereotypical assumptions regarding a young males' communication strategies to hinder the young males' potential disclosure. It is also critical to consider professionals' communication capabilities in relation to how it might either ensure or hinder identification or disclosure by young males. The ability for young males and professionals to communicate about CSE can, to a large extent, be dependent upon their level of awareness, the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter seven: Level of awareness impacting recognition of CSE in young males

This chapter focuses on the level of awareness of CSE amongst young people and professionals. The aim is to ascertain how awareness, or lack of it, impacts on recognition of CSE in males. I will first consider young males, followed by professionals.

As presented in chapter five, the majority of YLT survey respondents reported knowing 'a little' about CSE (64%; n=735), while 19% (n=223) said they knew either nothing about it or were not sure. Six per cent more males than females reported having no knowledge about CSE. Related to this, over one quarter (29%; n=26) of professional survey respondents believed a lack of cognitive awareness to name the abuse was more of a barrier to disclosure of CSE for young males than females. Only a minority of professionals spoke about this in interview:

*I think there's something more about young men not realising that what has happened is abuse...a huge barrier to young men being able to label the abuse, and therefore they are unable to disclose (because they don't know there is anything to disclose). (PS 23, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Pete, a young male interviewee, endorsed this professionals' perception:

*because I consented to everything I didn't think he was doing anything wrong, do you know what I mean? I wasn't forced into it. He bought me gifts and bought me mobile phones, credit; took me out for nice meals. (Pete, aged 30).*

Turning to a lack of awareness and its potential impact on identification of CSE in males, a lack of knowledge about it was viewed by professional survey respondents to be the most likely reason to inhibit identification of CSE in males; 73% (n=46) rated it amongst their three most likely reasons. Professionals' misinterpretation of behaviours in young males as something other than CSE related examined in chapter six, somewhat corroborates this finding. One professional interviewee admitted his own shortcoming in terms of his knowledge:

*I hold my hands up, I don't know a lot about it; I don't know the signs. You are going on your gut. (PI 17a Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

Another professional was concerned about others' depth of knowledge surrounding the sexual exploitation of young males:

*The amount of people who have said to me 'I've been on CSE training, so I know all that'. And I will say, yes, I'm sure you have been on CSE training...but did it address boys, or did it just have a slide at the end that said, 'and boys too'. (P27 – Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

There were examples from young male interviewees who believed that the signs of their exploitation should have been obvious to others, but this did not result in an appropriate response:

*I used to come home with blood in my boxers and all over my clothes when I had been abused... Nobody would ever reach out to me... (Simon, aged 22).*

Simon's perception was, having tried over a number of years to get professionals to listen to him, a lack of knowledge regarding the sexual exploitation of young males was the *cause of their inaction*:

*...it's hard for someone to sit in front of somebody you don't know and tell them what's going on because as in my experience...half of these social workers have no experience at all. It's like police officers, some of them know what they are doing but some don't...that's my experience. (Simon, aged 22).*

What Pete described was not so much a professionals' lack of awareness; more an example of condoned consent – that of professional negligence – as discussed in the theoretical framework, chapter three:

*I had money, nice new clothes, trainers, gifts – obviously stuff that a young lad can't afford. I was in and out all the time, being picked up all the time, like outside where I was living and in people's houses. I think they knew what I was doing. (Pete, aged 30).*

It is also difficult to know from Connor's account of his perceived lack of response from police to intervene to stop the sexual exploitation of him and his female friend, if this was an example of 'unconscious' condoned consent through a lack of professionals' awareness, or professional negligence. In this way he was not portraying this lack of response just as an issue for him as a male. His example suggests that no response is tantamount to a negative response:

*We would be getting in the same cars pretty much every night or in the same spot in the road and there is a police station about 10 feet down the road and the police would drive past and not one of them would say anything and they'd seen both of us getting in and out*

*of cars...we would get in like 10 cars a night...we'd be out to like one in the morning, two in the morning, and not one police officer ever said anything. (Connor, aged 18).*

My hypothesis is that a lack of awareness or knowledge about an issue can potentially result in a lack of confidence speaking about it or dealing with it. As presented in chapter five, almost half (46%; n=42) of professional survey respondents perceived a lack of confidence in talking about the issue of CSE to be more likely to impede the identification of males than females as victims. Very few professionals provided qualitative information to support this, with the exception of this one, illustrating a lack of confidence in how to approach the subject of CSE where there may be suspicions that a young male is a victim:

*...you're scared to say because if you get it wrong and then it's a real battle...and then if you don't say it...Do you say to that young man and risk losing that relationship? (PI 17b, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

With insufficient knowledge and a consequent lack of confidence in a subject area, there is the potential for practitioners to feel unable to deal appropriately with the complexities surrounding CSE generally, as highlighted in the literature review, chapter two. Almost two fifths (36%; n=33) of professional survey respondents believed the issue of CSE being too complex to deal with was more of a reason for non-identification of males than females. Other issues, such as the fear of re-traumatising the victim, which can result from a lack of confidence and knowledge in how to deal with it, was also viewed by the majority of professionals (71%; n=65) as a potential impediment to identification of CSE. However, only a minority (11%; n=10) believed this to be more of a barrier to the identification of young males. A minority of professionals illustrated the hesitancy of others in addressing the issue of CSE with young males, fearful of the repercussions of what might happen following disclosure:

*There's a fear sometimes for professionals around extremity and what could come out of this and are we opening Pandora's Box? (PI 11, Voluntary non-CSE specialist).*

*Residential staff may decide not to 'set him off'... (PS 51, Police).*

*What if a young man hurts himself or takes his own life or runs off on the back of what I've said... (PI 8, Voluntary non-CSE specialist).*

Whether through a lack of awareness or other reasons, it is important to consider how the awareness of others, including the general public, can portray negative messages to young males regarding their victimhood which could influence non-disclosure. Greg, a young male interviewee, perceived how others could and should have intervened in his exploitation. He questions why no-one responded to help him:

*I remember sometimes I was so terrified of these people because I'd been beaten up for something...I'd be put in a taxi with another man and I would just stay silent the whole way, and the taxi driver... its things like 'who is that older man you are travelling with at two o'clock in the morning – you look like you should be in school'. 'Why are you not saying anything?' I mean it's clear from my face that something's wrong and the taxi drivers and the hotel staff and even the public in the street in [name of town] town centre, when I got punched in the face, no-one did anything. But it's not normal for an adult to punch a child in the face. (Greg, aged 22).*

It would be interesting to know if the response would have been different, to any degree, if Greg had been a female.

In terms of solutions to a lack of awareness that would aid recognition of males as victims of CSE, these were given by professionals on three levels: awareness for the general public, professionals, and young males.

There were suggestions from participants as to how awareness could potentially be achieved, first from a general perspective:

*I think generally an increase in knowledge of everyone including the public – the fact that boys and young men can be sexually exploited. Any campaigns need to focus on males too and the same with literature, it shouldn't all be about females. (PI 4, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

*I think if we were able to, as a society, get it out there because it is your media platforms, your big campaigns that give out these messages. That's where people hear it. We need to get people to waken up to it. (PI 16, Social Services).*

*Another way would be to have mainstream TV or mainstream media in any shape or form to promote the idea that: a) it's safe to disclose and b) the ridiculing of that isn't acceptable behaviour... (PI 9 Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Providing free text in the survey, professionals were perhaps judicious in suggesting solutions to help professionals identify CSE in males. The top two suggestions were:

- ❖ Training for professionals on the sexual exploitation of young males; and
- ❖ An increase in challenge to professionals regarding their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs surrounding the sexual exploitation of young males.

Each of the participant groups gave comment on their belief that raising the awareness with young males regarding their vulnerability to sexual exploitation, at different junctures of their lives, was critical to their disclosure of it:

*I think there should be serious work in the primary years – ages eight, nine, ten and consistent input re healthy relationships and what this feels like. Boys tend to muddle through. They don't get enough safe messages and if it is later, they can't process this.* (PI 1, Voluntary, CSE specialist).

*...by the time they get to us at 16, and we are able to take a bit more time and space and not be led by the behaviours and stuff...some of the young men are just so involved and so engaged [with CSE] and it's just life; it's become part of their system and their routine. Yet if you can catch them at 10 or 11... but by the time they turn 16 so many patterns have developed and life styles and thinking patterns and all of those things are starting to kick in...all of those fears, and so they run naturally to what has been normal for them.* (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).

Awareness of what will happen following disclosure, for a young male, was also viewed as important in aiding disclosure itself:

*For boys in particular that loss of control and fear of that, and who will know what about them, what will they say, who will they tell. They have no control over this...Boys need to feel safe in disclosure – what will happen next. Management of disclosure needs to include how the young male is helped to manage it.* (PI 1, Voluntary CSE specialist).



Hearing from other male survivors of CSE was perceived by approximately one quarter of all respondents to be an enabler for young males to identify that what has happened has been abusive. This was felt to be particularly pertinent to overcoming barriers in relation to masculinity issues that inhibit disclosure:

*To hear others speak out about their experiences. (YLT, Female 56, Category 2)*

*...from our point of view, they just need more male role models who... have been through it or who can talk openly about it... the young man's looking at him and thinking 'there's a guy who throws himself off mountains and plays football and was in the army, you know those ridiculous stereotypes...' (PI 8 Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

*Hearing stories about how people have been helped by reporting it; that they're not the only one. (YLT, Female Category 2)*

*Probably the best thing would be other young people who have been through a similar journey. (PI 10, Social Services).*

Participants were clear in their opinions regarding enablers to raise awareness of male CSE. However, they were also clear as to what was needed to facilitate this – an available and appropriate service.

### *Availability and appropriateness of a service*

Related to these suggestions above and, I believe, of relevance to awareness of CSE amongst males, is the availability of a service that is appropriate to which young males can disclose and which enables professionals to deal with the issue. As presented in chapter five, professional survey respondents chose 'no available/appropriate service to disclose to' as one of their top three reasons more likely to inhibit disclosure for males than females (49%; n=44). Similarly, almost the same percentage (48%; n=44) believed no available or appropriate service to deal with the issue to be more likely to inhibit identification of CSE in males than females.

Several professional participants had suggestions as to what they considered an appropriate and effective service for young male victims. One concerned the length of time that should be afforded to young males to engage and work with them, given the perception that it takes them longer to talk about CSE issues:

*...there is obviously stigma...about being male...'boys don't cry'...I think it takes a lot of time for a young man to build up a level of trust...to feel comfortable and be able to actually state what happened to him. For one particular male it took over a year and a half of working before he would actually state about the four years of abuse that had actually been taking place. ...I work for a service that is geared up in terms of not being governed by time constraints to actually be able to build up a good enough relationship to get to that... A lot of time it is testing the water, it's seeing whether you do the things you say you are going to do to see if they can trust you to some degree...build the relationship with the young person before you introduce some of the things you need to do as part of the requirements within your service...Any assessment can wait. (PI 2, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Several professionals reiterated the same message:

*...the biggest aspect is engagement and building a relationship with that young person. That goes for anybody but more so with young males because they tend to be a little bit harder to engage than the girls...building up a trusting relationship is at the core of everything...being available because if you are available at times which they might not expect, it goes a long way in building that relationship.* (PI 23, Voluntary, CSE specialist).

*...it takes a lot longer to engage with a young male to talk of any experiences of CSE than it would with a female because of all the barriers and stigma that comes with it.* (PI 28, Voluntary, CSE specialist).

Another aspect of concern voiced by professionals regarded gender of worker, however, there were differences in opinion amongst professional interviewees as to the significance of this for young males:

*...some young men find it beneficial if it's another male they are speaking to... just be mindful that if we want to engage with young men have we actually asked the question... would they rather engage with males or females...it's just getting some of those things in place that seem insignificant to some people.* (PI 2, Voluntary, CSE specialist).

The same opinion was reiterated by two other professionals, including the merits of an all-male service for male victims of CSE, however, emphasised as more critical were the skills and approaches of the worker:

*I think there is a need for male workers...I think all male projects like Blast<sup>48</sup> are quite successful for boys. ...it has been useful to move away from gendered organisations, but...there is merit in it when it comes to sexual exploitation...we need more male workers out there and I think the approach with males needs to be incredibly casual and flexible...a lot of our appointments with males take place across a pool table or playing darts or nine holes of golf... not making it look like counselling or like there's something wrong. Mentoring type service works with boys. It can work with girls as well but specifically if you are looking at putting something out there for boys, so it doesn't smack of being a sexual support service or anything around counselling; anything that smacks of any sort of weakness. (PI 6, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*...you do need an all-male service, but you need the right kind of people in the roles. It's about thinking, what can these people offer, are they therapeutic in their nature, do they understand what this is all about, and do they know where they're going with the work... A gender specific service is important but it's more about the skills and the approaches of the professionals. (PI 16, Social Services).*

The following comment disputes the need for male workers, but again, highlights the pre-requisite skills of workers for young males, similar to those for young females:

*...it's very much about the worker. I don't think they necessarily need a male worker. ...in some instances, they may do but equally there are some who would need a female worker. We need a child centred approach and therefore, male/female, wouldn't necessarily make a difference. All young males don't display the same behaviours; some*

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<sup>48</sup> The Blast Project is described as: *the UK's leading male only sexual exploitation service supporting and working solely with boys and young men who have experienced, are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing child sexual exploitation: [www.menandboyscoalition.org.uk](http://www.menandboyscoalition.org.uk).*

*are very quiet, some are very boisterous, and some are very violent and dangerous, and we need to find a way of working with that young person. (PI 21, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

One professional highlighted the importance of a young male being able to choose the gender of the worker to whom they are allocated:

*I don't think the model has to be a male only service. Some young males will prefer having a female worker; some boys will relate better to a male but so will some girls, so it's back to the individual. (PI 24, Independent).*

One professional suggested another necessary element of an appropriate service:

*...you need to take account of the materials because a lot of the pictures are very female and a lot of the conversations you have are very female focused. You sort of add on the males, don't you; it's a kind of secondary consideration on occasion. (PI 12, Social Services).*

A further logistical aspect of an effective service was perceived to be its accessibility:

*I think there's a whole lot of stuff there which a lot of mainstream projects aren't picking up because a lot of services are working nine to five; they're not out working late at night, they're not out at weekends and this is when you see a lot of these young people. (PI 24, Independent).*

Professional interviewees were vocal in their opinions on what would constitute an available and appropriate service for male victims of CSE to aid their disclosure. However, there was an absence of reasons as to why such a service would help professionals deal with the issue, despite a strong response to this in the professionals' survey. One hypothesis could be that an identified service that is both available to and appropriate for young males would bring a focus to them as victims, thus making identification easier.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a significant volume of data from research participants in relation to a lack of awareness and its potential influence on recognition of CSE in males. There are examples throughout these findings chapters that demonstrate, where a lack of awareness/knowledge of professionals exists, there is the potential for misinterpretation of behaviours, inaccurate assumptions, the creation and compounding of negative belief systems, and consequent failure to respond to the victimhood of young males. Similarly, a young males' lack of cognitive awareness of his experience as abusive also serves to hinder his disclosure. My hypothesis is that where both parties are lacking in this respect, one serves to reinforce the other, thus demonstrating an interplay between barriers to disclosure and identification.

## **Chapter eight: The impact of perpetrator gender on the recognition of CSE in young males**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins by reflecting on what study participants perceived to be the most critical factors impacting recognition when a female perpetrates the sexual exploitation of a young male. The potential barriers considered include: the minimisation of harm; the physiological composition of the male; and the labelling of female on male abuse as a form of 'conquest' for the male victim. I then move to examine the unique consequences for young males as victims of male perpetration, in particular, the potential threat to or confusion over their sexual identity; and issues pertaining to homosexuality and homophobia.

### **8.2 Perpetration by females**

Chapter two of this thesis, the literature review, highlighted how the sexual abuse of either gender by females challenges a prevailing sexual script in society, and therefore, creates the potential for denial or minimisation of the abuse, by others and by the victim him/herself. Here, I explore how these themes were reflected in the findings of this research as inhibitors to recognition of the sexual exploitation of young males.

Narratives from almost half of young male and professional interviewees reflected upon the impact of the minimisation of female on male sexual exploitation:

*...how his peers might see it is, you know, 'oh you've been having sex with an older bird' you know. 'Well done you'. And some adults may even view it like that. (Greg, aged 22).*

*You also get 'the cougar', but that's not normal. But it's that lad culture; 'well done, gold star, you've earned your stripes, you've been with this older woman'. (Sammy, aged 21)*

*His friends thought of it as a 'trophy'. (PI 1, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

*And I guess if the abuser is female as well, very often that can be seen as a conquest for the young men. (PI 23, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

*CSE is nearly a joke when it happens to males by a female. Something to laugh about, for example, 'sexy older teacher'. (PI 19, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

*There are always two sides, not always women as innocent; women can be the culprit and it needs to be recognised that we are all equal. (Darren, aged 17).*

As presented in chapter five, 63% (n=57) of respondents to the professionals' survey perceived an impediment to identification being others' belief that abuse of a young male by a female is not as serious as abuse by a male. Just less than one third (32%; n=18) of those respondents rated this as one of three most likely reasons to negatively impact identification. This was an issue replicated in professional interviews with a minority seeing a presumption amongst others that females are less likely to be harmful than male perpetrators. These professionals illustrated the dichotomy between the stereotypical view of females and how they saw them:

*There is something there about normalisation and women not always being viewed as harmful in the same way that men can be viewed. (PI 24, Independent).*

*We tend to see female abusers as loving, caring, nurturing, and emotionally giving, when, actually, what our boys do tell us is that there was fear, there was control, there was force. (PI 22, Voluntary CSE specialist).*



A professional summed up the potential consequences of failing to recognise the significance of female on male perpetration in sexually exploitative situations, impacting identification:

*...as a profession, we tend to minimise the impact on our boys, particularly if the abuse has been by a female, so we underplay that it may have been abusive... Now if we don't accept that females can abuse in that way we are already minimising that impact before they tell us... (PI 22, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

One professional explained how wider attitudes can influence young males' disclosure and create difficulties in his navigation of other peoples' responses to exploitation by a female:

*...sometimes parents have a very different response to a female who perpetrated CSE than a male and that can impact how the child or young person responds to it... So, you've got a professional saying 'way hey' and the dad saying, 'way hey' and young males friends saying, 'oh aren't you the lucky one'; it becomes very tricky for young males to navigate that. (PI 24, Independent).*

Similar themes were identified by young males in interview, three of whom anticipated a lack of consequence for female perpetrators of males. Sammy, in particular, suggested how such minimisation of abuse by females can negatively influence disclosure:

*...when it comes to females, people have a different attitude to that: 'oh they had emotional problems, or they must have some kind of mental illness'. It's never that the person is bad, just mad as it were. (Greg, aged 22).*

*If a guy does it to a female he gets arrested but if a female does it... nothing will happen to her or she will just get suspended. (Adam, aged 17).*

*She's an older woman but I'm a guy – I should have known; it's that whole thing – the men have control. No matter what age you are as a male, you can control yourself – you can do it – but it's never true, is it? Less chance of her being prosecuted. I think people know that, so they just don't bother. Don't worry about it. (Sammy, aged 21).*

A perception of minimisation of sexual exploitation of males by females, creating a potential impediment to identification, was evident from the quantitative and qualitative data from professionals and young people. The following two themes explore further potential causes of the minimisation of female on male exploitation, those of the physiological make-up of the male or female, and the labelling of female on male exploitation as a 'conquest' for the male.

Questions regarding the physiological make-up of the male or female in the context of the sexual exploitation of young males were not constructed for either the YLT or professional surveys, nor were they specifically asked in interviews with either cohort. However, this matter did receive unprompted comment by professional and young male interviewees. The suggestion was that female perpetration is perceived as inconceivable due to the absence of a penis. A minority of professionals and young male interviewees perceived the physiological make-up of the male as positioning him, in the eyes of himself and others, as the initiator and controller of sexual contact, thus potentially inhibiting recognition of the young male as a victim:

*...no-one would believe him...if it were a female perpetrator a boy would feel like think 'well how can I be raped or abused by a woman...it doesn't work that way'. (Greg, aged 22).*

*A lot of our lads would say 'no-one would believe that, no-one would believe a woman could do that'. That's a barrier. (PI 22, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

One professional interviewee compared inhibitors to disclosure as a result of female on male exploitation to that of male-on-female exploitation:

*...you've got a good-looking female perpetrator grooms this boy...and she says, 'well if you tell anyone I will just tell everyone that you forced me'. If that was the other way around, you would not really get a 25-year-old male turning round to a 14-year-old girl and saying, 'I will tell everyone that you forced me'...there are a number of males who have been forced into things by women who have said 'I can't say anything because they are going to tell people that I raped her, and they will believe her not me'. (PI 27, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

These beliefs were seen to be compounded by the stereotypical perception of the male as physically able to protect himself, as discussed in chapter six. Sammy believed that blame would have been attributed to him had his abuser been a woman in her 30s:

*...actually, that was hard enough, it being an older man...but for a younger guy to say, 'actually this older woman has been doing this to me', you will have lost everything, you know 'you're not a man anymore; you've let a woman do this to you'. 'You could have stopped this anytime you wanted; you're the man here'. (Sammy, aged 21).*

Each of these narratives highlight the potential impact of the physiological make-up of males and females upon recognition of young male victims. However, with the absence of quantitative data in this study, regarding this, I suggest this would benefit from further research.

As presented in chapter five, young people believed professionals' perception of female on male exploitation as a 'conquest' for the male, negatively impacts identification of young males as victims. However, professionals did not place the same significance on this either in terms of impacting identification or disclosure. As highlighted in chapter two, the literature review, rather than being considered abusive, the abuse can be seen by the young male, by professionals, or

indeed others, as an accomplishment, the envy of his peers and even status-enhancing for the young male.

In relation to identification, there may be some correlation between the belief of female on male exploitation as a 'conquest' for the male, and the view of the male victim as 'a willing participant'. Although the issue of the male victim as a 'willing participant' did not specifically relate to female perpetration, it is worth considering a possible link. While over two-fifths of professional survey respondents (42%; n=38) believed viewing the victim as a willing participant to be equally likely a reason for non-identification of both genders, the same percentage believed it applied more to young male victims.

As presented in chapter five, over three-fifths (62%; n=56) of respondents to the professionals' survey believed a young males' view of his own abuse, by a female, as a 'conquest' for him to be a potential barrier to disclosure. However, professionals did not view it as a critical barrier for males with just over one-tenth (11%; n=6) rating it as one of three most likely reasons, identifying other issues as more significant barriers. Professionals had a similar view of the negative impact on disclosure as a result of a prevailing view, in society, of female on male abuse as a 'conquest'. While almost two-thirds (65%; n=59) viewed this as a potential reason for non-disclosure, less than one-fifth (19%; n=11) rated it as one of the three most likely reasons.

The perception by professionals was that female on male sexual exploitation is not regarded with the same degree of seriousness as that perpetrated by another male. However, young people did see it as having greater impact upon identification, than professionals did. The stereotypical gender constructs and the physical make-up of both genders were seen as potential barriers to recognition, to varying degrees. Similarly, while both young people and professionals were divided in their opinion on whether female on male sexual exploitation being viewed as a 'conquest' for the male negatively impacts identification, a significant minority believed it does.

Each of these issues are distinctive from female on female perpetration and male on male perpetration, an issue which I next turn to explore.

### **8.3 Perpetration by males**

This section primarily focuses on two aspects of the findings in relation to male on male sexual exploitation: the potential threat to or confusion over the male victims' sexual identity; and issues pertaining to homosexuality and homophobia. Questions were constructed for the professionals' survey, regarding these issues. However, no related questions were posed within the YLT survey; the reason for this was that questions within the YLT survey were gender neutral.

#### *8.3.1 Threat to or confusion over sexual identity*

A young males' threat to his sexual identity or confusion over it, if abused by a male, refers to a young male who identifies as heterosexual. As presented in chapter five, almost three-fifths (59%; n=54) of respondents to the professional survey rated a threat to the young males' sexual identity as a reason likely to inhibit disclosure. However, overall, opinion was divided regarding its significance as an inhibitor, with less than a quarter (22%; n=12) rating it amongst their three most likely reasons for non-disclosure. However, almost one third of professional interviewees referred to examples of young males' sexual identity feeling threatened:

*Young males, where a sexual assault has taken place, and, 'that's it I'm going to show everyone the pictures, I'm going to tell everyone you're gay, that I shagged you like a woman, like a bitch', that kind of language that can be used sometimes. Imagine being a young male who identifies as heterosexual, who comes from a particular area or family, or culture where there are very specific norms around masculinity and have that threat hanging over you; there's a lot of vulnerability there for that young person. (PI 24, Independent).*

*I think there is this thing about certain stigma maybe being labelled gay...it makes it really difficult, more difficult for males than females. (PI 23, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Professionals placed a similar emphasis on a young males' confusion over his sexual identity as a barrier to disclosure, with 66% (n=60) of respondents rating this as a reason for non-disclosure and just over one quarter (27%; n=16) rating this as one of the three most likely reasons. Overall, professionals were divided in their opinion as to the importance of a threat to or confusion over sexual identity as barriers to disclosure by young males.

The two quotes below reflect a young males' level of confusion over his sexual identity when exploited by another male, but did not go as far as stating this as a barrier to disclosure:

*I feel that a young male who has been sexually exploited is likely to experience confusion and difficulties around their identity and sexuality. (PS, 12, Anon).*

*It [CSE] then leads them to feel confused about their sexuality. (PS, 8, CSE specialist).*

One professional highlighted an alternative source of confusion for a young gay male victim of CSE; that is, he has become gay as a result of the abuse:

*...there is a bigger issue for boys and young men who are abused by males, that the victim then questions their sexuality... almost questioning whether they've 'caught gayness' or because they've been abused by the same sex it might give them some sort of interest in same sex relationships. (PI 9, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

While professionals viewed a young males' threat to or confusion over his sexual identity as a barrier to his disclosure, they only rated this as moderately relevant. None of the young males interviewed spoke about this in relation to non-disclosure of their exploitation.

#### **8.4 The impact of homosexuality on the recognition of CSE in young males**

The earlier findings from the literature review in relation to the potential risks to CSE for young males who identify as LGBTQ supported the rationale for my inquiry surrounding homosexuality, and its impact upon recognition of CSE in males. In my literature review, chapter two, three aspects of homosexuality were cited as responsible for creating barriers to disclosure: the belief, by others, that the male victim of a same sex sexual assault is gay; the victims' struggle with understanding or naming their own sexual identity; and the victims' own homophobia. These concepts have been used as the basis upon which to present my findings on disclosure. In addition, I have also used these concepts to enhance understanding of the impact of male sexual identity upon identification of CSE by professionals, namely: misinterpretation of sexual identity issues (beliefs); (struggle) with understanding issues relating to sexual identity; personal bias against homosexuality (homophobia).

Seven of the ten young males interviewed for this study identified as homosexual, one as bi-sexual and two as heterosexual. This information was not directly sought but volunteered by them.

##### *Beliefs by others impacting recognition of CSE in young males*

Questions cited in the YLT survey did not focus on this theme of homosexuality as an inhibitor to recognition of CSE in males. As explained earlier, the aim was to achieve comparative perspectives from males and females regarding non-disclosure for both genders. In retrospect, it may have been advantageous to have obtained a perspective, from young people generally, on homosexuality as an inhibitor to recognition. However, qualitative data was available from young

male interviewees, as well as professionals and is represented in the narratives in this sub-section.

A belief by others that the male victim of CSE is gay, irrespective of whether he is or not, was perceived to be a barrier to both disclosure and identification. This was seen on two levels: firstly, the young males' fear of being labelled gay and cultural influences surrounding this, and secondly, professionals' misinterpretation of the young male's sexual identity. It should be noted that the professionals' survey question relating to this issue, refers to 'fear of being labelled gay (if the abuser is male and the victim is heterosexual)'. However, many of the narratives also refer to the same fear amongst young gay males.

Seventy-four per cent (n=67) of respondents to the professionals' survey believed 'fear of being labelled gay' to be a relevant barrier to disclosure for young males. The majority (60%; n=40) of those respondents rated this as one of the three most likely reasons for non-disclosure. This factor was, therefore, viewed as a significant barrier and corroborated by the narratives of a minority of young people and professionals:

*I think that males are affected more emotionally as they keep it a secret for longer and find it harder to tell someone for fear of being labelled gay... (PS, 8, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*Also, it's about 'if I tell, people will think I am gay' so what would that mean? So, we see a lot of those barriers with our boys. (PI 22, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*There was one case I was working with a young male and he identified as being heterosexual and had been exploited by a male, and his concern was about people thinking he was gay and how he would be treated. So that's had a big impact on him and*



*there was a video taken of that and it was shared – seen by his peers - he would have been 14 at the time. (PI 20, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*They are called gay and a fag if they are taken advantage of by another man. (YLT, Male 43, Category 6).*

One professional interviewee defined the fear of being labelled gay, emphasised their perception of this as a distinctive barrier to disclosure for males as opposed to females, and highlighted the potential consequences of this fear:

*I think there is this thing about certain stigma maybe being labelled gay, about being weak and all of that. It makes it more difficult for males than females to talk about their feelings, their emotions and their experiences and certainly about being sexually exploited which means the risks to things such as suicide are maybe much higher for males than for girls. (PI 23, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

It was evident from four of the young male interviewees, who identified as gay, bi-sexual and heterosexual, that the impact of homosexuality did not just impact gay young males. All four young males described a fear of being labelled gay as a reason for delay in disclosing or decision not to disclose. They related this to either their own experiences or in reference to a vignette used with them in the initial stage of the interview. Simon, identifying as heterosexual, stressed how others' perception of him as gay was a source of significant difficulty for him:

*Some people are embarrassed because they don't want people to think they are gay. I've had that, and it's caused me so many problems that you wouldn't believe. (Simon, aged 22).*

While discussing one of the vignettes, Greg suggested that 'Davy' (one of the vignette characters) may not disclose his exploitation because:

*People might think he's gay which a lot of young people that age are uncomfortable with, particularly when you are in school. (Greg, aged 22).*

Johnny, another young male interviewee, was also able to articulate how 'Davy' might be prevented from disclosing his exploitation because, to do so, would mean admitting he was gay, and this might cause him to lose his friend:

*...he's afraid to lose his best friend because he's gay, he has to think 'I'm not going to lose my best friend if I tell him this' (Johnny, aged 18).*

Malcolm's anticipated reaction from others regarding his sexual identity, i.e. bi-sexual, resulted in his determination not to disclose, until his exploitation was discovered by others:

*From my situation...being bi-sexual, it's much more worse to think about being gay because it's a lot of pressure and people aren't very friendly – it's something different so they don't know how to respond to it, so people do tend to hurt other peoples' feelings...if people in school found out then they would be like 'you're gay, you got raped' and obviously that's not something you want to hear. (Malcolm, aged 14).*

Narratives from professional and young male interviewees illustrated the impact of negative cultural influences towards homosexuality as inhibiting disclosure. Examples were given of certain geographical areas in the UK and different cultural traits that may exacerbate fear of disclosure. These included black and ethnic minority communities; travelling communities; and religious communities. Paramilitary-affected communities in NI was another feature whereby specific

cultural dynamics were seen to prohibit disclosure within such closed communities, as described by Sammy:

*I think it's the culture of [named area] where actually you hear... 'you can't do this, you can't do that...Why would you bother going to the police? Especially in [named] areas – that's all I've known is [named culture]'<sup>49</sup> (Sammy, aged 21).*

*Politically there have been difficulties for young people coming forward, coming out and being open around sexuality. I know of one particular young male who said that he couldn't...come out because of his community, his family, how they would react. (PI 20 – Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

The first comment referred to a loyalist paramilitary culture; the latter did not specify whether it was Republican, Nationalist, Unionist, or Loyalist.

There was a perception that the same negativity existed towards homosexuality in other parts of the UK:

*Particularly the Welsh valleys have a negative view on same sex relationships and on being hugely stereotypical. (PI 22, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

A further cultural influence cited as impacting disclosure through fear of being labelled gay was in relation to Black, Minority and Ethnic communities. As presented in chapter five, professionals perceived young males from BME communities as one of the top three groups of young males less likely to disclose experiences of CSE. It should be noted that the BME communities referenced here were the only ones mentioned by participants. Moreover, it is important to be cognisant of differences within various BME communities.

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<sup>49</sup> Loyalist paramilitary culture in NI.

*Potentially BME young males where there may be cultural issues around being gay. (PS 36, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*Males who are from a South Asian background may be fearful to disclose due to reasons of honour-based violence and forced marriage. (PS 25, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*Males from cultures where it would not be acceptable to disclose abuse or sexuality such as traveller communities. (PS 25, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

A minority of young male and professional interviewees referenced potential cultural inhibitors to disclosure; one in particular explained the repercussions for a young Asian male victim:

*We identified him through outreach and what he told us was his family couldn't find out about what was going on; he felt he was gay and if his family knew he was gay they would kill him. (PI 28, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Malcolm, a young male interviewee, also voiced his understanding of discrimination, based on his experience within his own black Caribbean culture:

*Some people say 'oh yes, being gay or bi-sexual is wrong and you shouldn't really associate with anyone who is bi-sexual or gay, and for me I could understand that because if I went back to my home country, [named country], and they knew, I wouldn't be able to go over there because they don't handle that stuff lightly...(Malcolm, aged 14).*

Malcolm's belief was corroborated by one professional interviewee, describing how such influences could reduce, or entirely disable, the young male's opportunity to disclose his victimhood:

*...if you are gay in a certain culture...some south Asian cultures, some Black African, Caribbean cultures, that would be very frowned upon. For some boys and young men there is the threat of forced marriage if it comes out that they are having exploitative relationships. So, some young people may be exploited but leave the local area, putting it bluntly, they could be shipped back to another country for a forced marriage and then that takes them away from their network of support and can increase their vulnerability, they could be lost to services and people who were a positive in their lives. (PI 24, Independent).*

The same interviewee described a similar cultural influence on disclosure relating to young males within some travelling communities, describing how either being homosexual or being perceived as:

*...a big no, no. And I have worked with young men who have been sexually exploited who are from the travelling community and especially where there are particular notions of masculinity. ...where you're brought up to box, and that's not your thing, and that terrifies you... (PI 24, Independent).*

Discrimination of homosexuals within religious settings was another cultural aspect perceived by one young male interviewee as inhibiting disclosure:

*I'm probably the youngest of my group of friends...so in that group there will be 5 or 6 of us, and most of my friends will be Christian and gay. It [CSE] happened to us all. And I think the church adds that extra bit into it which makes it a lot harder but also a lot easier to get into that because if you grow up in a place that says, 'we love you, but we don't actually', you will go find it from somewhere else. (Sammy, aged 21).*

There was no direct evidence from participants as to how cultural influences on homosexuality might negatively impact professionals' identification of CSE in males. However, I believe it is pertinent to consider this. One example of this in other research reflects the links between forced marriage (of males and females) and CSE (Kazimirski *et al.* 2009; SOCA, 2013; Sharp 2016) which highlights the unwillingness of children's services to intervene in what might appear to be culture specific or culturally sensitive subjects. I would suggest further research would be beneficial to understand the variety of cultural influences upon the specific identification of CSE amongst males. One professional reflected upon this:

*We need to be aware of the cultural differences and, for example, the use of violence within the travelling community. We need to talk about what happens in the different cultures with young males.* (PI 29, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).

The aspect participants did discuss in relation to professionals' identification of CSE was misinterpretation of a young male as gay, which they viewed as detrimental to his identification as a victim. Simon, one of the young males, believed misinterpretation of his sexual identity as gay, in addition to professionals' assumption that this explained his behaviour, exacerbated the trauma of his sexual exploitation:

*When I was in foster care social services put me with a gay foster carer because they thought that was more beneficial to do, but I never identified as a homosexual...I think because I was having some kind of friendship with older males and being found in the gay area of [named city] it was this thing of exploring my sexuality, so it was cooler that this gay male would be a positive role model. But I've never identified as bi-sexual or homosexual. That cunt abused me an' all.* (Simon, aged 22).

A small minority of respondents to the professional survey illustrated others' misinterpretation of a young males' sexual identity as a particular issue of concern for identification:

*I think that there is also issues of sexuality that still exist in both the identification and support for young males – CSE not being recognised but being seen as sexual exploration for young gay men. (PS, 29, CSE specialist).*

*Professionals often assume it is boys experimenting with their sexuality. (PS 85, Education).*

*Male CSE is mistakenly dealt with as 'sexual exploration'. (PS 36, Police).*

A very small minority of professional interviewees reported concern as to how some other professionals conflated the concepts of homosexuality and CSE, reflecting a belief that only young gay males can be sexually exploited:

*...we've had people say in the past that they're not going to refer them into our project because they're not gay... 'they are not gay, so they can't be involved in CSE'. (PI 28, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*I think it was coming across that, young men who are going to be at risk of CSE are all struggling with their sexual orientation...but it's not just that...people will miss all the other young males who are not [gay]. (PI 14, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

The qualitative data and minimal quantitative data suggest the stigma that still surrounds homosexuality and the lack of understanding by professionals regarding the complexities of both homosexuality and the sexual exploitation of males, is demonstrated through misinterpretation and has the potential to negatively impact on identification and consequently disclosure.

### *Reticence in naming sexual identity*

This aspect of sexual identity and its influence on recognition of CSE in males is different to that examined above which related to a heterosexual young male and his confusion over his sexual identity or threat to it if exploited by another male. This aspect refers to a young male victim who may already be struggling to understand or name his own sexual identity, to himself or to others, as something other than heterosexual:

*So, they may feel unsafe exploring that [sexual identity] off line; they may fear bullying. For a young lad living in the community who feels he is the only one questioning his sexuality or who has found he is very affirmed about his sexuality but has no opportunity to explore that, then some of those lads, they have moved on line to try to find a relationship, a same age relationship, but for a number of those lads it has gone horribly wrong, where the person they have met or formed a relationship with has gone on to abuse them in the off-line world. (PI 22, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

The relevance of this to recognition of CSE in males is two-fold: firstly, having initiated contact with someone who ultimately exploits them, the young male may feel complicit in the abuse, preventing disclosure (Palmer, 2015). Secondly, professionals may assign blame to the young male for initiating contact, thereby, failing to provide an appropriate safeguarding response.

However, I acknowledge this is not only true for those struggling with sexual identity.

The examples below are from three of the young male interviewees, who identified as gay but were not ready to come out at the time of their exploitation. In response to the vignette about 'Davey', Matty explained:

*...if he was to say to his family 'oh I met a boy for a coffee and he ended up being 30' then there's that coming out thing for him – that's still a barrier for him. (Matty, aged 25).*



Sammy articulated a similar experience that prevented his disclosure of exploitation:

*It's not just you're saying that...I've been with this older man and he's done this and this and this but...it's a man so you have these two things going on. So, not only maybe they take the blame but 'oh you're gay now as well'. You've got a double one and then you've got to deal with that in school as well. (Sammy, aged 21).*

Although Darren did not view his sexual identity as preventing his disclosure of CSE, the negative response towards his sexual identity, received from his family when his exploitation was discovered, affirms the fear young males might envisage when contemplating disclosure of CSE by another male:

*I think I would have come out sooner if people didn't find out because with my mum and my gran seeing that, it kind of knocked me, knocked my confidence...and it literally made me feel wrong because I'm gay. (Darren, aged 17).*

Darren, who was targeted for sexual exploitation at a time when he was meeting his father for the first time, at the age of 15, reported the repercussions for him when he subsequently felt compelled to come out to his family:

*They say they are [accepting] but to a certain extent I don't think they do. My dad doesn't; he disowned me because I'm gay. (Darren, aged 17).*

Darren articulated a further complexity surrounding male on male sexual exploitation; the victims' belief that his sexual identity might have caused the abuse. Darren was affirmed in his sexual identity as gay, however, his exploitation created his belief that his sexual identity caused it. It was years before he realised this was not the case.

*Ever since they found out about that it knocked my confidence and it literally made me feel wrong because I'm gay; 'why am I doing this because it's wrong...it's because I'm gay'. It took a good four years for that to sink in that it wasn't cause I'm gay. (Darren, aged 17).*

Consideration should be taken of the potential for each of these aspects to become a barrier to a young males' disclosure of sexual exploitation.

I turn briefly to the identification of CSE in males, applying the same theme - 'struggling with understanding' or more particularly, 'naming sexual identity'. This might be through a lack of knowledge or personal discomfort discussing issues relating to sex and sexual identity. As presented in chapter five, almost half (47%; n=43) of respondents to the professional survey believed a professionals' 'personal discomfort talking about sexual issues' generally was more likely to be a reason for non-identification of CSE in a young male than a female, while 42% (n=38) believed it to be equally likely. Overall, this demonstrates quite a strong perception that personal discomfort is a significant impediment to professionals' identification of CSE generally, and specifically regarding young male victims, with homosexuality being one element of this. One professional interviewee suggested why this might be:

*We are maybe restricted by our own attitudes and moral compass or moral code.*

(PI 21, Voluntary, CSE specialist).

If this is a true representation of professionals' attitudes it raises concerns regarding identification, response and transparency, particularly in relation to young male victims. As presented above, a young males' fear of being labelled gay and his difficulty in identifying as gay may primarily be a consequence of the existence of societal homophobia, the focus of the next debate.

### *Homophobia*

As presented in chapter five, 63% (n=57) of respondents to the professionals' survey believed a reason for non-disclosure by young males was fear of a homophobic response if the abuser is

male, and irrespective of whether the young male is gay or not. Over one-quarter (28%; n=16) of those respondents rated it as one of the three most likely reasons, while the majority of respondents (58%; n=33) chose it as the fourth most important reason for non-disclosure. This demonstrates fear of a homophobic response as being of some significance in inhibiting disclosure of CSE by young males. This question to professionals did not specify this fear in relation only to those who identified as gay, and as the narratives suggest, this fear can also be present for males who identify as homosexual.

Two questions were constructed for the professional survey relating to homophobia and its potential influence on identification of CSE in males. Both questions met with mixed responses. Fifty-five per cent (n=50) of respondents believed fear of appearing discriminatory or homophobic (if the abuser was male) to be an impediment to identification. Over one quarter (28%; n=14) rated this as one of the three most likely reasons. Over half (51%; n=46) of respondents to the survey also believed a professionals' bias against homosexuality (if the abuser was male) to be an impediment to identification. However, only one-fifth (20%; n=9) rated it as one of the three most likely reasons. The two comments below from professionals acknowledged both the fear of appearing homophobic and bias against homosexuality as potential impediments to identification of males:

*Society is either not aware or fearful of tackling the subject for fear of being labelled homophobic...and there is concern that an investigation may be seen as anti-homosexual.*  
(PS 36, Police).

*We live in a culture that generally still stigmatises male to male sexual experiences.* (PS 78, CSE specialist).

Professionals believed a young males' fear of a homophobic response to have some relevance to his non-disclosure. Interestingly, a similar percentage of professionals believed the fear of

appearing discriminatory or homophobic to be an impediment to identification. A professionals' bias against homosexuality was viewed as slightly less of an impediment.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to present the findings in relation to the perceived influence of perpetrator gender on recognition of CSE in males. The quantitative findings in relation to female on male perpetration showed a degree of dissonance between how professionals and young people viewed the minimisation of male exploitation by females as a barrier to disclosure and identification. The perception that female on male exploitation is seen as a conquest for the young male was viewed as partially responsible for this, but more in relation to identification than disclosure, and seen as more significant by young people than professionals. It is difficult to ascertain the reason for this conflict of opinion. The reason for this may have been the construction of the two different surveys however, having reviewed the wording in both, I do not believe this to be the case and, therefore, I can only conclude these findings reflect the true views of the respondents. Similarly, professional respondents did not view the young males' view of his exploitation as 'a conquest' to be a significant barrier to his disclosure.

I then turned to address the sexual exploitation of young males by other males and its impact on recognition. Whilst a threat to masculinity was viewed as a significant barrier to disclosure, opinion was divided over the significance of a 'threat to or confusion over sexual identity' being barriers to disclosure. What was more evident was the importance professionals placed on the young males' 'fear of being labelled gay' (if the abuser is male and the victim heterosexual), viewing it as a major inhibitor to disclosure, including cultural influences, creating and/or compounding this fear. Analysing this data revealed a gap in the research, i.e. how cultural influences might potentially impede professionals' identification of CSE amongst males.

Accounts by participants illustrated how struggles, by both professionals and young males, in understanding and naming sexual identity can present impediments to disclosures and identification.

Fears regarding homophobia and actual bias against homosexuality were viewed, by professionals, as relevant factors in influencing both non-disclosure and non-identification. This points to the conclusion that the personal discomfort of professionals in discussing these issues and their potential to misinterpret and misunderstand sexual behaviours related to the sexual exploitation of young males, may be the primary factors which require addressing.

## Chapter nine: Criminality

### 9.1 Introduction

From my review of the literature I found two existing arguments supporting the inclusion of youth offending as a subject matter in this study. Firstly, strong correlations found between youth offending and child abuse generally (Day *et al.* 2008) and a clear demonstration of the links between CSE and youth offending specifically in a series of other studies (Clutton and Coles, 2007; Pearce, 2009; Beckett, 2011; CEOP, 2011; Cockbain and Brayley, 2012; Rigby and Murie, 2013; Smeaton, 2013; McNaughton Nicholls *et al.* 2014; Cockbain *et al.* 2015; Fox, 2016).

Secondly, that youth offending is found to be more likely associated with the sexual exploitation of young males than females (Cockbain and Brayley, 2012). That said, only one pre-determined option in the professionals' survey focused on youth offending; none in the YLT survey. In addition, one of the vignettes produced was on the subject of criminality and CSE. The focus of this chapter is, therefore, primarily based on the qualitative data gained from young males and professionals' narratives.

This chapter comprises two main sections. Section one examines the issue of youth offending in the context of sexual exploitation of young males; specifically, how youth offending impacts on recognition of CSE. It explores the complexities surrounding this. Several themes emerged from my findings which will be examined in turn.

The second, and related, section of this chapter, examines the role of paramilitary gangs in NI as a specific feature of criminality, highlighted by some NI participants. This topic was not a pre-determined directed area of questioning on my part as the researcher but was offered as narrative by a small number of participants. It's significance to the study warranted inclusion.

The aim of this second section is to demonstrate how this particular gang culture might act as an inhibitor to disclosure and/or identification of CSE amongst young males.

## **Section one: Youth offending behaviour**

### **9.2 Introduction**

As presented in chapter five, of the 60% of respondents to the professionals' survey who believed there were particular groups of young males less likely to disclose experiences of sexual exploitation, 13% (n=12)<sup>50</sup> indicated those involved in criminality to be the most likely group not to disclose. Although young males from BME backgrounds and those with a learning disability were also rated as significant groups,<sup>51</sup> the narrative from both interviewee cohorts, regarding youth offending and CSE and its impact on recognition, warranted further analysis. This section, therefore, sets out four particular themes that emerged from the findings in this study regarding youth offending. Firstly, there was a perceived predisposition of professionals to focus on youth offending behaviour of young males, rather than considering other behavioural motivators for the crime, namely CSE. Secondly, the perception that male youth offending behaviours can be manifestations of CSE related trauma, which the male victim and the professional may not recognise as such. Two particular manifestations were those surrounding aggression and drug use. Thirdly, how professionals' misinterpretation of CSE related behaviours can impact both identification and disclosure. Fourthly, the perception that a previous poor negative response to a young male, and the repercussions of such, has the potential to impede disclosures.

#### *9.2.1 A focus on offending behaviour*

Chapter six presented how stereotypical assumptions regarding masculinity and, in particular, the stereotypical view of the male as a perpetrator rather than a victim, can be a significant barrier to

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<sup>50</sup> This was an open question without pre-determined choices.

<sup>51</sup> Eleven per cent of respondents cited both young males from BME communities and young males with learning disabilities as two other groups being the least likely to disclose.

both young males' disclosing their experiences of CSE and to professionals' identification of them as victims. Similarly, a theme amongst professional interviewees, was others' tendency to concentrate on the offending or anti-social behaviour of young males, to the exclusion of potential motivating factors for it:

*...a lot of criminality coming up, especially with boys and young men, where they maybe have the history of committing crimes. I have spoken to colleagues in other professions where there are young males committing offences and it's not really looked at properly. (PI 3, Police).*

*I do think there is too much of a tendency to rush boys into the criminal justice system when they are kicking off...I think it can be more of a mixed bag with boys and the sexual exploitation gets missed and they are more likely to go down the youth offending route. (PI 6, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

A significant minority of professional interviewees alluded to the difficulties in identifying experiences of CSE amidst the offending behaviour of a young male. Despite this they acknowledged the existence of it in many cases of their work with young men who had offended.

*I know we get a lot of referrals for young males where there are offending issues and other stuff going on and one of the challenges is to pick through to see if there is CSE. It's difficult because everyone else is focussed on their offending. (PI 4, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*What you get is a lot of acting out...and so you get young males who are then involved in YOT [Youth Offending Teams] – coming up through because of their behaviour, and it might be that they are stealing for someone they got involved with or their behaviour is being acted out and they get noticed. I think you do see a correlation with young men*



*who've, by the time they are picked up, something has happened and then CSE is discovered. (PI 1, Voluntary, specialist).*

*Services need to understand that boys' response to dealing with trauma is often displayed by challenging behaviour; services need to see beyond the behaviours. (PS, 28, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

Even where there was acknowledgement of potential CSE, one respondent to the professional survey perceived such concerns as being overshadowed by other behaviours:

*Niggles and concerns may be quickly forgotten for the usually criminal/aggressive young man in the chaos of a children's home. (PS, 51, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

Indeed, in my study there were references from professionals that a young male's involvement in criminal activity was likely to result in his dissociation from police, assuming a lack of credibility because of criminal offending, or the expectation of blame:

*...sometimes they have a negative opinion of the police. If it's the only time you ever come into contact with the police...if we are arresting you for car crime or stuff like that, you have a bad experience...I do think you are not going to come forward and speak to the police. (PI 3, Police).*

*Those who have been perceived to have been engaging in criminality at that time, for example, substance misuse, or who have a history of criminal type behaviour. This group...either feel they won't be believed; fear they will be blamed for their engagement in criminal behaviour... (PS 52, Police).*

The following case example demonstrated three particular points in relation to a negative response from professionals: the disparity in responses between young males and females in a criminal context; reinforcement of the ideological status of male as offender and female as victim; and how assignment of an offender status can disable disclosure of oneself as a victim of CSE:

*...I worked with a young guy who was groomed when he was younger...everyone thought this man was grooming him and he would say 'no, no he's a mate...Eventually he got a girlfriend who was the same age as him...He mentioned in passing to his social worker that he and his girlfriend were sending each other naked pictures. There's no violence, no coercion, no pressure...the social worker heard it, freaked out, told the police, the police came and recorded a crime in his name... (PI 27, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

This professional interviewee was reflecting upon the disparity in response between both young people who were equally involved in this activity; the young male was criminalised; however, the young female was not:

*In the future he wanted to be a [named profession]. He had a DBS<sup>52</sup> check and it showed on his DBS, and he didn't get the job because of that. The really sad thing about that is him and his girlfriend split up...and the man that everyone suspected of grooming him raped him, and because of the police's overzealous response to the images, he did not want to engage with police and he did not want to give a statement and he said to me 'if they hadn't criminalised me for those images I would probably have spoken to the police'. (PI 27, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

This point emphasised how the young man's offender status, the circumstances in which he received this status, and his negative perception of the police response as a result of this, all served as inhibitors to disclosure about his own exploitation.

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<sup>52</sup> DBS: Disclosure and Barring Service.

The professional interviewee, providing this example, believed an alternative course of action may have resulted in a more positive outcome:

*...if he had had education and support rather than be criminalised, when this man did rape him, he would probably have engaged with the police and help get a conviction. But he didn't do that, so this man has got away with it. (PI 27, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

The comments above exemplify the potential dangers of a professionals' focus on the apparent offending behaviour of the young male victim of CSE, neglecting to address the source of the behaviour. With this there is the danger of misinterpretation of the young males' behaviour. This is illustrated by professional and young male participants below.

### *9.2.2 Offending behaviour as a manifestation of CSE in young males*

A majority of professional participants in the survey and interviews demonstrated their own personal understanding of offending behaviour as a possible manifestation of CSE related trauma in young males:

*There may be more acting out of the trauma through involvement in offending behaviour in the community. This behaviour may take the form of criminal damage, assaultive behaviour and possible fire setting, combined with risk taking behaviours linked to substance misuse. (PS 84, Police).*

The two quotes below connect the manifestation of CSE related trauma and offending in males to their inability or unwillingness to verbally communicate about their experiences:

*My fear is, they don't talk about this, they keep it to themselves, can't see any way out of their situation and sometimes the only way out is looking to end their life or to harm*

*themselves in some way or to get involved in criminal activity... (PI 23, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

*They've no outlet and they can't talk about it and I think that's the biggest part of the impact and the difference of impact for a young man because they hold onto it...nowhere to put all that trauma, no-one to trust or no way of expressing it and most of them do finally implode and do something very serious to themselves or end up in prison. There's an awful lot of young men in prison who have been in our house. (PI 8, Voluntary non-CSE specialist).*

However, they perceived other professionals as not sharing this same understanding, which they viewed as an impediment to identification of CSE:

*...generally, out there amongst professionals there is less awareness in terms of young males being exploited and even how we interpret the behaviour of young males... I think there still is that reluctance to describe young males' experiences as being potentially sexually exploited and probably more of a focus on their criminal behaviour and coming into conflict with the law and not maybe understanding that this could be the out workings of trauma and their experience. (PI 21, Voluntary, CSE Specialist)*

*Years ago, probably up until quite recently the whole issue of CSE would have been 'they are difficult children' and other choice phrases as well but I think that still lingers in terms of boys. Whether they are seen as offenders, getting themselves in trouble and so forth, I think they continue to be seen as that. (PI 18, Police).*

As presented in chapter five, well over two-thirds (69%; n=63) of respondents to the professional survey believed the criminal behaviour of young males masked their victimhood and saw this as an impediment to professionals' identification of them as victims. Moreover, it was seen as the

second highest reason, with almost two thirds (64%; n=40) believing this to be one of the three most likely reasons for non-identification.

The strong perception that criminal behaviour of young males may mask their victimhood was echoed in narratives from professional interviewees where they viewed offending or anti-social behaviour by young males as inviting negative responses from other professionals:

*Boys will tend to respond to trauma by acting out through negative or anti-social behaviour which tends to be criminalised as opposed to seeing them as a victim. (PS 88, Social Services).*

... 'oh, here comes trouble' as opposed to 'here comes a troubled young person'.  
(PI 23, Voluntary, CSE specialist).

*Often, we don't scratch back and look at the cause and just look at their behaviour. (PI 21, Vol, specialist).*

Professionals also observed that, when the same risk indicators are seen in young females and males, CSE is an immediate conclusion drawn by professionals in relation to the female whilst there is greater hesitancy in recognising the males' victimhood, or instead, more emphasis placed on his possible involvement in criminal activity:

*When a boy displays a number of CSE risk indicators some professionals say, 'this is a boy being a boy; it's youth offending behaviour or drugs running' or 'we need more risk indicators to consider CSE'. (PS 32, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*...the resulting behaviours in relation to the trauma of CSE that are seen in young men are more often criminalised than supported through social care routes...boys expressing*

*anger by causing criminal damage is not generally responded to by a social care referral, but by police intervention. (PS 23, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

Two particular aspects of offending behaviour in young males were viewed, by professionals and young male interviewees, as manifestations of CSE related trauma, or behaviour that simply masked CSE in males; these related to aggressive behaviour and criminality through drugs:

*...in particular with young men, aggression and substance misuse are the two biggies that I can think of in all the young men that I have known who have been sexually exploited (PI 8, Voluntary, non CSE specialist).*

### *Offending behaviour through aggression*

The literature review and theoretical framework for this thesis, chapters two and three, highlighted how, for the male victim of CSE, the trauma from the experience, feelings of shame, and an inability to communicate emotions, can manifest in outward aggression and other anti-social or destructive behaviours. There were several accounts by professionals and young males, indicating a young males' inability or unwillingness to disclose the exploitation, with a resultant display of aggression:

*A common response to trauma from boys is to manifest distress as physical aggression and rage. This is where I think more criminal behaviours are seen and labelled in boys who have or are experiencing trauma, alongside addiction to drink and drugs. (PS 23, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*They've no outlet and they can't talk about it...nowhere to put all that trauma, no-one to trust or no way of expressing it and most of them do finally implode and do something very serious to themselves or end up in prison. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-specialist).*

*Young men will damage themselves considerably by fighting or punching walls and so on.*  
(PS 51, Voluntary, non CSE specialist).

During interview, Adam, a young male, revealed visible scars on his fists from punching walls, a manifestation of the anger he felt as a result of exploitation:

*I still have anger, but it was a lot worse last year. A lot has gone now...I know that because I haven't hit a wall recently.* (Adam, aged 17).

Simon, a young male interviewee, also demonstrated his insight into the consequences for him of being unable to communicate his feelings as a victim of sexual exploitation. He shared his experience:

*I think the problem is for somebody who doesn't talk, that build things up, and when things build up you finally explode, and you go down two different roads – you go down taking drugs to get rid of everything or you end up being a nasty person towards everybody. I experienced both of those.* (Simon, aged 21).

Simon's perception of professionals' failure to respond to his disclosures resulted in his display of anger and frustration through aggression. This was specifically in relation to his sexual exploitation by a police officer, against whom he felt particularly powerless:

*...they use their power as something, so you feel you have to do something to them or they are going to do something to you, and the problem is, when I've taken action because no-one else was listening, I get arrested. That's because I've had enough, and I take things into my own hands. But if no-one else is talking what do you do?* (Simon, aged 21).

A professional interviewee described a similar act of aggression by a young male victim towards his abuser resulting in the young male being criminalised:

*I know of one young person...where he broke a window and was arrested, and he actually told his youth worker; he didn't tell the police, but the reason he broke the window was cause the person had touched him up. So, it's perhaps looking differently at certain trigger offences like damage, assault... (PI 3, Police).*

These descriptors of aggressive reaction, which also link with the discourse in chapter six regarding feelings of shame, demonstrate the potential for some male victims of CSE to externalise their trauma through aggressive, violent means and labelled as such. In addition, for the young male victim exploited by another male, and potentially posing a threat to his masculinity, his own aggressive behaviour can serve to fulfil masculine ideology of him as the aggressor, as discussed in chapter six. Attempting to maintain this image can become a priority for the young male over and above seeking help:

*...young males, particularly those who may display macho/aggressive behaviours may find it difficult to come forward, be believed and accept support to manage their situation. (PS 87, Voluntary CSE specialist).*

The second feature of offending behaviour which participants perceived as being linked to the sexual exploitation of young males is that which involves drugs.

### *Offending behaviour through drugs*

As shown in the literature review, chapter two, there can be a number of factors associating CSE and drugs. By focusing on young males, I am not negating the fact that drugs are also a factor linked to the sexual exploitation of young females and may influence the recognition of them as victims. Previous research on CSE attests to this. The difference for young males relates back to



earlier points regarding the additional and often unique inhibitors to disclosure for young males which may compound their involvement in drugs, including use as a coping strategy. Simon described his drug use as a coping strategy during his exploitation:

*...you go down taking drugs to get rid of everything...before, I would just shove 12 grams down my nose in one night...Drugs are often used as a pain relief just as a normal person takes paracetamol to try to take away a headache. (Simon, aged 21).*

One professional interviewee observed that, for young male victims who become drug dependent through using drugs as a coping strategy, disclosure of exploitation jeopardises exposure of their drug use, threatening this coping mechanism. This was viewed as a significant inhibitor to their disclosure:

*...are you going to take away their drugs, and if you do, how are they going to cope? You are going to basically strip their parachute of how they cope with life. (PI 12, Social Services).*

Pete was clear his substance misuse was one reason for not disclosing his exploitation:

*I was taking drugs and drinking so I don't know if I would have told anyone. (Pete, aged 30).*

This corresponds with my discussion in the literature review about male victims of CSE who are also involved in offending behaviour. They may assume a lack of credibility as a victim, through their own offending behaviour or may not wish to draw attention to it. This has the potential to reduce the likelihood of them disclosing experiences of exploitation. Irrespective of the original reason for involvement with drugs, professional participants believed the young males' feeling of complicity in this illegal activity was another factor in reducing the chances of him disclosing his

experiences of CSE. There was also the perception that professionals may believe the young male to be fully responsible for his drug use, thus influencing their decision on how to respond:

*If they are also doing drugs, then people think they are making a choice. (PI 1, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

*...and that whole description of, and you still hear it... 'he deserved it because he was out getting drugs or getting alcohol'...They don't recognise what was behind it all. (PI 12, Social Services).*

In the context of the use of secure accommodation for young males, one professional interviewee saw a tendency for a professionals' focus to remain solely on the young male victims' criminal behaviour when he is also involved with drugs:

*The boys who get placed there are generally there on a youth justice order rather than a welfare order because of a criminal act that got them in there. So, the route in is that they are described as 'drugs runners' when they have actually been exploited in that context and some of their exploitation has been sexual in nature. (PI 22, Voluntary, CSE specialist).*

It is in this respect that there may be differentiation in the professionals' response between the young male and female victims, in relation to drugs, which may also impact on how policies on the use of secure care are administered.

Accounts from both professionals and young males regarding a young male victims' links with drugs suggested potential consequences for both disclosure and identification simultaneously, demonstrating a potential interplay between the two. Simon's account of his drug use is one

example of this. To Simon, his perceived lack of response from professionals indicated normalisation of the abuse, impacting likelihood of disclosure and, as such, he saw drugs as his only coping strategy:

*Because when you are telling these people, and nothing is being done, well you think 'It's got to be normal, hasn't it?'... kept myself stimulated to forget about everything. It was also an easier way to deal with the abuse, so I didn't feel any pain at the time and after.*  
(Simon, aged 21).

This sense of hopelessness and helplessness, expressed by Simon, is echoed in the following sub-section, illustrating further complexities between the sexual exploitation of young males and youth offending.

#### *Imprisonment versus disclosure – a constrained choice*

The previous two sub-sections explored how participants viewed the manifestation of trauma through aggression and drug use, seen to mask victimhood and potentially inhibiting recognition of CSE in young males. Although the following experience is that of one professional interviewee, it is a highly significant and stark example, relevant to this debate. This example aptly reflects the complexities surrounding male victims of CSE, including many of the potential inhibitors to recognition that have been discussed in this thesis up to this point. In particular, this relates to the young males' expectation of himself as 'protector', experiencing fear and a sense of helplessness in perceiving his failure in this and seeking alternative, negative coping mechanisms:

*Some of them are just dying to be in prison. Some of my young men would do anything to keep themselves in prison and get that break [from CSE].* (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).

This same professional explained how, for one young male victim, imprisonment served three functions: as his only perceived means of escape from his exploitative situation; his only method of concealing his experiences of CSE; and as a way for him to avoid potential negative repercussions of disclosure from his perpetrator and others. This interviewee illustrated their perception of how the same young man appeared to escalate the seriousness of his crime, as he got older, to ensure his incarceration:

*There's one young man in particular stands out... and just from he was 16, every time he came out [of prison], he was maybe out a couple of weeks and he just did something, and he made sure it was the right amount to get back in. Not a really aggressive young man in any shape or form and now he's 21 he has to work harder to make sure he's inside you know; a wee petty theft isn't going to do it... so he has to up the game. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-specialist).*

This case illustrates this young males' inability to see any viable alternative, other than imprisonment, for his survival and to escape exploitation:

*He turned up at the house one day and he had a yellow box...and he was just weeping...He was just saying 'look at this, look at this'... and it was an injection that, if you found this young man lying on the street...you had to snap open the box and put it into his heart. I mean that was how far gone with substance misuse he was, and this had really shocked him and upset him that the doctor had given him this, and he said, 'look at what my life has come to, I've got to get myself back inside'... (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

This professional portrayed this young man's fears for his own life and the potential physical risks to others, all of which were repercussions of his experiences of CSE:

*... and he's able to say 'I can't live...I'm going to die...I've got to get off the streets' and he did it, he got himself off the streets... And, of course, he did the most heinous thing, he attacked two paramedics, two people who were trying to help him... (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

The manifestations of his trauma were apparent to the professional, and the potential for his premature death apparent to them both:

*...all the comments in the paper were spectacular, but of course you cannot share and understand that he didn't just turn like this ... this isn't just the way he was brought up and this just didn't happen... I would honestly believe I will be at this young man's funeral eventually to be honest; and he, I think, knows that too and then buys himself that time inside...there's supervision, there's food, there's a locked cell and I think those things must be precious to that young man... (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

This is reflective of a point highlighted in my literature review for this study - that one consequence of CSE related trauma can be a passive acceptance of death and therefore, an increased risk of suicide (Barnardo's 2014; 2018). Again, it should be acknowledged this is also relevant to young female victims; however, this may be more likely for young males given the points already highlighted regarding their greater tendency to deal with traumatic events in a more destructive manner, and the general higher rates of suicides amongst males, compared to females, in the UK.<sup>53</sup>

This young man's life underlines the potential repercussions of not being in a position to exit or disclose experiences of exploitation. It exemplifies the importance of earlier identification of CSE by professionals to prevent it becoming embedded in the lives of young males, compounding the

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<sup>53</sup> Male suicide rates remain consistently around three times higher than female suicide rates across the UK: Samaritans Suicide Statistics Report, 2017.

likelihood of non-disclosure. It highlights the extremes of a young man's behaviour in order to escape both the act of exploitation and exposure of it and necessitates the understanding of these complexities by professionals.

This sub-section has reflected the findings from participants' narratives regarding how they perceive the manifestations of trauma in the form of offending behaviour of young males, as a result of CSE. Whilst demonstrating how participants see this happening, some of their accounts touched on the professionals' misinterpretation of a young males' behaviour as criminal to the detriment of recognising his victimhood. This will be examined next.

### *9.2.3 Misinterpretation of a young males' behaviour as criminal*

Greg, one of the young male interviewees, gave his account of a range of professionals' responses to his exploitation, all indicative of 'condoned consent', as discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis, chapter three. Whether it was through a lack of awareness or purposeful action professionals failed to recognise his experiences as abusive. A lack of awareness appeared to account for the misinterpretation of his behaviours as that of being a gang member rather than as symptoms of exploitation.<sup>54</sup>

*Because of all the risk indicators of my CSE really...where I was coming home with injuries and bruises and things like that; I had the use of 2 mobile phones and I was very secretive about calls, I had new trainers, new clothes, anything I wanted I had and that was interpreted as being in criminal activity with other young people which wasn't the case. (Greg, aged 22).*

Having been referred to a project for gang members, the project worker assessed Greg as an inappropriate referral, recognising behaviours indicative of CSE rather than those of gang

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<sup>54</sup> Greg has spoken about his experiences in other forums; his account can be found on the Blast website: <http://www.mesmac.co.uk/projects/blast/for-boys-and-young-men/real-life-stories>

membership. The perceptive skills of this worker facilitated Greg's disclosure to her. However, despite her referral of Greg on to social services, he reflected how no action was taken by social services:

*I think that the project worker, because she works with young people in gangs every day, I think she could see from how I was that it was unlikely that I was in a gang, and it was her I told I was in a relationship with an 18-year-old man. She passed it on to social services, but nothing was done. (Greg, aged 22).*

A consequence of the initial misinterpretation of Greg's victimisation, and subsequent failures by social services to respond appropriately once his exploitation was recognised, resulted in Greg enduring sexual exploitation for a period of 18 months.

## **Section two: The influence of paramilitary gangs on recognition of CSE in young males**

### **9.3 Introduction**

The issue of any form of gang in relation to the sexual exploitation of young males was not a pre-determined category in the data collection methods utilised for this study. Nevertheless, five out of the 18 professionals interviewed within NI and one young male interviewee from NI, raised the issue of paramilitary gangs as significant in relation to CSE and its impact on the recognition of males as victims. Each of these participants provided compelling accounts of the links between the two phenomena and the repercussions for a young male's disclosure of CSE experiences.

In recent years the links between gangs and CSE have been well documented (Berelowitz *et al.* 2012; Firmin, 2013; Beckett *et al.* 2013; Pitts, 2013; Brayley *et al.* 2014). However, with the

exception of Beckett (2011) and Marshall (2014), the focus has primarily related to gangs in England. Furthermore, as with many other aspects of CSE research, these studies have revealed females to be the primary victims, with less known about the victimisation of young males in this context. The information gained from participants in this study offers a greater and, to some extent, new insight into the specific involvement of paramilitary gangs in the sexual exploitation of young males, or the sexual exploitation of males within a paramilitary controlled environment, irrespective of whether the abuser is a paramilitary figure or not. Knowledge of the dynamics and complexities within this culture provide significant learning about the factors that act to impede recognition of the exploitation.

Despite many online searches it was not possible to source a specific NI definition of 'paramilitary', therefore, I relied upon two similar definitions from the Collins and Cambridge dictionaries respectively:

*A paramilitary organisation is organised like an army and performs either civil or military functions in a country.*<sup>55</sup>

*A paramilitary group is organized like an army but is not official and often not legal.*<sup>56</sup>

The purpose of this section is not to debate the nuances of paramilitary gangs against these definitions, suffice to note one distinct feature, that is the predominance of adult male leaders within paramilitary gangs. The significance of this is the potential heightened dynamics of power and control exerted over others.

The remainder of this section will set the context of paramilitarism in NI, explaining its significance to this study. It will then highlight factors impeding recognition of CSE in males within these

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/paramilitary>

<sup>56</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/paramilitary>



environments, those of: fear (for self and others); control (including through the use of drugs); coercion to perpetrate; gains for the young male; and normalisation of paramilitarism and all that is inherent in that culture. However, before proceeding, several points of clarification are required:

- ❖ Limitations to the data do not allow distinction to be made between young male victims of CSE who are members of paramilitary gangs and those who are not, but simply reside in paramilitary controlled communities.
- ❖ Statements by research participants, making links between the sexual exploitation of young males and paramilitaries, did not clarify whether the abuse was wielded by gangs or by individual members of these gangs. Nor were participants specific to which paramilitary gang they were referring.
- ❖ It was not the intention of this study to detail the entire complexities surrounding the sexual exploitation of young males within the realms of paramilitarism, but to address those believed to impede recognition of it within this context. This has, however, highlighted a knowledge gap which would benefit from further research. See recommendations, chapter eleven.

## **9.4 Setting the context**

From the late 1960s until the mid-1990s NI experienced a sustained period of violent conflict over national identity, namely Republicanism versus Unionism. The evolution of paramilitary organisations originated at the start of this, with young males being actively recruited by them (Harland, 2009). During this era there were over 3,000 'punishment shootings' and over 2,500 'punishment beatings' by paramilitary organisations. Of significance to this study is the degree of fear generated, and power exerted, by these gangs, together with the fact that 25% of victims of punishment attacks were perpetrated against those under the age of 19 (Muldoon *et al.* 2005).

It is important to highlight, in the conflict transformational change period since the late-1990s, paramilitary gangs did not relinquish their grip on the communities in which they originated. While

there was de-militarisation in a political sense, the structures remained, turning their focus to criminal activity for personal benefit (Marshall, 2014).<sup>57</sup> This was conducted at a local level, the dealing of drugs becoming a significant element of this. Furthermore, despite this changing political context in NI, vigilante style 'punishment beatings' and shootings continued, with paramilitaries acting as the 'informal police' enforcing their own form of violent justice (Knox, 2001; Feenan, 2002; Kennedy, 2004).

*Two paramilitary-style shootings or beatings are taking place on the streets of Northern Ireland every week, the Belfast Telegraph can reveal. (Kilpatrick, 2014).*

*Acts of intimidation and PPA<sup>58</sup> are not a new phenomenon; rather they have been a consistent feature of Northern Irish society throughout the 30 years of the troubles. (Knox, 2001).*

The significance of paramilitarism to this study, both during and post-conflict, is three-fold. Firstly, it created an environment which reinforced the masculine ideology, as discussed in chapter two - one of power, strength, aggression, and protection, giving young males a place as defender and protector of their community; with this came status amongst peers and community members (Harland, 2011; Ashe and Harland, 2014). Secondly, it established a climate of fear and control which silenced victims of CSE. This could have been a result of paramilitary figures being the perpetrators of the exploitation; general fear of disclosing within such a threatening environment; a culture which did not permit the involvement of statutory services; and/or a distrust of statutory bodies tasked with protecting them, especially the police: *'We were told very clearly that paramilitary influence, where it is apparent, may cause and facilitate CSE and this undoubtedly makes it difficult for people to report it to the statutory authorities'* (Marshall, 2014, p.49). This established culture may be the cause of the process Pitts refers to as *'involuntary affiliation'* in

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<sup>57</sup> Report of the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in NI – November 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Paramilitary Punishment Attacks.

relation to gangs (2008, p.108). This will be evident below in the discussion regarding control, constrained choice, and the impact of fear.

The third significant strand of paramilitarism to this study is regarding the longevity of the conflict which has helped embed and normalise a culture of violence (Harland, 2011).

The following sub-sections will address these specific issues as identified by study participants.

### **9.5 The impact of fear, control and constrained choice**

All five of the professional interviewees in NI, referencing paramilitarism in the context of CSE and young males, provided accounts of the impact of fear and control, generated by paramilitary gangs, believed to impact young men's disclosures of sexual exploitation.<sup>59</sup> This is echoed throughout section two of this chapter. Collectively, they described environments of fear, created to generally engender compliance and silence:

*...you didn't cross them, and that's nearly 20 years ago, and I don't think there is anything different. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

*There was one young man one night when I was on nightshift, and he came down in tears, floods of tears...and then he disclosed he was in huge drug debts and a paramilitary group were making him perform oral sex as a way to pay off this favour. His social worker at the time was involved and reported it to the police but he didn't want to proceed with the investigation. He withdrew his statement and retracted what he had said. (PI 16, Social Services).*

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<sup>59</sup> In this section all participants referred to were those living in NI.

This young man was conscious of the consequences for him if he did not retract his statement, stating to his worker:

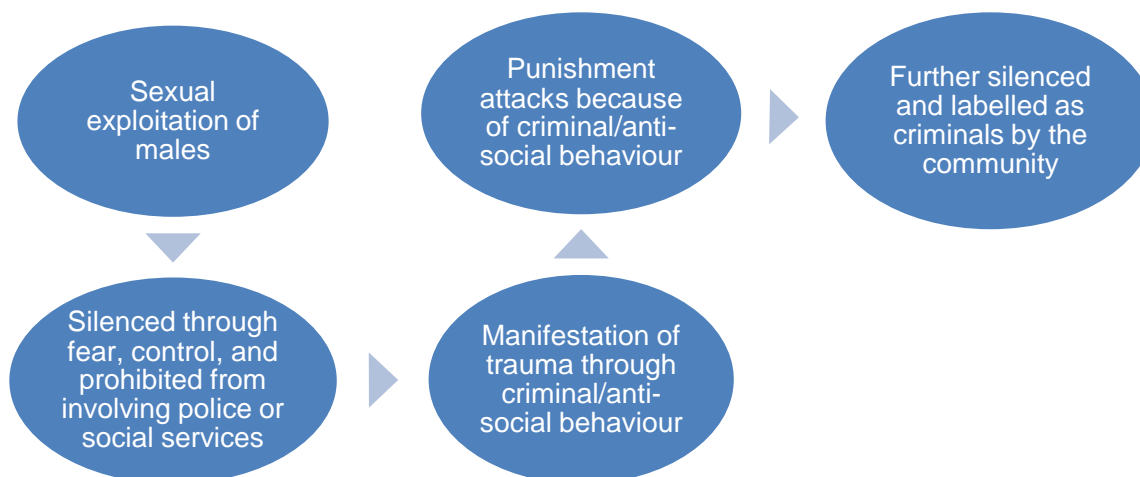
*...that touts get a hard time or get beat up, especially by this known group of paramilitaries. (PI 16, Social Services).*

As discussed in section one, offending and anti-social behaviour can be manifestations of trauma for male victims of CSE. In the context of NI and paramilitary controlled communities, such behaviours can result in a young male being subject to 'punishment attacks' within their communities:

*...their punishment is meted out by paramilitaries acting on the communities' behalf.*  
(Knox, 2001, p.181).

This role as facilitator of 'criminal justice' within their own community is to ensure compliance to their 'laws'; to ensure alienation of police and other statutory authorities. Criminal behaviour by others is seen to undermine paramilitary authority and their status within communities, as well as some criminal activities, ironically, being viewed as detrimental to the community (Silke, 1998). I hypothesise that this has the potential to reinforce fear and compound silence within paramilitary controlled communities. Furthermore, punishment by paramilitaries results in the labelling of these young males as criminals which, as discussed in section one, has the potential to reduce their own credibility as victims, in their own view and that of others. The male victim of CSE who is then guilty of offending and subject to paramilitary punishment attacks, is then prohibited from disclosing his victimhood on two levels - either as a victim of CSE or that of paramilitary punishment. The cyclical nature of this proposition is illustrated in Figure 9.1 below.

**Figure 9.1: Cycle of exploitation and silence for young male victims of CSE in paramilitary controlled communities.**



### *Fear for others*

Chapter six highlighted the efforts of male victims of CSE to disguise their experiences from others, often fearful of the repercussions of disclosure for them. Sammy, a young male interviewee, described his struggle to maintain the secrecy of his exploitation, having learnt from a young age what was safe and acceptable to disclose in his close-knit paramilitary controlled community:

*Northern Ireland has this real sense of community where... 'we can work it out,' but because of the way it is with the paramilitaries and no equal rights here, ...everyone in the estate knows everyone... You walk outside your door and everyone knows what time you left at... but because of those other things (sexual exploitation) it's just surface level. It's 'I will tell you about this and this and this, but I won't tell you ever about this'. (Sammy, aged 21).*

The young males' attempt to protect his own perpetrator was also explored in chapter six. Sammy provided an example of how this was manifested for him within a paramilitary controlled community. Living within a paramilitary culture of violence, he understood the potential lethal consequences for his abuser should he disclose his identity. Sammy felt he could not be responsible for this:

*Especially in [named paramilitary area] – that's all I've known... these are all manly men and I know, if I went and told my dad, him and his manly paramilitary friends would go up and kill him, I mean literally kill him there and then on the spot. So, for a young male feeling that sense of responsibility, knowing you've caused someone's death because you've told about something happening. (Sammy, aged 21).*

As well as recognising the potentially fatal consequences for his perpetrator, Sammy contemplated that he would not receive an appropriate safeguarding response from within his community; at best it would be unsympathetic and, at worst, victim-blaming:

*...if its paramilitary involved 'you can't say that – you're going to get put out'<sup>60</sup>. So, it's 'okay thank you for telling me but that's it, keep quiet'... because of that community and sense of 'how did you let this happen; you know how close we all are?' (Sammy, aged 21).*

This context exemplifies again the potential pressure on young males to prioritise the welfare of others above that of themselves, reducing the likelihood of disclosure of CSE, and highlights the influence of cultural complexities compounding this.

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<sup>60</sup> This usually means to be told to leave your home, your community, and in some cases, the country.

### *Control through drugs*

The links between drug use and victims of CSE, was discussed in the previous section. Drug issues amongst young males and females, in the context of paramilitary gangs, featured as a common theme during interviews with each of the five professionals in NI referencing paramilitaries. However, there was a perception as to the different forms drug use took for young males and young females which should assist our understanding of the constrained choice of young males:

*With females it's more about control; in that they would be given a bit of the substance and 'here's a party' and 'you take a wee bit of this love'; it's less of that party atmosphere and more of this big man, hard man atmosphere, you know 'you're part of our group now and you're part of moving this [drugs] from here to here' and it's very much tied in...like a job rather than a party situation. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-specialist).*

As an illegal activity, one professional interviewee spoke of how young males felt complicit in their role with drugs. This, combined with the fear and control wielded by paramilitaries, rendered them unable to speak about the connections between drugs and their experiences of CSE:

*... that whole aspect of having total control over a community, one that closes down and that sense of the young person...they are involved with ourselves because of drugs or alcohol issues...It's very scary... they get the drugs to deal with the issues that are going on at home. ...they go to the paramilitaries, get involved in getting drugs when they don't have the money to get them, so eventually they get to the stage of 'well how are you going to pay the debt off?' So, they may do a couple of runs but maybe they get into the habit and create a dependency and the aspect of that is that it becomes a greater dependency...and then I suppose thinking who would they tell, who would believe them? (PI 12, Social Services).*

### *Coercion to perpetrate*

The coercion of young males, by paramilitary figures, to perpetrate sexual exploitation on young females illustrated a further dimension of constrained choice for the male. One professional interviewee viewed this as a barrier to disclosure for the young male who was also a victim of CSE. It was also seen by this professional as an impediment to identification, where other professionals ignored the victim status of the young male:

*...so there would be powerful individuals in the community who would organise line-ups and then there would be fear attached if young men don't turn up and do as they are asked; then there would be repercussions – could be very, very sinister; they could be beaten up... Young males would be expected to perform sexual acts on girls as well so then they look like they are the predators but essentially, they are being controlled by the paramilitaries. So, there is a very fine line between victim and perpetrator. (PI 21, Voluntary, specialist).*

This example concurs with other research findings, such as that by Beckett *et al.* (2013), where, within a gang culture, they describe young males being pressurised into performing sexual acts with females, against their will. This debate also has relevance to the debate surrounding the inclination to view young males as perpetrators without cognisance of underlying determinants, a theme throughout this thesis.

### *Gains versus disclosure*

Two professional interviewees highlighted particular vulnerabilities to young males within socio-economically deprived areas, where these paramilitary gangs primarily existed:

*You tend to find that young people who have a paramilitary connection tend to come from more working-class areas... (PI 16, Social Services).*



*You've got a lot of these young males coming from very deprived areas and I suppose a lot of the deprived areas, if they are run by paramilitaries, they are the men that are held in high esteem. (PI 12, Social Services).*

This is corroborated by Harland (2011) who has written widely on the issue of young males in the context of paramilitarism in NI, stating how paramilitary membership appeared to be of mutual gain for the gang and the young male:

*Young men from disadvantaged communities throughout Northern Ireland have always been a prime target for paramilitary membership. Conversely, paramilitary membership has been a potentially attractive option for marginalized young men living in areas of deprivation. (Harland, 2011, pp.427-428).*

Again, this aligns with some of the most recent research identifying the existence of gangs within areas of acute social deprivation (Beckett *et al.* 2013). One professional and one young male in my study described how the desire for a life of purpose, with a sense of status or acquired possessions, otherwise unavailable to some young males, was the means by which the perpetrator gained their compliance and silence:

*The paramilitaries have access to guns, they have access to drugs and a lot of things that would be used to lure young men into involvement in certain things. (PI 21, Voluntary, specialist).*

The social exclusion referred to by Pitts (2008), compounded not by race as he suggests, but by religious and political divide in the NI context, has the potential to create what Pitts refers to as an 'alternative cognitive landscape' which 'isolates young people from mainstream social and cultural values' (2008, p.65).

When asked if there was an element of fear for boys sexually exploited by paramilitary figures, Sammy illustrated a degree of complexity around this:

*I think a bit of both status and fear. 'I've met someone and he's really powerful'.... In a way you are living the dream because you are with him, but no-one knows and he's buying you a drink. I think in their heads it's not a bad thing because there's this powerful person...It's almost like this mobster's wife, you know. With the paramilitaries I don't think it's so much 'oh I'm so scared'; it's more 'I've more status now.' Especially if you grow up in [named paramilitary area]. (Sammy, aged 21).*

Considering this in the context of identification, I would suggest it is possible status gain for the male victim of CSE has the potential to render him culpable in the eyes of others, perceived to be choosing involvement in gang culture, and thus not viewed as a victim. In some cases, gravitation towards gang status was seen by participants to provide a sense of protection to the young male who believed this would guard him from further exploitation, or some other harm. In this way, the fear exerted by paramilitaries, towards others, was viewed by the young male in a positive light and preferable to seeking protection from the authorities for his own victimisation:

*...it's nearly glorifying paramilitary groups what you see young men doing. 'I know such and such who will look after me when I'm out in the community' or 'I'll be fine down there because such and such is the head of that group' There's that protection, the status, so 'if I'm in with them I'm safe'. (PI 16, Social Services).*

Similarly, previous gang research has also evidenced the desire for status and protection to be a strong motivator in young people (male and female) where they are seen to exchange sex in return for what they perceived to be these gains (Beckett *et al.* 2013).

This paradoxical position of some male victims of CSE who may claim, or appear to be claiming, a degree of agency regarding their involvement with paramilitaries needs to be recognised. The inducement of power, status and protection are by-products of their affiliation to such gangs; however, coercion and fear simultaneously impact them, resulting in powerlessness, being objects of control, silenced, and unable to conceptualise a viable escape from this life of exploitation. The implications of this constrained choice for young males who become victims of sexual exploitation within such environments potentially reduces the likelihood of recognition of their victimhood.

### *From tolerance to normalisation*

A theme emerging from all five professional interviewees and the one young male showed how the lived experiences of some young males promoted tolerance of cultural norms such as violence, including sexual violence, resulting in the normalisation of the same. Such acceptance was seen as inevitable in reducing the likelihood of disclosure of CSE experiences. The following case example was given by one professional, regarding one young male victim, who assumed his role in life as 'drug running' for a paramilitary group, acceding to sexual exploitation as part of that role:

*...if you grow up in the wrong place...if you are born into the wrong house...He saw that he was never going to live anywhere else in his life; that was him for the rest of his days, he was never going to be employed or have proper education but...this was how he was going to make his money, this was his future; so everything was tied in to this and whatever was going on, on the side, you just had to soak it up, you just had to get on with it; that was life and just accept it. Young men get very stuck, 'this is my life, this is the way it is. This is the way it was for my brother, my da, my cousin'. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

The same professional explained the strength of such community structures, and pervasive control, which remained significant to young males, despite their experiences of exploitation:

*...that structure is really important to the young men...that's the be all and end all.*

*Potentially a longevity thing in that the young men are maybe being primed to take over and to go into this because it's a man's world – there's no women really in charge of these housing estates. Young women are only needed for sexual exploitation to a certain age and then 'off you go' whereas these young men will be sexually exploited to a certain age but then 'you will be staying on to help us move our money, move our drugs – you are part of this now...so, it's that potential lifelong kind of thing. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).*

Each of the contextual influences, discussed above, present in paramilitary controlled environments, were shown to clearly impact the young male's perceived lack of freedom to, not only reject the exploitation, but to disclose their status as a victim of it. Whatever the reason for a young males' non-disclosure, the silence surrounding it was also perceived to have implications for professionals' response to it. There was an element of frustration expressed by professionals, aware of some extreme circumstances for young males:

*...he was only 13 when he came through to ourselves, but huge history of drug use, being found in flats in [named area], being found in his own faeces so very much gone in his functioning on a day to day basis, known to be around a lot of older males... There was a huge influence with the paramilitaries and he seemed to gravitate towards known figures in the community. Again, police were informed and investigated what they could, but there was nothing substantive for them to go on and this young man would never have talked about it. (PI 16, Social Services).*

Qualitative data from participants in relation to professionals' identification of CSE amongst young males within the realms of paramilitarism was limited and would, therefore, benefit from further research. See recommendations, chapter eleven.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has brought together two co-presenting issues found in this study – youth offending behaviour and the role of paramilitarism (in NI). Section one provided evidence to support links between youth offending and the sexual exploitation of young males, but more specifically how this impacts recognition of males as victims of CSE. The findings illustrated youth offending (or the perception of it) presents a variety of challenges to the recognition of CSE in males, all of which necessitate addressing if young males are to be safeguarded. This should involve awareness, by professionals and young male victims, of the complexities surrounding manifestations of trauma as well as the facilitation of more positive coping mechanisms for victims.

The issue of paramilitarism was not a pre-determined area for examination in this study; however, the significance of accounts by several participants in NI necessitated its inclusion and analysis. Section two, therefore, examined the concept of paramilitarism and the complex dynamics within paramilitary controlled communities to which young males are exposed, particularly those who are sexually exploited.<sup>61</sup> The ultimate impact of this cultural environment on the identification of CSE in males, and reasons for their silence, was explored. It was evident from the findings that there can be a direct impact on young males from the sexual exploitation by paramilitaries, and also an indirect impact through the fear of living within such communities, as a victim of CSE.

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<sup>61</sup> Although the focus of this section relates to one nation within the UK, due consideration should be given to its application to similar cultural contexts in the other nations.

Analysis of this subject concluded more is known about the potential barriers to disclosure of CSE amongst young males within paramilitary controlled environments than there is in relation to impediments to identification by professionals. This latter limitation, therefore, highlights a significant knowledge gap and the need for further research specifically regarding professionals' identification.

This chapter completes the presentation of the findings in this study. A critical interpretation of the findings forms the basis of the next chapter, the discussion.

## **Chapter ten: Discussion**

### **10.1 Introduction**

Having presented the findings from this research study in chapters five to nine, the aim of this penultimate chapter is to discuss two specific elements of this thesis. First of all, I will focus on the applicability of my chosen theoretical framework to my findings as an aid to understanding the complexities surrounding the non-recognition of males as victims of CSE. Secondly, I will discuss my findings against what is understood from the CSA/CSE literature. In considering both aspects I will demonstrate how this study confirms, challenges or develops the existing knowledge base. This demonstrates my unique contribution to the field of literature on CSE.

‘Young people’ referenced in this chapter, refers to respondents to the YLT survey and young male interviewees. References to ‘professionals’ implies survey respondents and interviewees. Where there are distinctions for specific groups of participants, this will be indicated.

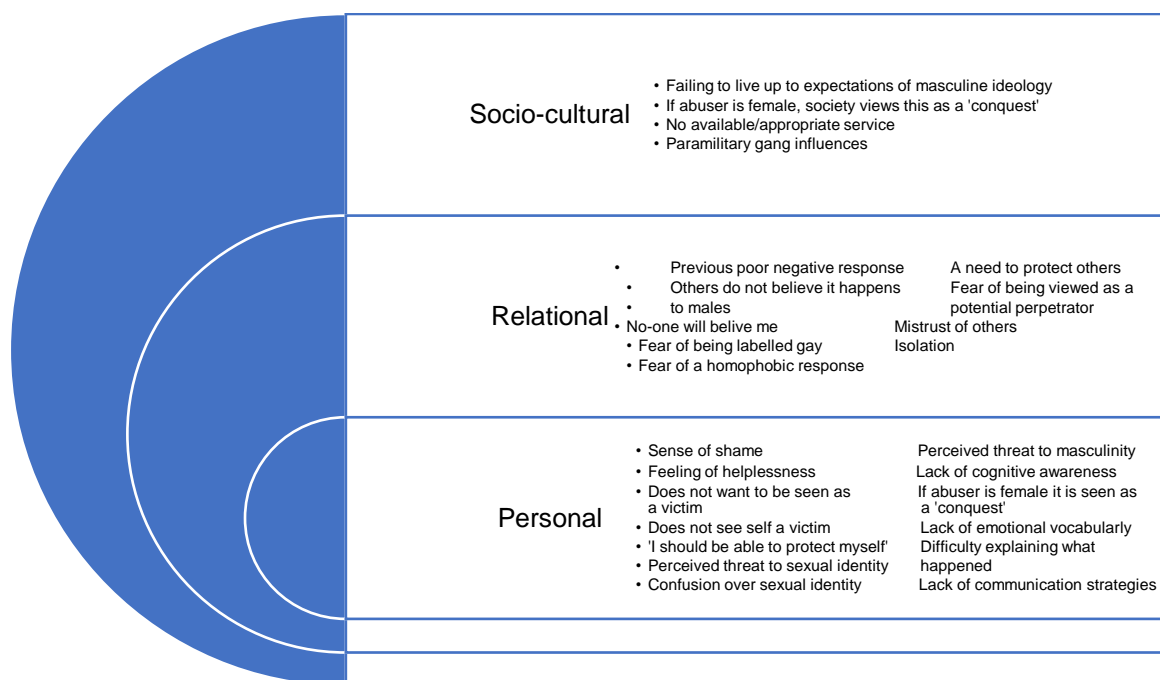
### **10.2 Applicability of ecological systems theory**

Ecological systems theory (EST) was purposefully chosen as an overarching theory for this study based on the concept that obstacles to disclosure of CSA amongst males appeared to be more than a manifestation of the individual male victim operating in a vacuum. Rather, these obstacles were seen to exist on multiple levels, each factor contextual to others. Sorsoli *et al.*'s (2008) three domains model was chosen as a practical framework to use alongside EST to illustrate inhibitors to disclosure across different levels of influence. Sorsoli *et al.* (2008) framed this model solely on male non-disclosure of CSA. My additional contribution to this has been three-fold. Firstly, to consider how all three domains - personal, relational and socio-cultural - could be applied to the non-disclosure of CSE by males, as a particular form of CSA, aiding our understanding of the

complexities surrounding barriers to disclosure. Secondly, to use the domains model to help understand impediments to professionals' identification of CSE in males. While Sorsoli *et al.* (2018) considered an interplay of barriers across the domains in relation to non-disclosure, my third contribution to this model was to demonstrate an interplay between inhibitors to disclosure and identification and across the domains.

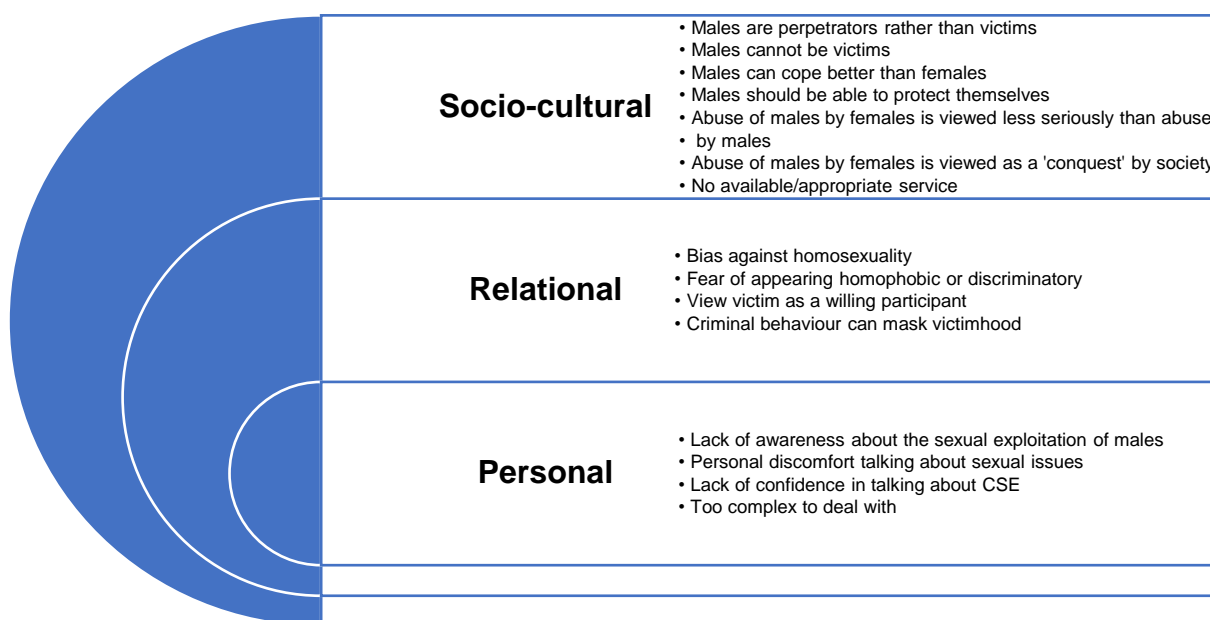
Figures 10.1 and 10.2 below illustrate the relevance of the model to inhibitors to both disclosure and identification of CSE in young males.

**Figure 10.1: Barriers to disclosure of CSE by young males across the socio-cultural, relational and personal domains**





**Figure 10.2: Impediments to identification of CSE in young males  
across the socio-cultural, relational and personal domains**



Of particular interest was my observation that an obstacle within one domain could be a cause of and effect to others within the same domain, as well as across the three domains. One example of this interrelatedness in relation to non-disclosure was evident in a young males' lack of cognitive awareness to name the abuse and his difficulty explaining what happened. Both obstacles stem from the personal domain, however, can be reinforced by their belief that others do not believe CSE happens to males, also demonstrating an interplay between the personal and relational domains. The influence of the socio-cultural domain is seen as the origin of this belief that CSE does not happen to males, deriving from gender constructs and masculine ideologies, inhibiting the young male from challenging the abusive nature of what is happening to him.

One example of a distinct parallel observed across impediments to disclosure and identification, was how a lack of awareness of both young males and professionals, coupled with personal discomfort and/or a lack of confidence talking the issue, and the belief that males cannot be victims of CSE, were seen to serve as inhibitors to both. A further example of this interrelatedness could be seen where there exists a professionals' personal bias against homosexuality and a male victims' fear of being labelled gay or fear of a homophobic response; both factors possibly created and reinforced by the notion of heteronormativity as the dominant ideology and one barrier influencing the other.

Considering parallels between non-disclosure and non-identification I observed how the concept of 'condoned consent' (Pearce, 2009), and the notion of 'unconscious', referenced several times in this study in relation to professionals' non-identification, could also be applied to understand barriers to disclosure. The notion of the 'unconscious' can be applied to explain a young males' lack of cognitive awareness to name the abuse, compounded by stereotypical masculine ideologies that prevent him learning what is exploitative. The absence of a positive response from professionals to the young males' victimhood, as described in accounts from more than one young male interviewee, may serve to reinforce this.

The interplay between personal social cognitive dynamics and those obstacles at the relational and socio-cultural levels are clearly evident, highlighting that barriers to disclosure and identification exist on multiple levels of experience. Basing the findings within this theoretical framework has also highlighted which levels of experience (domains) may be more likely to negatively impact disclosure and identification. In relation to the quantitative data, two of the three most likely reasons chosen by males as negatively impacting their disclosure lie within the personal domain (a sense of shame and having difficulty explaining what happened), while the third lies within the socio-cultural domain (the belief 'I should be able to protect myself). However, one could argue each of these three barriers are created from socio-cultural ideologies

surrounding masculinity. Interestingly, however, the same reasons for non-disclosure were chosen by young females as barriers to disclosure for them. This commonality between barriers to disclosure for both genders is important in highlighting the similar difficulties faced by both genders, whilst recognising they can be experienced differently by each gender. One example of this is young males coping with additional issues of shame as part of a heteronormative ideology which still exists. This is addressed again in the following section.

Three of the most significant factors young people believed negatively impact identification of males as victims are all within the socio-cultural domain: the beliefs that males cannot be victims and they tend to be abusers rather than victims, as well as the perception that abuse of the male by a female is viewed as a 'conquest'. This may suggest young people view socio-cultural factors as being primarily responsible for negatively influencing identification of males as victims.

Professionals perceived the most likely barriers to disclosure for male victims of CSE as situated across the three domains: the belief 'I should be able to protect myself' (personal); fear of being labelled gay (relational); and people don't believe CSE happens to males (socio-cultural). This would suggest, considering multiple reasons for non-disclosure, professionals are able to see responsibility for this lying within and beyond the individual victim. Professionals' perceptions of the primary impediments to their identification of young males' victimhood appeared to be located within the personal domain (a lack of knowledge regarding the sexual exploitation of young males) and the socio-cultural domain (criminal behaviour of males masking CSE, and males being viewed as perpetrators rather than victims). These factors are illustrated in tables 10.1 and 10.2 below.

**Table 10.1: Young peoples' main perceived inhibitors to recognition of males as victims of CSE**

	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Socio-cultural</b>
<b>Barriers to disclosure</b>	A sense of shame	
	Difficulty explaining what happened	
	'I should be able to protect myself'	
<b>Impediments to identification</b>		Males are seen as abusers rather than victims
		Males cannot be victims of CSE
		If abused by a female, it is seen as a 'conquest' for the young male

**Table 10.2: Professionals' main perceived inhibitors to recognition of CSE in young males**

	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Relational</b>	<b>Socio-cultural</b>
<b>Barriers to disclosure</b>	I should be able to protect myself because I'm male	Fear of being labelled gay	People do not believe CSE happens to males
<b>Impediments to identification</b>	Lack of knowledge about male CSE	Criminal behaviour masks victimhood	Thinking males are perpetrators rather than victims

This analysis confirms, despite the differences in factors relating to non-disclosure and non-identification, these three domains operate for both young people and professionals. It also illustrates the magnitude of the interrelatedness, and thus the complexities, surrounding the non-recognition of CSE in males. It is critical to note, as referenced in the theoretical framework, chapter three, that even if young males have the ability to overcome personal and relational obstacles, socio-cultural barriers may continue to inhibit their disclosure. This was particularly evident in examples from both young males and professionals in interview, describing the negative impact of certain cultural norms towards homosexuality and preserving masculine

ideology. Whilst the literature provides some understanding of cultural norms impacting disclosure by males, less is known about its impact upon the identification of CSE in males. This study exposed this as a gap and is therefore addressed in the recommendations, chapter eleven.

This section has discussed the applicability of the domains model regarding general CSA, to CSE as a particular form of CSA. Using this model, my findings confirmed the existence of barriers to disclosure and identification on multiple levels, as well as exposing interrelatedness between the levels and between disclosure and identification. These inherent complexities are compounded by the dissonance between level of significance young people placed on certain barriers to recognition compared to what the literature informs us, and the views of professionals; this is the focus of the next section.

### **10.3 Contribution to the existing literature**

In chapter two, the literature review, I explained how I drew upon the wider literature regarding males as victims of CSA and considered its applicability to CSE as a particular form of CSA, encompassing the concepts of exchange and consent, and as a phenomenon predominantly affecting those in their teenage years. As stated above, this section focuses how this study's findings compare with, and contribute to, the existing literature base.

An examination of the literature showed an emphasis on gender constructs and masculine ideology as having significant influence over the recognition of CSA in young males. The dimensions of traditional masculine ideology were found to be:

- ❖ Avoiding all things feminine;
- ❖ Being non-expressive of emotions related to vulnerability or attachment;
- ❖ Being tough and aggressive;

- ❖ Being independent and self-reliant;
- ❖ Being driven toward high social status;
- ❖ Perpetually in the mood for sex; and
- ❖ Fear/hate of homosexuality.

Such constructs are seen as influencing such issues as a lack of social acceptance and belief of males as victims; responsible for self-blame amongst male victims; viewing female perpetrated abuse as 'sexual exploration'; and creating uncertainty around their sexual orientation, thus creating different and greater barriers to disclosure for male than female victims of CSA. My findings did not so much dispute the existence of barriers to disclosure for young males as noted in the literature but rather the level of significance placed on various inhibitors to disclosure by young males compared to young females. The quantitative data findings of young people in this study showed a smaller differentiation regarding the significance of barriers to disclosure between the genders than the literature would suggest. Five of the seven factors under consideration as barriers to disclosure were viewed as more significant by females than males. These were: feelings of shame and helplessness; 'no-one will believe me'; having got a previous poor response when attempting to disclose; and difficulty explaining what happened. Regarding the other two factors, not wanting to be seen as a victim and the feeling 'I should be able to protect myself', only slightly more males than females believed these to be barriers for them, based on the influence of social constructionist ideology of masculinity. These findings suggest more commonality than difference between young males and females regarding some barriers to disclosure, with differences ranging between three and fifteen per cent. Moreover, contrary to the views of young people, professionals' opinion in relation to these barriers also concurred with the literature. This perhaps indicates the propensity for professionals to be influenced by these stereotypical ideologies that dictate how young males should feel and behave.

I considered two potential reasons for the levels of dissonance between the views of young people contributing to this study and existing research literature. One possible explanation for disparity may be the fact I examined obstacles to disclosure and identification from the perspective of both young people and professionals, whereas much of the literature focuses on the views of one cohort, often professionals. As Lefevre *et al.* have highlighted, children are less able to recognise their exploitation when their *'feelings, rights to safety and views have been disregarded'* (2017, p.2459). I would question how much this is perpetuated when our social systems negate the views of young people regarding their lived experiences of CSE. As chapter four, the methodology, particularly highlighted, this underscores the critical importance of including young people in research of this nature. Using a methodological approach that gained the perspectives of young people as well as professionals, and on a quantitative and qualitative basis, has highlighted the need to contextualise young males' experiences of CSE to understand not only what they perceive to be the barriers to recognition but how their experiences of them may differ from those of young females. This can only really be achieved by listening to the lived experiences of young male victims.

The experiences of young respondents to the YLT survey raised a further point for me, worthy of note in this debate. The CSE experiences of these young people were unknown; however, it would be interesting to ascertain any divergence in responses to questions between young people who had experienced CSE and those who had not. This would be a valuable consideration in future research in this field.

A second potential explanation for dissonance between my findings and that within the literature could be related to my focus on CSE, a phenomenon encompassing the concepts of exchange, consent and age, as opposed to CSA, on which most of the literature was focussed. This perhaps corroborates Allnock's (2018) position, arguing the field of CSA has not yet fully integrated the various manifestations of CSE as one form of CSA. This can have implications for

the recognition of CSE in general, particularly encompassing the element of 'exchange' involved in this form of abuse.

A particular unique contribution to the literature emanating from the qualitative element of this study has been the correlation between non-recognition of young males in NI as victims of CSE and paramilitarism in NI. The various ways in which this particular culture was seen to negatively impact recognition of CSE in males offered new insights into particular nuances regarding impediments to recognition. Furthermore, such insights can also have wider relevance to a young males' victimhood, emphasising their potential paradoxical position of claiming, or appearing to claim, a degree of agency regarding their involvement in CSE as a result of specific circumstances. The inducement of other things such as a means of surviving, power, status, and protection for the young male can be by-products of what they believe they are choosing. At the same time, it should be recognised coercion and fear can simultaneously impact them, resulting in feelings of powerlessness, being the objects of control, and feeling unable to exit the exploitative situation. It can be within such circumstances that young males are seen by professionals as making legitimate choices. This highlights a further example of barriers to disclosure negatively influencing identification and the complexities surrounding this phenomenon of male CSE.

#### **10.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed Sorsoli *et al's* (2018) domains model as a practical framework for applying ecological systems theory to this study. I have taken this model a step further than simply showing obstacles to disclosure exist in multiple domains and are interrelated, but that the same can be applied to the non-identification of CSE in males. Moreover, I have revealed an interplay between obstacles within and across each of the domains and in respect of both disclosure and identification. This has clearly demonstrated, not only the existence of obstacles on multiple levels of experience, but also the complexity this creates. Recognition of the fact



each obstacle does not exist independently but is influenced by other contextual issues, is crucial to effectively addressing the sexual exploitation of young males. One of the key benefits of such an integrated approach to recognising the sexual exploitation of young males is that it firmly places the responsibility of their sexual exploitation and response to it, on the larger community rather than solely upon the young male. Operationalising this concept should result in a climate of safety for the young male victim, that in turn, enhances both disclosure and identification.

The second part of this chapter discussed the dissonance shown to exist between young people's views on barriers to recognition and what we understand from the literature on CSA. This revealed barriers to disclosure and impediments to identification of male victims of CSE may not be as clear cut as we would believe from the literature. Furthermore, at least two significant points were realised: firstly, the importance of contextualising CSE when responding to issues specific to young male victims of CSE; secondly, that the contribution of young people's voices to this discourse is a pre-requisite to fully understanding the impediments to the recognition of CSE amongst young males.

## Chapter eleven: Conclusion and Recommendations

This research study set out to address a knowledge gap in relation to the sexual exploitation of young males. In particular it sought to examine potential impediments to the recognition of CSE amongst males under the age of 18 by:

- ❖ Identifying inhibitors to disclosure by young males and potential solutions;
- ❖ Identifying impediments to identification by professionals and potential solutions;
- ❖ Exploring the existence of any relationship between inhibitors to disclosure and impediments to identification.

My subject of choice for study was a result of having worked in the field of CSA and CSE for almost two decades, where I witnessed young males rarely being recognised as victims of abuse and responded to, with more immediacy, as perpetrators of sexual abuse and other crimes. My aspiration was to achieve greater understanding as to the reasons for this by examining both barriers to their disclosure and impediments to identification as victims, by professionals. In doing so it was not my intention to disregard or diminish the impact of CSE on young females; in fact, it became clear during the study that, whilst several barriers to disclosure and identification may be considered unique to young males, many others posed the same difficulties for young females. However, it is my hope that, through increased understanding of the complexities underlying the sexual exploitation of young males, this might aid greater equilibrium in recognition of the two genders as victims of CSE.

Based on the results of this research it can be concluded there is both commonality and dissonance between the CSA literature relating to the non-recognition of males and the findings in this study in relation to CSE, resulting in challenges to stereotypical assumptions regarding males

and masculinity. The findings have also revealed a level of dissonance between the views of young people and professionals regarding relevance of barriers to disclosure and identification of CSE in males. This presents safeguarding implications in that the findings underscore the importance of recognising the role of gender constructs and socialisation in the negating of young males as victims of CSE. It also highlights what professionals may perceive to be barriers to disclosure for young people may not have the same level of significance as barriers for young people themselves. This adds unique complications to the process of both disclosure and identification of CSE in males. The implications of this for the interpretation and application of CSE policies and procedures to the identification of young males as victims, is significant.

I had hoped that by understanding the sources prohibiting young males' disclosure and professionals' identification will hopefully prevent CSE becoming embedded in the lives of young males. For future work, a strategy that challenges the current systems seen to perpetuate this, is developed. Through this we may be on the path to ensure the level of protection, that should be afforded to male victims of CSE.

The theoretical lens through which I conducted this study was that of ecological systems theory. I utilised this as an overarching theory to demonstrate three points, that:

- ❖ The barriers to recognition of CSE in young males are multiply determined by factors concerning the individual traits in the young male, interpersonal relationships, and other contextual factors such as community, environment, and culture;
- ❖ The impediments to identification of CSE in young males are also multiply determined by factors concerning the individual professional, interpersonal relationships, community, environment, and culture;

- ❖ There can be simultaneous causes for non-disclosure and nonidentification of CSE in young males, creating connections between the two phenomena.

Using the findings from this study I have demonstrated application of this theory by using Sorsoli *et al's* (2008) three domains model as a practical framework. Application of ecological systems theory and the domains model facilitated greater understanding of the complexities involved in the recognition of CSE in males exposing considerable interrelatedness between barriers to disclosure, impediments to identification, and at different levels of experience for both young males and professionals. Moreover, this level of interplay reveals how one factor can compound another, with the potential of reinforcement of factors within and across the different domains, thus compounding the complexities surrounding the sexual exploitation of young males.

In my opinion, the overarching benefit of the theory, in the context of this study, has been its ability to shift the responsibility from the young male to navigate the social and structural systems that act as a barrier to his disclosure. Instead, this theoretical framework has allowed for the integration of all levels of human ecology, including the environment and diverse cultural contexts, as responsible for the cause of and solution to the problem.

The discussion, as outlined in chapter ten, presented some solutions to the barriers to recognition, as was one of the objectives of this study. However, the majority of the findings focused on current problems, offering minimal solutions. This in itself is significant in highlighting where people are currently positioned in terms of finding solutions to the barriers to recognition of CSE amongst males. This, therefore, leads me to the last section of this thesis – recommendations for future studies. This consists of four specific recommendations derived from the findings; one in relation to disclosure, two regarding identification, and one relating to both.

## **Recommendations for future research**

A level of dissonance between the views of young people and professionals was evident. It was clear that communication abilities of both young male and female inhibit their disclosure of CSE experiences. This points to the importance of not perpetuating stereotypical assumptions regarding a young males' communication strategies which can serve to hinder his potential disclosure and recognising there is good evidence that CSA/CSE disclosures are more likely to occur in a dialogical context. **Further research is, therefore, recommended on contextualising the reasons why both males and females have difficulty explaining their experiences of CSE to reveal if there is any divergence, and to provide a more in-depth examination of the influence of gender socialisation on their respective communication strategies.**

This study's findings illustrated the impact of negative cultural influences towards homosexuality and masculine ideology as inhibiting disclosure. This was evident in various aspects of culture, such as BME communities, religious communities, certain geographical areas and gang-controlled communities. Whilst data suggested how this inhibited disclosure of young males' experiences of CSE, little information was offered about the impact of culture upon identification by professionals. **Further research would be valuable in relation to impediments to the identification of CSE amongst young males in specific cultural environments where disclosure is prohibited for reasons specific to those cultures. A specific area of recommendation, which has received little attention, yet raised significant issues within this study, is that within paramilitary controlled communities within NI; a culture which embodies masculine ideology.**

Another issue emanating from the qualitative data from young male and professional interviewees was that relating to the physiological make-up of males and females, in addition to gender constructs, and the consequent impact of this upon both disclosure and identification of male victims of CSE. This was viewed as a particular impediment to identification of the young male as a victim where the perpetrator is female, a circumstance in which the victimhood of the young male was perceived to be minimised. **This knowledge gap highlights an understanding of these physiological complexities surrounding female-on-male exploitation as a pre-requisite to reducing the level of minimisation connected to this, as well as the young males' fear of being blamed. Therefore, further research with professionals on this specific issue is recommended.**

The contribution from young people to this study has revealed levels of dissonance between their perspectives on barriers to the recognition of CSE in males, the existing knowledge base, and what professionals recognise as barriers to recognition. This points to the critical importance of involving young people in issues pertaining to their lives and experiences. **The fourth recommendation, therefore, is that both practice and policy development be informed by the experiences of young people, utilising whatever methods are appropriate and necessary.**

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to prevent CSE becoming embedded in the lives of young males as it has been through shortcomings in the recognition of them as victims of it. To achieve this, an understanding of factors inhibiting recognition is a pre-requisite, as is a strategy that challenges current systems and prevailing negative attitudes and beliefs that serve to perpetuate the non-recognition of males as victims of CSE. In accomplishing this, we may be on the path to ensure the responsibility for young males' protection from this crime rests with the professional, and the wider social system, and achieving greater equilibrium in recognition of the two genders as victims of CSE.

## **Appendix 1 – UK CSE definitions: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland**

### **Scotland**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse in which a person(s), of any age takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something received by the child and/or those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the presence of perceived consent does not undermine the abusive nature of the act.

Child sexual exploitation: Definition and summary:

**<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/10/6376>**

### **Wales**

Child sexual exploitation is the coercion or manipulation of children and young people into taking part in sexual activities. It is a form of sexual abuse involving an exchange of some form of payment which can include money, mobile phones and other items, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, 'protection' or affection. The vulnerability of the young person and grooming process employed by perpetrators renders them powerless to recognise the exploitative nature of relationships and unable to give informed consent.

**<http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/our-work/safeguarding/wales-child-protection-procedures-review-group/>**

N.B. (Awaiting a revised definition in autumn 2018).

## **Northern Ireland**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.

Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

N.B. England's definition has been used within the content of this thesis.



## **Appendix 2 – UK Policy and Guidance regarding CSE**

### **England**

#### *Policy*

The Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area. Section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

#### *Guidance*

Child sexual exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation February 2017.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/591903/CSE\\_Guidance\\_Core\\_Document\\_13.02.2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf)

This guidance should be read alongside: Working together to Safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the safeguard of children

### **Wales**

#### *Policy*

As above, the Children Act 2004 applies to Wales.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

## *Guidance*

The way in which these arrangements should be exercised by different agencies is set out in the Welsh Assembly Government Guidance Working Together.

Supplementary guidance to Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004

<https://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/policy/110107guidanceen.pdf>

## **Scotland**

### *Policy*

Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/5/contents>

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out duties on a range of public bodies to report on how they are taking forward children's rights as set out in the UN Convention.

### *Guidance*

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014

<file:///C:/Users/Owner/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/QFK3CBGZ/00450733.pdf>

Scotland's National Action Plan has been developed with specific areas of focus for tackling Child Sexual Exploitation:

Prevention of abuse (with specific measures for dealing with particularly vulnerable children)

Disruption and prosecution of offenders through legislation; and

Supporting children and young people affected by CSE.

## **Northern Ireland**

### *Policy*

Children (NI) Order 1995

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1995/755/contents/made>

### *Guidance*

Co-operating to Safeguard Children 2017

It provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how communities, organisations and individuals must work both individually and in partnership to ensure children and young people are safeguarded as effectively as possible. The policy was originally issued in March 2016. It was refreshed in August 2017 to include an updated definition of child sexual exploitation (see section 7.2.7).

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>

## Appendix 3 – UK Legislation regarding CSE

### England and Wales

#### Sexual Offences Act 2003

Prosecutions for child sexual exploitation can be brought under provisions of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. These include:

- [S.1 Rape](#)
- [S.2 and 3 Sexual assault](#)  
[S.5-8 Rape and other sexual offences against children under 13](#)
- [S.14 Arranging or facilitating commission of a child sex offence](#)
- [S.15 Meeting a child following sexual grooming](#)
- [S.47 Paying for sexual services of a child](#)
- [S.48 Causing or inciting sexual exploitation of a child](#)
- [S.49 Controlling a child in relation to sexual exploitation](#)

### Northern Ireland

#### The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008

Prosecutions for child sexual exploitation can be brought under provisions of this Act, including:

- S.12-13 Rape and other offences against children under 13
- S.16-22 Offences against children under 16, including meeting a child following sexual grooming
- S.23-42 Offences against children under 18

[View The Sexual Offences Order 2008](#)

## Sexual Offences Act 2003

Although the Sexual Offences Act 2003 primarily addresses sexual offences law in England and Wales, certain sections apply to Northern Ireland and can be drawn on for prosecutions related to child sexual exploitation. These include:

- [S.15 Meeting a child following sexual grooming](#)
- [S.47 Paying for sexual services of a child](#)
- [S.48 Causing or inciting sexual exploitation of a child](#)
- [S.49 Controlling a child in relation to sexual exploitation](#)
- [S.57-59 Trafficking within and outside the UK for sexual exploitation](#)

## Scotland

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

Prosecutions for child sexual exploitation can be brought under the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005, sections 1 and 9-12 including:

- [S.1 Meeting a child following grooming](#)
- [S.9 Paying for the sexual services of a child \(under 18\)](#)
- [S.10 Causing or inciting provision by a child of sexual services or child pornography](#)

### [View the Prevention of Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)

The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009.

Cases that come under the definition of child sexual exploitation may be prosecuted under the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act including:

- [S.1 Rape](#)
- [S.18 Rape of a young child](#)

- Sections that involve sexual assault of young children and older children (see sections 19, 20, 28, 29 and 30).

[View the Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)

## **Appendix 4 – Research Protocol**



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Research Protocol**

#### **A: General Information**

##### **Title:**

What are the potential impediments to the recognition of the sexual exploitation of  
young males under the age of 18?

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**B: Purpose of the Research**

This research is being conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate in Children and Young People's Services Leadership undertaken through the University of Bedfordshire and chosen because of a perceived gap in the knowledge regarding the sexual exploitation of young males under the age of 18.

A growing body of research evidence over the last decade has shown child sexual exploitation (CSE) in the UK to be an issue of serious concern.<sup>62</sup> However, the invisibility of boys and young men within the discourse on CSE and within the literature has been strongly emphasised.<sup>63</sup> The

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<sup>62</sup> Beckett, 2011; Berelowitz *et al*, 2013; Melrose, 2013; Pearce, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Chase and Statham, 2004; Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Dennis, 2008; Pearce, 2009; Beckett *et al*, 2013 Melrose, 2013; Pearce, 2013; Reid and Piquero, 2013.



low rate of known cases of male CSE appears to be an issue of recognition as well as prevalence (Beckett, 2011; Berelowitz *et al.* 2013).

As models of CSE have been produced over the years, (see for example, Barnardo's, 1998), they have rarely helped to explain the involvement of males, other than as assumed perpetrators of abuse (Melrose, 2013). Melrose (2010) argues that the domination of such gendered models within policy and practice frameworks prohibits discussion around or understanding of the involvement of boys and young men as victims of CSE. Whilst males have been included in definitions and specific guidance on CSE it is questionable as to whether they are effectively being applied to males in the same way as for females and to what extent existing models of CSE are informing or misinforming policy and practice.

The issue of sexual exploitation of boys and young men under 18 has been a somewhat shrouded topic that requires a change in practice in order to afford them the protection that is theirs by right. Although there is increasing recognition of difficulties in relation to the disclosure and identification of child sexual exploitation of young males, there has been little UK research that has focussed explicitly on the reasons for this. Research into the sexual exploitation of boys and young men in the UK published in August 2014 provided some further understanding of the known characteristics of male CSE compared to that of females, professionals' views on perpetration and victimisation processes and perceived support needs for young males<sup>64</sup>. However, in the absence of more focused research into the barriers to recognition fundamental gaps exist in knowledge and understanding and inevitably limit the degree to which we can effectively protect boys and young men from this form of abuse. Exploration of these elements is imperative in order to inform targeted, evidence-based interventions for young male victims of CSE.

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<sup>64</sup> Cockbain *et al.*, 2014

### **C: Aim and main objectives of the research**

The overall aim of this research is to address the gap in knowledge in relation to the potential impediments to the recognition of the sexual exploitation of young males under the age of 18.

The objectives are to:

- Identify inhibitors to disclosure by young males and potential solutions
- Identify impediments to identification by professionals and potential solutions
- Explore any relation between barriers to disclosure and impediments to identification.
- Examine the effectiveness of current policies and procedures on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in relation to young males
- Consider examples of promising practice.

### **D: Methodology**

A mixed methods approach will be adopted for the research. There are four planned phases to the data collection:

#### **Phase 1: - Preliminary work**

- A review of policies and procedures in relation to CSE
- Collation of secondary quantitative data on male and female CSE for comparative purposes
- Production of research instruments.

#### **Phase 2: - Survey of professionals regarding challenges to recognition.**

- An online survey, with a word version as optional, will be administered to a range of professionals from (a) two HSC Trusts and (b) other relevant agencies.

### **Phase 3: - Interviews with professionals**

- Interview between 15 and 25 professionals (8 in NI), from those who complete the survey.

### **Phase 4: - Interviews with males (aged 14 – 25)**

- Potential participants will be identified by professionals according to inclusion criteria and anonymously risk assessed before being approached about the potential for involvement
- Conduct semi-structured interviews with 10 to 16 males (2-4 in NI).

### **E: Ethics/Governance**

The ethical protocols to be followed will be in accordance with:

- The University of Bedfordshire
- Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee
- Office for Research Ethics Committees (OREC).

The ethical protocol to be followed in this research will be in accordance with the standards set forth in Barnardo's Statement of Ethical Research Practice (see attached – Ethical Protocol).

Ethical approval has been granted by Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee. (see attached for confirmation).

Ethical approval has also been granted by the University of Bedfordshire's IASR (Institute of Applied Social Research) Ethics Committee and UREC (University Research Ethics Committee). (see attached for confirmation).

## F: Time Frames

Task	Time frame
Submit application for ethics approval with participating HSCTS/ORECNI	April 2016
Conduct survey of professionals	May – August 2016
Interview professionals	May – August 2016
Interview young males	May – August 2016
Data Analysis	August – November 2016
Report Writing	December 2016 – May 2017
Submission	May 2017
Dissemination	By May 18

## G: Further Information

For further information please contact Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin on [Jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:Jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk) or by telephone on 07795676830.

## Appendix 5 – Professionals' Survey



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males under the Age of 18**

#### **Professional Survey**

This survey considers the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) amongst young males under the age of 18. For the purposes of this work, CSE is defined as: “a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse’.<sup>65</sup>

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me on:

07795 676830 to discuss before commencing the survey. Otherwise, please tick to confirm the following before proceeding to the questions:

I have read the information sheet and am happy to participate on the basis of the information provided.

☐

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<sup>65</sup> SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI.

I give permission for my answers to be used in the research and any associated publications/presentations, on the basis that my contributions will not be attributable to either myself or my organisation.

☐

I understand that my answers will remain confidential to the research unless confidentiality thresholds around child protection, illegal activity or professional misconduct are reached (see information sheet).

☐

I know that I can withdraw from the research at any time and know how to do this.

☐

I wish to be informed of the results of this research, therefore, consent to my details being held until then.

☐

## **SECTION A: ABOUT YOU**

Name: (Optional)-----

Agency: (Optional)-----

**Sector: Please select one of the following:**

Social Services

☐

Youth Justice

☐

Sexual Health

☐

Community organisation

☐

Area of work:-----

Voluntary organisation

☐

Area of work:-----

Other -----

☐

Length of service in current post: -----

**Please tick and give comments where requested.**

**SECTION B: GENDER PATTERNS OF CSE**

1: Is child sexual exploitation an issue you have come across in your current role?

Yes, of females -----

Yes, of males -----

Yes, of both males and females -----

No -----

Comments: -----

---

---

2: How prevalent do you think the sexual exploitation of young males is compared to young females?

More prevalent-----    As prevalent-----    Not as prevalent-----    Don't know-----

Please give reason/s for your response: -----

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---

---

3: Age of victims

Based on your experience, what is the main age range of young people affected by CSE for:

a: Males -----

b: Females-----

4: Do you think the ways in which young males are sexually exploited differ from that of young females?

Yes -----

No -----

Don't know -----

Please give reason/s for your response: -----

---

---

5: Do you think the impact of sexual exploitation differs for young males to that of young females?

Yes -----

No -----

Don't know -----



Please give reason/s for your response: -----

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### **C: REASONS FOR NON-DISCLOSURE**

**Research indicates that there are generic reasons why young people, both male and female, find it difficult to disclose experiences of sexual exploitation.**

6: Please indicate, in the table below, your opinion as to whether each factor is more of a reason for non-disclosure for a male than a female; for example, is 'shame' more likely to be a reason for non-disclosure for a male than a female, equally as likely, less likely or don't know.

	More likely	Equally as likely	Less likely	Don't know
Shame				
Self-blame				
No available or appropriate service to disclose to				
Doesn't view him/herself as a victim				
Sense of helplessness				
Previous negative response re disclosure				
Lack of cognitive awareness to name the abuse				
Mistrust of others				
Lack of communication strategies				

**Research also indicates that there are specific reasons why young males are less likely than young females to disclose their experiences of being sexually exploited.**

7: Based on your experience, which of the following reasons do you think may inhibit disclosure of CSE by young males?

Please select all that apply, **rating in order of the most likely (1 being most likely).**

"I should be able to protect myself because I'm male" -----

"People don't believe this happens to males" -----

Perceived threat to masculinity (if abuser is male) -----

Fear of being labelled gay (if abuser is a male & victim is heterosexual) -----

Fear of homophobic response -----

Lack of emotional vocabulary -----

Perceived threat to sexual identity (if abuser is male & victim is heterosexual) -----

Confusion over sexual identity (if abuser is male) -----

Fear of being viewed as a potential predator -----

If abuser is female, the male views this as a 'conquest' for the male -----

If abuser is female, society views this as a 'conquest' for the male -----

Other -----

Additional comments: -----

---

---

8: Based on your experience, do you think there are particular groups of young males who are less likely to disclose than others?

Yes -----

No -----

Don't Know -----

If yes, please state which groups you think these are:-----

---

---

---

9: What do you think could be done to encourage young males to disclose their experiences of sexual exploitation?

---

---

---

#### **D: IMPEDIMENTS TO IDENTIFICATION**

**Research indicates that there are generic reasons why professionals may not identify sexual exploitation as an issue for young people, both male and female.**

10: Please indicate, in the table below, your opinion as to whether each factor is more of a reason for non-identification of sexual exploitation for a male than a female; for example, is personal discomfort talking about it more likely to be a reason for non-identification of a male victim than a female victim, equally as likely, less likely or don't know.

	More likely	Equally as likely	Less likely	Don't know
Personal discomfort talking about sexual issues				
View victim as a willing participant				
Lack of confidence in talking about the issue				
Too complex to deal with				
Fear of re-traumatising the victim				
No available/ appropriate service to deal with it				
Minimises the impact of the abuse				

**Research also indicates that there are specific reasons why young males are less likely than young females to be identified by professionals as being victims of sexual exploitation.**

11: Based on your experience, which of the following reasons may inhibit identification of CSE of young males by other professionals?

Please select all that apply, **rating in order of the most likely barrier (1 being most likely).**

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| Fear of appearing discriminatory or homophobic (if abuser is male)               | ---- |
| Thinking males are the perpetrators rather than victims                          | ---- |
| Thinking males can cope better than females                                      | ---- |
| Thinking males cannot be victims   | ---- |
| Thinking males should protect themselves   | ---- |
| Criminal behaviour of young males can mask their victimhood                      | ---- |
| A young male abused by a female is not viewed as seriously as abuse<br>by a male | ---- |
| Bias against homosexuality (if abuser is male)                                   | ---- |
| A lack of knowledge about the exploitation of males                              | ---- |
| If abuser is female, this is viewed as a 'conquest' for the male                 | ---- |
| Other  | ---- |

Additional comments: -----

---

---

12: What do you think could be done to help professionals identify the sexual exploitation of young males?

---

---

13: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the issue?

---

---

I plan to undertake a small sample of interviews (via telephone or in person) following this survey. Would you be willing to be considered for interview?

Yes ----

No ----

If 'yes' please provide your email address:-----

**If there are other professionals to whom you would consider this survey relevant, I would be grateful if you would pass the information to me.**

Please return the completed questionnaire to:

[jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)<sup>66</sup>

**OR** Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin, 230b Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AW

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey

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<sup>66</sup> If you return the survey via email and have chosen not to provide your name/organisational details, please be assured that your responses will not be linked to your personal details.

## Appendix 6 - Young Life and Times Survey 2015

The next few questions focus on sexual exploitation of young people under the age of 18. If you are personally affected by some of the questions below and want to talk to someone about this, you can contact **Barnardo's Safe Choices** project: 028 9065 8511

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** is a form of abuse in which children or young people are tricked, bribed or persuaded to take part in sexual activity in return for something they want or need. This can happen on-line or off-line. The things young people might be given in return can include attention, affection, food, cigarettes, money, drugs, alcohol, somewhere to stay. The sexual activity might include sending or viewing sexual images, sexual conversations or some kind of physical sexual contact. The person getting the young person to do this may be an adult or someone of a similar age to them.

1. How much do you know about the sexual exploitation of children and young people?

A lot ☐

A little ☐

Nothing ☐

Not sure ☐

2. Do you think child sexual exploitation happens:

Only to young males ☐

More often to young males than to young females ☐



Equally often to young males and young females

☐

More often to young females than young males

☐

Only to young females

☐

I don't know

☐

3. Please explain why you think this.

4. If you know any **males** this has happened to, what age were they when this first happened to them?

*Please tick all that apply*

Under 13

☐

13 – 15

☐

16 -17

☐

This has not happened to any male I know

☐

I don't know

☐

5. Do you think reporting of sexual exploitation is:

...harder for young males than for young females ☐

...equally hard for young males and young females ☐

...harder for young females than for young males ☐

I don't know ☐

6. If someone tried to take advantage of you sexually, how likely would you be to report this?

Definitely report this ☐

Probably report this ☐

Probably not report this ☐

Definitely not report this ☐

Go to question 8

I don't know ☐

7. And who would you report this to?

*Please tick all that apply*

A Friend ☐

A parent/carer ☐

A teacher ☐

A youth worker ☐

A sibling ☐

The Police ☐

☐

A helpline, such as Childline

A confidential website

☐

I would report this to someone else: who.....

☐

I would report this in another way (*Please specify*)\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

☐

8. If someone tried to take advantage of you sexually, do you think any of these would be reasons why you would not report it?

*Please tick all that apply*

a) Not wanting to be seen as a victim

☐

b) A feeling of shame

☐

c) A feeling of helplessness

☐

d) Having got a poor response when trying to tell before

☐

e) Difficulty explaining what happened

☐

f) The feeling: 'I should be able to protect myself'

☐

g) No one will believe me

☐

h) Other reasons (*Please specify*)...\_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you think professionals are likely to view sexual exploitation more seriously for young males or young females?

Young males

☐

Go to Q 11

Young females

☐

Go to next question

Equally serious for young males and females

☐

Go to Q 11

I don't know

☐

Go to Q 11

10: What do you think are the reasons for this?

*(Please tick all that apply)*

- a. They think boys can't be victims ☐
- b. Males are seen as abusers rather than victims of CSE ☐
- c. If abuser is female and the victim is male, this is viewed as a 'conquest' for the male ☐
- d. Other reasons (please write in) \_\_\_\_\_

11: Please name 3 things each that you think would help young men and young women to report sexual exploitation? If you think these are the same for both, just tick the box below

Young men	Young Women

This is the same for both. ☐

12: Is there anything else you would like to say about the sexual exploitation of your own gender?

[illegible]

## Appendix 7



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males under the Age of 18**

#### **Participant Information Sheet: Professional Survey**

This document provides you with information about the research, and why you are being asked to participate in this survey. Please read this carefully before deciding to complete the survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me via the contact details provided at the end of this document.

Thank you,

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin

#### **About the Research**

**‘Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.’ (SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).**

Although many professionals across the UK are now more aware of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) compared to five years ago, research suggests we do not yet have as good awareness about the sexual exploitation of young males as young females. Proposed reasons for this include a lower propensity to disclose on the part of young males and less frequent identification of risk amongst young males on the part of professionals (Beckett, 2011; Berelowitz *et al.* 2013).

This research builds on this emerging evidence base and seeks to explore gender differences in the identification and disclosure of CSE. Specifically, it seeks to consider if there are specific reasons why it might be more difficult for young males to disclose their experiences of CSE and why professionals might find it more difficult to identify when this is happening to young males in the absence of a disclosure. The research will also explore stakeholder views on how we could better respond to young males who are victims of this form of abuse.

### **Who is conducting and overseeing the research?**

The research is being conducted by Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin, who has 15 years' experience working in the field of CSE. The research is being conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate in Children and Young People's Services Leadership undertaken through the University of Bedfordshire.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committee (HSC REC A), the University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee and Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee.

### **Why have I been contacted?**

Your professional group has been identified by the researcher as one of a range of professions within the statutory, voluntary and community sectors who would have an important contribution to make to the research because of your contact with young males within the age range of 14 to 25. Your agency has given permission for staff to participate in this work should they desire.

### **What I am being asked to do?**

You are being asked to complete a survey consisting of 13 questions relating to:

- Perceived differences between the sexual exploitation of young males and young females
- Potential reasons why young males may not disclose their experiences
- Potential reason why professionals may not identify it happening to young males
- Potential solutions.

The researcher would be grateful if you would complete the survey **within four weeks** of receiving it. It should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, your decision as to whether or not you wish to participate is totally voluntary. There is no requirement for you take part, and there is no penalty if you chose not to.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

This research provides you with an opportunity to contribute to filling the gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the sexual exploitation of young males in the UK and to help in the

identification of good practice, in relation to more effectively protecting them from this form of abuse.

### **What are the possible disadvantages?**

Participation in this survey requires a time commitment on your part, however, this has been taken into consideration by limiting the number of questions. You have the option of completing the survey electronically or on paper to enable you to complete it at a time and in a way that is most convenient for you. You may also be concerned about being identified through the information that you share; however, the following section addresses the steps that will be taken to safeguard against this, assuring you anonymity.

### **What will you do with the information I share?**

All information that you share in this survey will remain confidential to the research. The only occasion when confidentiality will have to be broken is if you share information that suggests there is a child protection concern that has not been addressed, or an illegal or professional misconduct issue about an identifiable individual. In this instance the researcher will be obligated to pass on this information to the relevant authorities.

By completing the survey, you are giving your consent for your responses to be used anonymously in the research. Your responses will be securely stored on computers within a secure server system in a password protected location confidential to the researcher. Anonymised personal data will be retained for 3-6 months.



If the information that you share is to be used publicly (e.g. in a publication or presentation) all identifying features will be removed. Direct quotations will be identified by participant type (e.g. social worker; youth worker; health professional) and not by individual name or organisation.

### **What if I change my mind?**

If, after participating in this survey, you wish to withdraw your consent for your information to be used you may do so without any negative repercussions. You can withdraw your consent by contacting the researcher via the contact details given at the end of this information sheet. If consent is withdrawn after completion of the survey, all data will be securely destroyed immediately.

### **What if there is a problem?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, your first point of contact should be the researcher, Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin (details below). If you do not get a satisfactory response from this contact, or if you wish to make a complaint relating to the researcher's conduct, you should contact Dr. Helen Beckett, the researcher's supervisor at the University of Bedfordshire via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk). You will have been provided with a complaint's procedure alongside this information sheet.

### **Next steps**

If you have any queries or concerns about participating in this research, please feel free to contact Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin (the researcher) to discuss these. If you would prefer to talk to someone who is not involved in conducting the research, you can contact Dr Helen Beckett.

If you are willing to participate in the survey, please complete it and return it to:

[jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk) (online) OR

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin, 230b Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AW (paper copy)

You can contact Jacqui by telephone: 07795 676830.

**Many thanks.**

## Appendix 8 - Coding of Young Life and Times Survey

### Respondents

Category	Question	Gender
1	Please name 3 things each that you think would help young men and young women to report sexual exploitation?	Females re females
2	Please name 3 things each that you think would help young men and young women to report sexual exploitation?	Females re males
3	Please name 3 things each that you think would help young men and young women to report sexual exploitation?	Males re females
4	Please name 3 things each that you think would help young men and young women to report sexual exploitation?	Males re males
5	Is there anything else you would like to say about sexual exploitation of your own gender?	Females re females
6	Is there anything else you would like to say about sexual exploitation of your own gender?	Males re males

## **Appendix 9**



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Professional Interview Schedule**

##### **A. INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEW**

- Explain the purpose of the research
- Confirm participant has received and read Participant Information sheet and check for questions/concerns
- Briefly recap on issues such as limits to confidentiality; anonymity; intended use of data; ability to pass on questions/withdraw consent
- Explain nature of interview and check participant is happy to proceed
- Obtain written consent for participation (see professional interview consent form)
- Request, and record in writing, consent to use audio recording equipment.

## **B. THEMES FOR DISCUSSION (WITH POSSIBLE PROMPTS)**

### **1. Professional knowledge/experience of the issue of sexual exploitation of children and young people, and specifically young males**

- Is CSE an issue you have come across in your role or within your agency?
- What forms of sexual exploitation have you come across?
- Have you received any training on the issue?
- Do you think young males can be/are sexually exploited?
- How prevalent do you think male CSE is compared to that of female CSE?

### **2. Forms of male CSE**

- Do you think the exploitation of young males differs from how it happens to young females and, if so, how?
- What forms/patterns of sexual exploitation?
- Use of new technologies?
- Where is abuse occurring?

### **3. Groups of young males known to be at particular risk**

- Age?
- Ethnicity?
- Sexual orientation?

- Any specific vulnerable groups of young males?

#### **4. Impact of male CSE**

- Do you think the impact on males is different from that of females and, if so, how/why?

#### **5. Disclosure of male sexual exploitation**

- Do you think young males are more or less likely than females to disclose this form of abuse?
- If so, what are the factors that create this difference?
- What do you think the barriers to disclosure might be?
- What would help disclosure?
- Any particular anonymous case studies to share?

#### **6. Identification of male sexual exploitation**

- How is the abuse identified?
- What do you think might inhibit identification by professionals and others?
- What happens after identification?
- Does this differ to the response for young females or age of males?

#### **7. Current service responses to young males at risk**

- Who responds?

- Is legislation/procedures used to in the same way to respond to male CSE as female CSE?
- Is it effective – positives and inadequacies in current responses?
- Use of secure care as a response?
- Difficulties/challenges in responding to issue?
- What would help better identification and response?

## **8. Needs of young males abused through sexual exploitation**

- What are their needs?
- How can these best be met?
- Links between sexual exploitation of males and other issues? (e.g. offending)

## **9. Examples of good practice in preventing/responding to the sexual exploitation of young males**

- What is working well? Examples of good practice, including use of legislation/policies.
- Inter-agency working?
- Preventative work?

## **C. CLOSE OF INTERVIEW**

- Offer the participant the opportunity to add any further comments or to ask questions

- Check the participant still consents for the information they have shared to be used in the research
- Give the participant the follow up leaflet, containing contact details of the researcher and who to contact in the case of a complaint or if the participant requires support following the interview
- Ask for suggestions for other relevant professionals to interview



## Appendix 10



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Participant Information Sheet: Professional Interview**

This document provides you with information about the research, and what is being requested of you. Please read this carefully before deciding whether or not you would like to participate. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me via the contact details provided at the end of this document.

Thank you,

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin

#### **About the Research**

**‘Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.’ (SBNI 2014 adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).**

Although many professionals in the UK are now more aware of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) compared to five years ago, research suggests we do not yet have as good awareness about the sexual exploitation of young males compared to young females because there appear to be less identified cases of young males. This may limit the degree to which we can effectively protect young males from this form of abuse. It, therefore, needs to be addressed if we are to become better at preventing it and responding to it.

One of the key objectives of this research is to explore potential reasons why it might be difficult for young males to disclose their experiences of CSE and why professionals might find it difficult to identify this happening to young males. The research will also explore stakeholder views on how we could better respond to young males who are victims of this form of abuse.

### **Who is conducting and overseeing the research?**

The research is being conducted by Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin, who has worked in the field of CSE for 15 years. The research is being conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate in Children and Young People's Services Leadership undertaken through the University of Bedfordshire.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committees (HSC REC A), the University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee and Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee.

### **Why have I been contacted?**

You kindly completed the survey for this research and indicated a willingness to be interviewed. I have chosen to follow up with you because of the interesting points and the extent of your

knowledge evidenced in your survey response. You have been contacted to ask if you would consider sharing more on your views and experience in relation to this issue. Your agency has given permission for staff to participate in this work.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, your decision as to whether or not you wish to participate is totally voluntary. There is no requirement for you take part, and there is no penalty if you chose not to.

### **What I am being asked to do?**

You are being asked if you would like to participate in a research interview.

The interview should last 45-60 minutes. It will be reasonably conversational in nature and will cover your thoughts and experience on:

- Potential inhibitors to disclosure by young males and potential solutions
- Potential impediments to identification by professionals and potential solutions
- Any relation between barriers to disclosure and impediments to identification
- The effectiveness of current policies and procedures on CSE in relation to young males
- Examples of promising practice.

You will also be offered the opportunity to raise any other issues that have not already been addressed by the researcher.

The researcher will make every effort to interview you in person at a time/location that is suitable for you, however a telephone interview can also be arranged if this is more convenient for you.

The researcher will ask, before the interview begins, for your consent to the interview being audio recorded. If you do not consent to this, the interview can still proceed without audio recording.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

This research provides you with an opportunity to contribute to filling the gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the sexual exploitation of young males here in Northern Ireland and to help in the identification of good practice, in relation to more effectively protecting them from this form of abuse.

### **What are the possible disadvantages?**

Participation in an interview will require a time commitment on your part, however every effort will be made to ensure that the interview is scheduled for a time and location that is most convenient for you. You may also be concerned about being identified through the information that you share; however, the following section addresses the steps that will be taken to safeguard against this, assuring you anonymity.

### **What will you do with the information I share?**

All information that you share during the interview will remain confidential to the researcher. The only occasion when confidentiality will have to be broken is if you share information with the researcher that suggests there is a child protection concern that has not been addressed, or an

illegal or professional misconduct issue about an identifiable individual. In this instance the researcher will be obligated to pass on this information to the relevant authorities.

At the end of the interview the researcher will check if you are still agreeable to the information you have shared being used in the research. If your consent is still given, the notes of your interview will be transcribed, anonymised and securely stored in a section of a server system in a password protected location confidential to the researcher. Tape recordings and handwritten notes will be destroyed immediately after transcription. Anonymised personal data will be retained for 3-6 months.

If the information that you share is to be used publicly (e.g. in a publication or presentation) all identifying features will be removed. Direct quotations will be identified by participant type (e.g. social worker; youth worker; health professional) and not by individual name.

### **What happens if I change my mind?**

If, after participating in this interview, you wish to withdraw your consent for your information to be used you may do so without any negative repercussions. You can withdraw your consent by contacting the researcher via the contact details given at the end of this information sheet. If consent is withdrawn after the interview, all data will be securely destroyed immediately.

### **What if there is a problem?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, your first point of contact should be the researcher, Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin (details below). If you do not get a satisfactory response from this contact, or if you wish to make a complaint relating to the researcher's conduct, you should contact Dr. Helen Beckett, the researcher's supervisor, at the University of Bedfordshire

via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk). A complaints procedure is provided alongside this information sheet.

### **Next steps**

If you have any queries or concerns about participating in this research, please feel free to contact Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin (the researcher) to discuss these.

If you would like to participate in a research interview, please complete and return the reply slip below or phone/email Jacqui to arrange this.

If you do not wish to participate in a research interview, it would also be helpful if you could notify Jacqui of this, in order to ensure that you are not bothered by unwanted follow up contact.

You can contact Jacqui by telephone at 07795 676830 or by email at [jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk) or by returning the reply slip below.

**Many thanks.**

---

**Professional Interview: Reply Slip**

Please tick the appropriate box, provide your contact details and return to:

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin

Safe Choices

230b Belmont Road

Belfast

BT4 2AW

I do wish to participate in a research interview

☐

I do not wish to participate in an interview

☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 11**



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males under the Age of 18 Young Person's Interview Schedule**

#### **1: Introduction to the Interview**

- Introduce yourself and explain what will happen over the next 30-60 minutes; the informal nature of the interview; that scenarios will be used followed by questions to prompt discussion; and that no specific responses being sought.
- Explain what will happen with the information they share and the limits to confidentiality. Confirm they understand this.
- Check the young person is voluntarily participating and that they know they can withdraw at any stage of the interview. Agree how they will indicate to you, verbally or non-verbally, if they do not wish to answer a question or if they decide to withdraw consent.
- Ask if they have any questions and respond to any concerns.
- Ask the young person to confirm the name of the individual to be informed about the young person's participation for follow up support and ensure they understand the reason for this.
- If the young person is still willing to participate, read through each point of the consent form and record written consent (see young person's interview consent form).



- Explain the reason for wanting to use audio recording equipment (i.e. so you don't have to write/remember everything they say and to ensure accuracy). Seek their written consent for this, ensuring they know they can decline.
- Check the young person is in a position to commence the interview.

## **2: The Interview**

Explain what will happen next, i.e. that you will share, approximately 2, scenarios and ask the young person to comment on these. Prompts will be used, in the form of questions, to aid discussion.

The scenarios have been adapted from real life situations. To ensure that the young person isn't presented with a scenario similar to their own, the researcher will obtain a brief overview of the young person's background from their social worker in advance of the interview.

### **Scenario 1 – Online (Male on male)**

Davy is 14 and has met a new friend (Sean) online. Sean says he is 15. They have been emailing each other for about 2 weeks and sending pictures and now Sean is keen to meet Davy. Davy feels happy about this because he doesn't have many friends; his parents describe him as a "loner". Davy agrees to meet Sean in town the next Saturday afternoon. Davy sometimes goes into town, on his own, on a Saturday afternoon so his parents won't be curious. He hasn't told them about his new friend.

When they meet up, Davy doesn't recognise Sean at first. He's older looking than his photo. Davy feels a bit foolish but after they chat for a while and go for something to eat, which Sean pays for, Davy thinks Sean is really cool. Sean admits that he is 25 and that the photo is posted online was him at the age of 16. However, he doesn't explain why he lied about his age and Davy is too embarrassed to ask.

Davy and Sean meet up most Saturdays over the next few weeks. Sean always offers to pay wherever they go and pays for other things that Davy can't afford. The only thing that seems odd to Davy is that Sean has asked him not to tell anyone about their friendship; Sean says people wouldn't understand. Davy likes Sean's company and the fact that he buys him things, which makes him feel a bit special, but he doesn't feel right about the secrecy. A few months later Sean describes to Davy how he wants to do something sexual to him. By now Davy feels he can't say 'no' to Sean and for the next few months Davy suffers Sean abusing him.

- Do you think things like this happen?
- What is Davy thinking/feeling all along and now when Sean asks this?
- Should he tell? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why might he not want to tell?
- What does he think people would say?
- Would this be different if he were a girl? If so, why/how?
- Would this be different if Sean was a female?
- What might make it easier for him to tell someone/get out of the situation?
- Do you think any adults around him would know something was happening to him? If so, what might they do?

## **Scenario 2 - Exchange**

Sam is 15 and lives in a children's home. About a month ago, he started staying out overnight and arriving back at the home the next morning, looking like he hadn't slept and in a very low mood. He won't tell staff where he has been or who he has been with. He also appears to have money and other new things but refuses to tell staff where he got them. Staff have also found quite a lot of unused condoms in his bedroom.

- What might be happening to Sam?
- What do you think Sam is thinking/feeling?
- Should he tell what is happening? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why might he not want to tell?
- Do you think staff could be aware of what might be happening? If so, what might they do?
- What does he think people would say if he told?
- Would this be different if Sam were a girl? If so, why/how?
- What might make it easier for him to tell someone/get out of the situation?

## **Scenario 3 – Female Perpetrator (Female on male)**

Barry and his friends are 15 years of age. They have recently been telling their parents that they're going to each other's houses for a sleep over on a Saturday night. Instead they have been going to Sarah's house for parties. Sarah used to be a friend of Barry's older sister – she is 24. There are always others there, usually people in their 20s and 30s, both males and females. They don't seem to care that Barry and his friends are a lot younger. Sarah gives them free drink and drugs. They can't believe their luck.

One night Sarah tells Barry that he owes her for all the alcohol and drugs she's been giving him and his friends over the last few weeks – “nothing comes for free” she says. Barry doesn't have the kind of money to pay Sarah, so Sarah says he can pay her and her friends back “in kind”, starting with having sex with her.

- Do you think things like this happen?
- What do you think Barry is thinking/feeling?
- Should he tell? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why might he not want to tell?
- What does he think people would say?
- Would this be different if Barry was a girl and this was an adult male? If so, why/how?
- What might make it easier for him to tell someone/get out of the situation?
- Do you think any adults around him would know something was happening to him? If so, what might they do?

#### **Scenario 4 – Homeless (Male on male)**

Stevie is 15 and ran away from home because both his parents have become increasingly violent towards him. He's been sleeping on friend's floors for the last few weeks, but his friends have said he needs to move on. One day, when he is hanging around the gaming arcade in town, he meets an older guy, Brian, who says he knows what it's like to have nowhere to stay and invites Stevie to come and stay with him for a couple of nights. Brian said he doesn't want any money in return. Stevie thinks his luck is in.

Brian is really good to Stevie. Even though he has to sleep on the sofa he is glad to have a roof over his head and Brian lets him do whatever he wants. Two nights turn in to three weeks and then Stevie starts to feel a bit 'creeped out' by Brian. Last week he caught Brian watching him get undressed, and then Brian walked into the bathroom while Stevie was having a shower a couple of times. (Brian said he hadn't got round to putting a lock on the bathroom door). Last night Brian put on a gay porn film and expected Stevie to watch it with him. Stevie really doesn't feel comfortable here now, but he knows if he left he wouldn't have anywhere else to go.

- Do you think things like this happen?
- What do you think Stevie is thinking/feeling?
- Should he tell? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why might he not want to tell?
- What does Stevie think people would say?
- Would this be different if Stevie were a girl? If so, why/how?
- What might make it easier for Stevie to tell/talk to someone/get out of the situation?
- Do you think any adults around him would know something like this was happening? If so, what might they do?

### **Scenario 5 – House Party (Male on male)**

Pete is 14 years old and lives at home. His friend, Shane, recently introduced him to a guy called Matty. Shane is 14 and Matty is 15. One night, Pete gets a text from Matty inviting him to a party with him and Shane. The party is at the home of Matty's mum's boyfriend, Mike. Mike is 37 and lives on his own in a trendy apartment. Matty says Mike is always having parties with his mates.

On this night, when the boys arrive at the party, everyone is drinking and before they know it all three boys are 'off their heads'. One of Mike's friends forces Pete to masturbate him and another persuades Shane to give him a blow job. The next morning Pete vaguely remembers what happened the night before but leaves and says nothing to Shane.

- Do you think things like this happen?
- What do you think Pete is thinking/feeling?
- Should he tell? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why might he not want to tell?
- What does he think people would say?
- Would this be different if Pete were a girl? If so why/how?
- What might make it easier for him to tell/talk to someone/get out of the situation?
- Do you think any adults around him would know something like this was happening? If so, what might they do?

### **Scenario 6 – Crime (Male & female on male)**

Kyle is 15. He has recently become friendly with Paul who is 21. Kyle feels lucky to be friendly with Paul because everyone in the community looks up to him. He always seems to have the latest gadgets and drives a sporty car, even though he doesn't seem to work. A social worker has been trying to help Kyle's family with some problems recently and is worried about the influence Paul has over Kyle.

Over the last few weeks Paul asked Kyle to steal a few things from shops in the city centre after showing him how not to get caught. Kyle felt he had no choice and didn't want to upset Paul so

kept doing what he asked. This week he asked Kyle to “deliver a package” for him to a guy in the local community and “spend a bit of time with him”. Kyle knew what Paul meant by the first bit – it was drugs in the package. Paul told Kyle that he owed him for all the favours he had given him and the drives in his car. The only problem was that the man he delivered the package to wanted more from Kyle than the drugs. The man was about 40 and his wife was also there; she was about 40 too. It was Kyle they were interested in. Kyle remembered what Paul said about spending some time there, so he felt he had to, but that meant watching a porn film with the 2 of them and then having to having to do sexual things with the woman. Kyle hated every minute of being there. Sexual things had happened to him when he was younger, and he just wanted to get out. However, this wasn’t the last time he had to go there. He wondered if Paul knew was going to happen each time.

- Do you think things like this happen?
- What do you think Kyle is thinking/feeling?
- Should he tell? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why might he not want to tell?
- What does he think people would say?
- Would this be different if Kyle was a girl? If so, why/how?
- What might make it easier for him to tell/talk to someone/get out of the situation?
- Do you think any adults around him would know something like this was happening? If so, what might they do?

### **Scenario 7 – Gay (Male on male)**

Jamie is 14 and for the past year has felt sure that he is gay. He feels that he cannot tell his family because they would be cross, and he doesn’t want to tell his best friend for fear of losing

his friendship. Jamie's teacher has noticed that Jamie has become very quiet and seems very worried about something but doesn't ask.

Jamie decides to look on gay internet sites for help. On one site he was able to contact someone who seemed to understand his worries about telling and his desire to meet someone else who is gay – this was Rick. Rick said he was 16 and had gone through the same situation.

After a few weeks of talking online Jamie and Rick decided to meet. Rick lived 40 miles away but said he could easily travel to Jamie. When they met, Rick turned out to be 30 years old. At first Jamie was angry with him for lying but then was so desperate for someone to talk to he agreed to go for a coffee with Rick. Everything was fine until Jamie went to the toilet in the busy café. Rick followed him in and sexually assaulted him in one of the cubicles.

- Do you think things like this happen?
- What do you think Jamie is thinking/feeling?
- Should he tell? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Why might he not want to tell?
- What does he think people would say?
- Would this be different if Jamie were a girl? If so, why/how?
- What might make it easier for him to tell/talk to someone?
- Do you think any adults around him would know something like this was happening? If so, what might they do?



### **3. CLOSE OF INTERVIEW**

- Thank the young person for their contribution and their time.
- Check how they are feeling and ask if they want to discuss anything further with you, or with someone else.
- Check if they would like you to pass on any information that they have shared to their social worker or named support person.
- Check the young person is still happy for what they have shared to be used in the research. If they are unhappy about certain elements being shared, check which elements and agree what will be taken out. If they change their mind about giving consent let them know that is ok.
- Give the young person the follow up leaflet, pointing out contact details of the researcher, other supports and who to contact in case they wish to complain.

### **4. IMMEDIATELY POST INTERVIEW**

- Contact the support worker who came with the young person to confirm that the young person participated in interview and address any support needs (unless the worker remained in the interview with them).

## **Appendix 12**



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **A Study Specific Distress Protocol**

The aim of this protocol is to minimise any intrusion, embarrassment, coercion, anxiety or distress for research participants.

It is recognised that, given the sensitivity of the subject matter, it has the potential to cause some distress to participants. In relation to those affected by CSE, it is recognised that directly involving them in research is not without risks, particularly in terms of potential harm or trauma, if the research is not correctly managed. Thorough consideration has been given to the issue and both the experience of the researcher (see CV) and the proposed methodology have been assessed in relation to this.

The anonymity and privacy of those who participate in research is respected and as such the researcher will avoid undue intrusion into the personal lives of participants and ensure that they do not feel pressured to discuss anything they do not want to.

In order to ensure this, the researcher will:

- Fully brief potential participants in advance of what is requested of them;
- Ensure instructions are clear and only ask the pertinent questions;
- Ensure participants have contact details for the researcher should they have any questions or concerns, pre or post interview.

**Prior to participation:**

The following protocol has been agreed in order to minimise risk for potential participants:

- Only young people aged 14 or over will be considered for direct involvement in the research;
- Prior to contacting any potential participant under 16, the researcher will seek the advice of their social worker (or other relevant professional/carer if the child does not have a social worker) as to any potential negative effects of involvement in the research;
- Should significant risks be identified, including potential for distress, involvement in the research will not be pursued;
- If a young person, under the age of 16, is deemed appropriate for participation in the research, the researcher will obtain all necessary Trust/parental consents via the social worker prior to informing the young person about the research;
- The researcher will only follow up with the young person, if consent is obtained

to do so.

An anonymised pre-inclusion risk assessment for interviews will be completed by the professional who identifies a potential young person (all males aged 14-25) for interview and consider any potential harm regarding involvement of young people (see document 16). They will be assessed in terms of risk, by the facilitating agency, to ensure the safe and meaningful involvement of young people in the research. This will be done prior to seeking any necessary consents. Only young people who have current appropriate support networks will be considered for participation in interviews. If risks are identified, protective factors will be sought to mediate against this; if they cannot be sought, interviews will not proceed.

Consideration must and will be given to any potential negative repercussions on current legal and/or therapeutic interventions. No interview will be conducted with a young person who is subject to a current criminal investigation in relation to a case of abuse or currently in receipt of active treatment.

In order to ensure that prevention of distress is central to the research design, both professionals and young people have been involved/consulted in the planning and piloting of research instruments.

**During participation:**

Consideration will be given to practical issues, such as: language used, ways of presenting information, location and timing of meetings, provision of refreshments and appropriate support.

During interview, young people will not be asked to speak about their personal experiences of abuse, only about the supports available to young males affected by CSE.

Upon contact with a participant, both professionals and young males, the researcher will confirm that they understand what they are consenting to and that this consent is voluntary. They will talk the participant through the next steps of the process, the issues to be discussed and check if they have any questions/concerns.

In order to ensure that participation is as positive an experience as possible for a young person, they will be offered the option of meeting with the researcher on their own or choosing to have a friend/advocate present with them, if this does not present an additional risk. Their support worker will remain present in the building during the interview or may be chosen by the young person to remain in the interview with them.

The welfare of the participant will remain the paramount consideration at all times. The researcher will consider how they will respond to participants who become distressed during the research process and remain alert to any signs of distress or discomfort during their contact with a participant. They will agree with the participant, in advance of the interview commencing, what will happen if the participant becomes distressed, that is, the researcher will halt the interview and attend to the needs of the participant. The interview will only recommence at the request of the participant.

Given that young people are often uncomfortable or resistant to the term 'sexual exploitation' this particular term will not be used in communication with young people under the age of 18 unless the young person raises it themselves. Sexual exploitation is an umbrella term that includes many different behaviours/scenarios – ranging from targeting/befriending vulnerable young people through to sexual assault. The researcher will frame discussions around a range of these

behaviours/scenarios when involving young people in research, rather than using a term that they are uncomfortable with. The substantive issues to be addressed will remain the same.

**Following participation:**

All participants will be fully debriefed following participation in the research. Follow up information sheets will be provided to all participants, suggesting sources of support, contact details for the researcher and their supervisor (should they wish to ask a question about the research or to make a complaint). (See documents 5 and 10).

## Appendix 13 – Ethical Approval from Barnardo's UK

19/05/2015

Dear Jacqui, I am writing as Chair of the Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee to confirm that you have our approval of to carry out your research. I hope it goes very well, and we look forward with interest to hearing about your findings.

best wishes, Sophie Laws

Dr Sophie Laws | Assistant Director for Evaluation and Impact | Strategy Unit | Barnardo's Head Office | Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Essex, IG6 1QG | [sophie.laws@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:sophie.laws@barnardos.org.uk) : 020 8498 7482 | 07881 359134 | :: [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)



More children than ever are being identified as victims of sexual exploitation. But our services don't have the capacity to help every child who needs us. Will you [help us](#) to help more of them?

## Appendix 14 – Ethical Approval from University of Bedfordshire



FAO: Jacqueline Devlin

9<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Dear Jacqui

**Re: IASREC Application**

**Project Title: Surrounded by silence: What are the potential impediments to the recognition of the sexual exploitation of young males under the age of 18?**

The Ethics Committee of the Institute of Applied Social Research has considered your application and has decided that the proposed research project should be approved.

Please note that if it becomes necessary to make any substantive change to the research design, the sampling approach or the data collection methods a further application will be required.

If the proposed work involves users or providers of any local authority service (this includes some education, pre-school and care establishments) you will additionally need approval from the relevant Local Authority.

If the project involves users of providers of health services approval will also be required from the relevant NHS Research Ethics Committee.

In all cases it is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of proof of all necessary authorisations before any fieldwork commences.

Yours sincerely

*Dr Alexandra Fanghanel*  
Dr Alexandra Fanghanel  
Acting Chair IASREC



## **Appendix 15 – Ethical Approval from Health and Social Care Board (Northern Ireland)**

"This email is covered by the disclaimer found at the end of the message."

Fri 02/10/2015 09:19

Dear Jacqueline

**Short Title:** Sexual exploitation of young males – impediments to recognition

Your request for initial approval for Executive Directors regarding the above research study was considered at the Assistant Directors Social Care and Governance meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015

The view was that it should proceed to next stage of approvals via ORECNI and Trust RECs.

There are however still some issues outstanding questions in respect of in respect of identification of the group under study including ethical issues that will need to be fully considered as part of the application to ORECNI and Trust Governance and REC Committees - Northern and South Eastern were those Trusts noted in your application

When submitting the ORECNI form please also forward a copy to myself as Social Care Research Lead.

Assistant Directors will wish to re - consider the request post receipt of the outcome of the opinion from ORECNI and the 2 Trust Ethics Committees

Anne (McGlade)

95363017

## **Appendix 16 – Ethical Approval from the Office for Research Ethics Committees Northern Ireland (ORECNI)**



***Office for Research Ethics Committees***

***Northern Ireland (ORECNI)***

**Customer Care & Performance  
Directorate**

Unit 4, Lissue Industrial Estate  
West Rathdown Walk Moira  
Road Lisburn BT28 2RF

Tel: 028 95361400  
[www.orecni.hscni.net](http://www.orecni.hscni.net)

**HSC REC A**

01 June 2016

Mrs Jacqui A Montgomery-Devlin

Children's Services Manager

Barnardo's NI

230b Belmont Road

Belfast, BT4 2AW

Dear Mrs Montgomery-Devlin

**Study title:** Surrounded by silence: What are the potential impediments to the recognition of the sexual exploitation of young males under the age of 18?

**REC reference:** 16/NI/0062

**Protocol number:** N/A  
**IRAS project ID:** 200131

Thank you for your letter of 22 May 2016, responding to the Committee's request for further information on the above research and submitting revised documentation.

The further information was considered in correspondence by a Sub-Committee of the REC at a meeting held on 27 May 2016. A list of the Sub-Committee members is attached.

We plan to publish your research summary wording for the above study on the HRA website, together with your contact details. Publication will be no earlier than three months from the date of this opinion letter. Should you wish to provide a substitute contact point, require further information, or wish to make a request to postpone publication, please contact the REC Manager, Kathryn Taylor, [RECA@hscni.net](mailto:RECA@hscni.net).

### **Confirmation of ethical opinion**

On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to confirm a **favourable ethical opinion** for the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation as revised, subject to the conditions specified below.

Please note that the extent of the ethical approval granted is limited to Northern Ireland only.

### **Conditions of the favourable opinion**

The REC favourable opinion is subject to the following conditions being met prior to the start of the study.

***Providing Support to Health and Social Care***



<i>Document</i>	<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>
Covering letter on headed paper [Cover letter]	2	20 March 2016
Covering letter on headed paper [Cover letter addressing amendments]	2	22 May 2016
Evidence of Sponsor insurance or indemnity (non-NHS Sponsors only) [Professional Indemnity with Sponsor]	1	25 July 2015
Interview schedules or topic guides for participants [Professional Interview Schedule - Document 9]	1	18 October 2015
Interview schedules or topic guides for participants [Young Persons Interview Schedule - Document 18]	2	03 May 2016
IRAS Checklist XML [Checklist_06042016]		06 April 2016
IRAS Checklist XML [Checklist_25052016]		25 May 2016
Letter from sponsor [Evidence of sponsorship]	1	06 November 2015
Letters of invitation to participant [Letter of Invitation to Parents (with consent form)]	3	03 May 2016
Letters of invitation to participant [Letter of Invitation to Professionals for Interview - Document 6]	3	03 May 2016
Non-validated questionnaire [Professional Survey - Document 4]	1	18 October 2015
Other [Good Clinical Practice - Certificate of Completion - Document 26 ]	1	03 November 2015
Other [Summary of Discussion at Meeting 15th December with Researcher's Responses]	1	16 March 2016
Other [Risk Assessment for Young Male Participants - Document 20]	3	03 May 2016
Other [A Study Specific Distress Protocol - Document 21]	2	03 May 2016
Other [A Study Specific Protocol for Managing Disclosures - Document 22]	2	03 May 2016
Other [Lone Worker Protocol Document 27]	1	14 May 2016
Other [Complaints Procedure Document 28]	1	14 May 2016

Participant consent form [Professional Interview - Consent Form – Document 8]	2	28 February 2016
Participant consent form [Young Persons Interview - Consent Form – Learning Disability - Document 15]	2	03 May 2016
Participant consent form [Young Persons Interview - Consent Form – Ages 14-18 - Document 16]	3	03 May 2016
Participant consent form [Young Persons Interview - Consent Form – Aged Over 18 - Document 17]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Parent Information Sheet]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Professional Information Sheet for Survey]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Professional Information Follow Up Sheet - Post Survey]	2	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Professional Information Sheet for Interview]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Professional Information Follow-Up Sheet - Post Interview Document 10]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Professional Information Sheet for Young Person's Interview - Document 11]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Young Persons Information Sheet - Learning Disability - Document 12]	2	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Young Persons Information Sheet – Ages 14-18 - Document 13]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Young Adults Information Sheet - Aged over 18 - Document 14]	3	03 May 2016
Participant information sheet (PIS) [Young Persons Follow-Up Sheet – Post Interview - Document 19]	3	03 May 2016
REC Application Form [REC_Form_06042016]		06 April 2016
Referee's report or other scientific critique report [Approval letter from University of Bedfordshire]	1	09 June 2015
Referee's report or other scientific critique report [Approval from HSCB ]	1	02 October 2015
Referee's report or other scientific critique report [Northern Health and Social	1	12 January 2016

Care Trust Placement Agreement]		
Referee's report or other scientific critique report [Approval from South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust]	1	17 December 2015
Research protocol or project proposal [Research proposal]	2	15 March 2016
Summary CV for Chief Investigator (CI) [CV Chief Investigator]	1	18 October 2015
Summary CV for supervisor (student research) [CV Research Supervisor]	1	18 October 2015

## Statement of compliance

The Committee is constituted in accordance with the Governance Arrangements for Research Ethics Committees and complies fully with the Standard Operating Procedures for Research Ethics Committees in the UK.

## After ethical review

### Reporting requirements

The attached document “*After ethical review – guidance for researchers*” gives detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion, including:

- Notifying substantial amendments
- Adding new sites and investigators
- Notification of serious breaches of the protocol
- Progress and safety reports
- Notifying the end of the study

The HRA website also provides guidance on these topics, which is updated in the light of changes in reporting requirements or procedures.

## User Feedback

The Health Research Authority is continually striving to provide a high-quality service to all applicants and sponsors. You are invited to give your view of the service you have received and the application procedure. If you wish to make your views known please use the feedback form available on the HRA website: <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-the-hra/governance/quality->

[assurance/](#)

## HRA Training

We are pleased to welcome researchers and R&D staff at our training days – see details at <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/hra-training/>

16/NI/0062

Please quote this number on all correspondence

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely



**pp Dr Catherine  
Hack Chair**

Email: [RECA@hscni.net](mailto:RECA@hscni.net)

*Enclosures: List of names and professions of members who were present at the meeting*

*and those who submitted written comments*

*"After ethical review – guidance for researchers"*

*Copy to: Dr Helen Beckett, University of Bedfordshire*

*Mr Paul Carlin, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust*

## HSC REC A

### Attendance at Sub-Committee of the REC meeting on 25 May 2016

#### Committee Members:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Ms Margaret Brady	Deputy Chief Education Welfare Officer Operations	Yes	
Dr Avril Craig	Project Manager	Yes	
Mrs Celia Diver-Hall	Oncology Research Manager	Yes	
Dr Catherine Hack	Consultant in Academic Practice (STEM)	Yes	Chair
Dr Felicity Hasson	Senior Lecturer	Yes	



## Appendix 17 – Ethical Approval from South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust



21/07/2016

□ Morningside  
Bangor Northern  
Ireland BT20  
5PD

Dear Mrs Montgomery-Devlin

**Study Title:** Sexual Exploitation of Young Males: Impediments to Recognition (V2)

**HSC Trust Ref:** SET.16.29 *(Please quote this number in all future correspondence)*

**IRAS Ref:** 200131

I am pleased to advise that the South Eastern H&SC Trust has given Research Governance Permission for the above project to commence. Permission is granted for the duration of the project to 01/11/2016

The following documents have been approved for use in the project:

Document	Version and Date	
Study specific distress protocol	V2 03/05/2016	
Study specific disclosure protocol	V2 03/05/2016	
Information sheet for parents	V3 03/05/2016	
Lone worker protocol	V1 14/05/2016	
Parent Letter Young person's interview	V3 03/05/2016	

Professional interview schedule	V1 18/10/2015
Professional survey	V1 18/10/2015
Professional follow-up leaflet- post interview	V3 03/05/2016
Professional follow-up leaflet- post survey	V2 03/05/2016
Professional interview consent form	V2 28/02/2016
Professional interview request letter	V3 03/05/2016
Professional survey information sheet	V3 03/05/2016
Research protocol	V2 15/03/2016
Risk assessment for young people	V3 03/05/2016
Young person's follow-up leaflet	V3 03/05/2016
Young person's information sheet (learning disability)	V2 03/05/2016
Young person's information sheet (14-18)	V3 03/05/2016
Young person's information sheet (over 18)	V3 03/05/2015
Young person's interview consent (learning disability)	V2 03/05/2015
Young person's interview consent (14-18)	V3 03/05/2015
Young person's interview consent (over	V3 03/05/2015

Research & Development Office 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Home 3, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald, Belfast BT16 1RH

Tel: 028 9055 3101

Email: [paul.carlin@setrust.hscni.net](mailto:paul.carlin@setrust.hscni.net)



18)	
Young person's interview schedule	V2 03/05/2015
Young people interview, professional information sheet	V3 03/05/2015

The following personnel have been approved to work on the study at this Trust:

Name	Indemnity Provided by
Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin	University of Bedfordshire

Permission is granted subject to the attached conditions which I would ask you to please ensure that all members of the research team make themselves familiar. Failure to abide by these conditions will invalidate permission and may result in the cessation of the research.

I wish you every success with your project.

Yours sincerely,

pp. 

— —

**Mr Paul Carlin**

**Research Manager**

Copy to: Sheila Simons, Dr Helen Beckett

## Appendix 18 – Ethical approval from Northern Health and Social Care Trust



www.northerntrust.hscni.net

Governance Department

### Final Research Governance Permission

20<sup>th</sup> October 2016

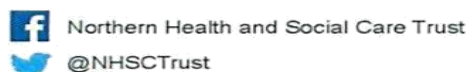
Mrs Jacqui A Montgomery-Devlin  
Children's Services Manager,  
Barnardo's NI  
230B Belmont Road,  
Belfast  
BT4 2AW

<b>Study Title</b>	Sexual Exploitation of Young Males – Impediments to Recognition V 2
<b>NHSCT Ref:</b>	NT16-0528-08
<b>REC Ref Number:</b>	16/NI/0062
<b>IRAS project ID:</b>	200131

I am pleased to advise that the Northern Health & Social Care Trust has given Final Research Governance Permission for the above project to commence. Permission is granted for the duration of the project to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

The following documents have been approved for use in the project:

Document	Version	Dated
Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians	V3	3 May 2016
Parents/Guardians letter for Young Person's Interview	V3	3 May 2016
Participant Information Sheet: Professional Survey	V3	3 May 2016
Professional Survey	V1	18 October 2015
Professional Follow-Up leaflet- Post Survey	V2	3 May 2016
Professional Interview Request Letter	V3	3 May 2016
Participant Information Sheet: Professional Interview	V3	3 May 2016
Professional Interview Consent Form	V2	28 February 2016
Professional Interview Schedule	V1	18 October 2015
Professional's follow up leaflet- Post Interview	V3	3 May 2016
Young Person's Interviews: Professional Information Sheet	V3	3 May 2016
Professional Information Sheet for Young Males with Learning Difficulties	V2	3 May 2016
Participant Information Sheet for Young Males aged 14-18 years	V3	03 May 2016
Participant Information Sheet for Males over 18years	V3	3 May 2016



Northern Health and Social Care Trust

@NHSCTrust



## Appendix 19



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Professional's Follow Up leaflet – Post Survey**

Thank you for taking part in this survey. Any questions or concerns, after taking part in this survey, should be directed to the researcher, Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin on 07795 676830 or via email at:

[jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)

If, after completing this survey, you wish to withdraw your consent for your information to be used you may do so without any negative repercussions. You can withdraw your consent by contacting the researcher via the contact details given above. If consent is withdrawn after completion of the survey, the data will be securely destroyed immediately.

Should you be affected in any way after completing this survey and require some support please contact the support services within your own organisation.

If you wish to make a complaint about the research, or how you have been treated by the researcher, please contact Dr Helen Beckett, the researcher's supervisor at the University of Bedfordshire via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk). You will have been provided with a complaints procedure alongside the information sheet for survey participation.

\_Thank you.

## Appendix 20



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Professional's Follow Up leaflet – Post Interview**

Thank you for taking part in this interview. Any questions or concerns, after taking part in this interview, should be directed to the researcher, Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin on 07795676830 (mobile) or via email at [jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)

If, after participating in this survey, you wish to withdraw your consent for your information to be used you may do so without any negative repercussions. You can withdraw your consent by contacting the researcher via the contact details above. If consent is withdrawn after the interview, the data will be securely destroyed immediately.

Should you be affected in any way after participating in this interview and require some support please contact Jacqui via one of the available means and she will organise appropriate support.

Please also contact Jacqui if you would like more information about child sexual exploitation generally. If you wish to make a complaint about the research, or how you have been treated by the researcher, please contact Dr Helen Beckett, the researcher's supervisor at the University of Bedfordshire via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk). You will have been provided with a complaints procedure alongside the information sheet for interview participation.

Thank you.

## Appendix 21



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Potential Participant Risk Assessment Process for Young Males**

These issues should be addressed by each professional who will potentially facilitate a young person's interview with the researcher.

Brief details of the young male: (no names to be given – initials only)

- Gender/age
- Brief details re CSE experience/knowledge of young person

Risks associated with engagement in research and how each can be managed:

- Too vulnerable at present time/potential for emotional distress?
- Interference with treatment - Should not be in current receipt of treatment.
- Interference with current legal processes – Should not be involved if subject to an on-going criminal investigation in relation to a current abuse case.
- Negative reaction from significant others in the life of the young person?
- Currently involved in any other research?

Additional consents:

- Is the consent of a parent/carer required? (Necessary for anyone under the age of 16).
- If the young person is under the age of 16 and is experiencing CSE or neglect in domestic or institutional environment and still living with those with parental responsibility it may not be deemed appropriate to ask for parental/carer consent.
- Are there any risks associated with requesting parental consent?
- Is the young person likely to understand they have a choice in whether or not to take part?

Practicalities:

- Do you feel you have sufficient information to approach the young person (and parent/carer if applicable)?
- Do you feel able to make the initial approach to the young person (and parent/carer if applicable)?
- Are you in a position to facilitate this young person through this process and accompany them to interview?
- Will the young person/parent/carer have any difficulty reading information materials provided? If so, what aids can/should be put in place?
- Does the young person have any additional needs such as translation or provision of information in a different format/do they have a learning disability?
- What should the researcher be aware of to ensure sensitivity is maintained?

Follow up support:

- Are you in a position to provide follow up support and are you the most appropriate person to do this?
- Are additional supports required, and if so, who could provide this?



Do you as the worker have any questions or concerns?

Overall assessment/decision:

- Can the identified risks be easily managed, or will the potential risk be too detrimental to the young person?

If the decision is to proceed – next steps.

- Information for the young male and information for the worker will be provided to you.
- If the young male is under the age of 16 a consent form and accompanying information for the parent/carer will be sent to you.
- When all necessary consents are obtained I will arrange, with you, a time to meet the young person.

Researcher's contact details: Tel: 07795676830 Email: [Jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:Jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)

## Appendix 22



### Young Person's Follow Up Leaflet

**Thanks for taking part in this research.**

If you have any questions or concerns and want to get in touch with Jacqui after today, you can email her at: [jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk) or call her on 07795676830.

If, after meeting with Jacqui, you no longer want your information to be used in the research you have the right to tell Jacqui and she will not use it. You can tell her by either phoning or emailing her. If consent is withdrawn after the interview, the information you have given will be securely destroyed immediately.

I will inform (*insert name of worker*), attending with you today that you have finished talking with me. If you feel you need some extra support after this meeting you can talk with your worker or someone else you can trust and/or get in touch with other support services such as those listed below:

Lifeline 0808 808 8000 (24 hour helpline)

Childline 0800 1111 (24 hour helpline)

*(Alternative support numbers will be provided for each respective area outside of Northern Ireland).*

If you are not happy about how you have been treated while taking part in this research, please contact Dr Helen Beckett, Jacqui's supervisor, via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk) or tell your worker and they will tell you what to do.

Thank you again for the time you have given to take part in this research.

## Appendix 23



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Complaints Procedure**

It is important that any research participant feels that participation is voluntary and that if they have a complaint about how they have been treated at any point of their involvement they are informed about the complaints process.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, your first point of contact should be the researcher, Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin by telephone at 07795676830 or by email at:

[Jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.uk](mailto:Jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.uk).

If you do not get a satisfactory response from this contact, or if you wish to make a complaint relating to the researcher's conduct, you should contact Dr. Helen Beckett, the researcher's supervisor, at the University of Bedfordshire via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk).

All complaints will be dealt with by the University of Bedfordshire in accordance with their procedures i.e. dealt with by the researcher's supervisor and escalated to Head of the Institute of Applied Social Research, as required.

## Appendix 24



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18 Lone Worker Protocol**

There is potential that the researcher may experience risks to their personal safety when meeting research participants, especially at research sites unfamiliar to the researcher, and particularly given that the work will be conducted by a sole researcher. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure precautionary measures are implemented prior to any interview.

In order to minimise risk, the researcher will:

- Conduct all fieldwork in a neutral, safe location;
- Ensure as much information as possible is available in relation to potential risks;
- Ensure the researcher has their mobile phone with them, switched on, charged and with enough calling credit.
- Ensure the researcher leaves: details of the name and phone number of the location, the named worker (to be interviewed or the young person's worker) and time of the meeting.

These details will be recorded in the researcher's electronic diary (made accessible to their supervisor) and on the in/out board of their office base.

- Ensure their supervisor is on call while conducting fieldwork; if this is not possible, an alternative will be agreed.
- Ensure their supervisor is aware of arrangements for fieldwork and aware of the protocol to follow should the researcher not report in as expected. If the researcher has not returned ½ hour after the specified time, the supervisor will contact the worker on their mobile phone in the first instance and if still un-contactable then a call will be made to the place of visit to ascertain the safety of the worker. If the situation is still deemed to be unsafe, i.e. the researcher left the visit some time ago but has still not returned then the situation will be discussed with the supervisor's line manager and if necessary further action taken. In the first instance phone the emergency number given by the researcher and if agreed call police.
- Interviews with professionals will be avoided if there is no one else in the building and conducted only during office hours. Interviews with young males will be conducted while their support worker is, at the very least, in the same building, if not in the interview with them.

### **Emergency code**

If the researcher feels they are in potential danger or risk which could be threatening to their safety, then they should call the supervisor and mention the **RED FOLDER**. This will be a code to alert their supervisor of the researcher's potential risk. The supervisor will then contact the reception of the building to alert others in the building that help is required. If help is not available, and as a last resort, the police will be called.

### **Reducing Risk of Emotional Distress**

There is also potential for emotional distress for the researcher given the nature of the topic being researched. A comprehensive support system has therefore been put in place to address this with support available from:

- Formal supervision and support from the researcher's line manager;
- Therapeutic sessions with an external consultant as and when required;
- Supervision and support from the researcher's supervisors at the University of Bedfordshire
- Access to Barnardo's Employee Assistance Programme for personal support, if required.

## Appendix 25 – Professionals' Interview Request Letter



2017

Dear

**Re: Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual  
Exploitation of Young Males under the Age of 18**

I am conducting research on the sexual exploitation of young males as part of a Professional Doctorate in Children and Young People's Services Leadership through the University of Bedfordshire. I have 15 years' experience of working in the field of Child Sexual Exploitation.

You kindly answered a survey I conducted in relation to this issue and indicated willingness to be interviewed. I have chosen to follow up with you because of the interesting points and the extent of your knowledge evidenced in your survey response. I am requesting that you would consider participating in an interview, as another element of this research. The interview would last 45-60 minutes and would be arranged at a time and location that is most convenient for you.

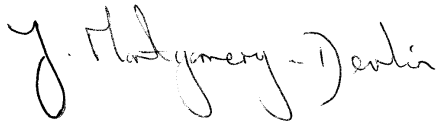
I have enclosed a Participant Information Sheet. It provides both an overview of the research being conducted and a clear description of what your participation in an interview would entail, should you agree to be involved. I would be most grateful if you would read through this information and consider participating in this much needed piece of research.



Should you require any additional information, or wish to discuss the matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me on: 07795 676830 or by email at [jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Montgomery-Devlin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

---

**Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin**

Enc

## Appendix 26



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Professional Interview Consent Form:**

**Please tick to confirm your agreement, and sign below:**

1. I confirm that I have read the Participant Information sheet provided for this research, that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and have had these addressed satisfactorily. ☐

2. I confirm that I understand the limits to confidentiality and that anonymity can be offered. I understand the researcher's need to pass on information I share in relation to child protection concerns, illegal activity and/or professional misconduct. ☐

3. I understand and consent to the information I share being used in a report/presentations/articles related to the research, and am satisfied that I, as an individual, will not be identifiable. ☐

4. I am voluntarily agreeing to participate in this research and understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time during the interview or afterwards without any negative repercussions. ☐

5: I wish to be informed of the results of this research, therefore, consent for my details to be held ☐ until then.

**If you consent to have your interview recorded, please tick to confirm this. (The interview can continue without audio recording).**

I consent to the use of audio recording equipment during my interview. ☐

Name of participant:-----

Signature of participant: -----

Date:-----

Signature of researcher: -----Date:-----

## Appendix 27



### **Participant Information Sheet for Young Males Aged 14-18 Years**

My name is Jacqui and I am doing research. I have worked for a long time with young males and females who have been taken advantage of sexually by others or those who are at risk of this happening to them.

#### **Why have I been given this leaflet?**

I am really interested to know what you think of the subject of my research. Your opinions are important to me. Your worker will have given you this leaflet as well as telling you about this research. Hopefully the information in this leaflet will help you decide if you would like to take part.

#### **What is the research about?**

We know that there are situations where adults, or other young people, take advantage of young males sexually, for example:

- when they are under the influence of drink/drugs
- getting them to engage in sexual activity in return for things such as drink/drugs, cigarettes, money, somewhere to stay etc.

There can be other reasons why young males may feel forced into such situations. Any of this might happen over the internet, in person or both. We know more about how this happens to girls

than boys. It seems that it is very difficult for boys to talk about. It can also be hard for those caring for them to see when it is happening. We need to deal with this problem so that young males can be protected. This is the reason why this research is being done.

### **What would I have to do?**

If you decide you would like to take part, you would be asked to meet with me, Jacqui, for about 30 to 60 minutes, depending on how much you want to say. A support worker will come with you. They can come into the meeting with you if you choose.

I will share some scenarios/situations with you and ask your thoughts about them. e.g. what might the young person be feeling in that situation? I will also ask you how you think we could do better to help young males talk about these situations.

I would like to tape what you have to say, but if you would rather I didn't that's ok – you can talk with me without me having to record it.

**It is important that you know you do not have to tell me anything about your own experiences if you don't want to.** We can just look at examples about other young males.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No. It is totally your choice whether you take part or not. No one will try to make, and you don't have to explain why if you choose not to.

**What are the advantages and disadvantages for me?**

This will be a chance for your opinions to be heard, and what you say could lead to you and other young males being better protected in the future. This can sometimes help young people feel stronger.

I realise that this will mean you giving some of your time to speak with me, so this will be really appreciated. Talking about these kinds of things can sometimes cause someone to become upset but everything possible will be done to make sure that this is unlikely to happen. I will also make sure that supports will be in place to help you if you need them.

**What will you do with the information I tell you?**

I will use what you, and other people, tell me to write a report about this issue. It is important you know I will make sure that no-one can tell that the information came from you – neither your name nor any other information about you will be used that would cause anyone to identify you.

Everything that you tell me will be kept confidential, unless you tell me something that makes me think that you, or someone else, is at risk of being harmed, or might harm someone else. If you tell me this, I will have to pass this on to someone who could try and help, but I would talk to you about that first.

If you agree to me recording what you say to me this will be destroyed as soon as I write it up.

### **What if I don't want to answer some of the questions or change my mind about taking part?**

It is ok if you change your mind. You can do this at any point, during your meeting with me or afterwards. If there are any questions that you don't want to answer, you just need to tell me, and I will move on to the next one. If you decide that you want to stop altogether that's ok too; just tell me and I will stop. We can agree at the start how you will let me know.

If after talking with me you decide you don't want what you have said to be used, that is ok – I will immediately destroy all information you have given me.

### **What if I have a problem?**

If you meet with me I will give you a leaflet with contact details at the end incase you need to speak to anyone afterwards or if you have any problem with the research. If you feel you want to make a complaint about me or the way you have been treated your worker will tell you what to do.

### **What do I do now?**

Decide if you would like to take part in the research. If you have any questions or worries, talk to the worker who gave you this leaflet.

**When you have decided whether or not you want to take part in the research, tell your worker.** If you want to take part, they will arrange for you to meet me.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

## Appendix 28



### **Participant Information Sheet for Males Aged Over 18 Years**

My name is Jacqui and I am doing research. I have 15 years' experience working in the field of child sexual exploitation.

#### **Why have I been given this leaflet?**

I am really interested to know what you think of the subject of my research. Your opinions are important to me. Your worker will have given you this leaflet as well as telling you about this research. Hopefully the information in this leaflet will help you decide if you would like to take part.

#### **What is the research about?**

We know that there are situations where adults, or other young people, take advantage of young males sexually, for example:

- when they are under the influence of drink/drugs
- getting them to engage in sexual activity in return for things such as drink/drugs, cigarettes, money, somewhere to stay etc.

There can be other reasons why young males may feel forced into such situations. Any of this might happen over the internet, in person or both. We know more about how this happens to girls



than boys. It seems that it is very difficult for boys to talk about. It can also be hard for those caring for them to see when it is happening. We need to deal with this problem so that young males can be protected. This is the reason why this research is being done.

Although this research is about young males under the age of 18, I am interested in the views and insights of males up to the age of 25 who might know something about this issue.

### **What would I have to do?**

If you decide you would like to take part, you would be asked to meet with me, Jacqui, for about 30 to 60 minutes, depending on how much you want to say. Your support worker will come with you. They can come into the meeting with you if you wish.

I will share some scenarios/situations with you and ask your thoughts about them. e.g. what might the young person be feeling in that situation? I will also ask you how you think we could do better to help young males talk about these situations.

I would like to audio record what you have to say, but if you would rather I didn't that's ok – you can talk with me without me having to record it.

**It is important that you know you do not have to tell me anything about your own experiences if you don't want to.** We can just look at examples about other young males.

**Do I have to take part?**

No. It is totally your choice whether you take part or not. No one will try to make, and you don't have to explain why if you choose not to.

**What are the advantages and disadvantages for me?**

This will be a chance for your opinions to be heard, and what you say could lead to young males being better protected in the future. This can sometimes help people feel stronger.

I realise that this will mean you giving some of your time to speak with me, so this will be really appreciated. Talking about these kinds of things can sometimes cause people to become upset but everything possible will be done to make sure that this is unlikely to happen. I will also make sure that supports will be in place to help you if you need them.

**What will you do with the information I tell you?**

I will use what you, and other people, tell me to write a report about this issue. It is important you know I will make sure that no-one can tell that the information came from you – neither your name nor any other information about you will be used that would cause anyone to identify you.

Everything that you tell me will be kept confidential, unless you tell me something that makes me think that someone is at risk of being harmed or might harm someone else. If you tell me this, I will have to pass this on to the relevant authorities, but I would talk to you about that first.

If you agree to me recording what you have to say this will be destroyed as soon as I write up the notes.

**What if I don't want to answer some of the questions or change my mind about taking part?**

It is ok if you change your mind. You can do this at any point, during your meeting with me or afterwards. If there are any questions that you don't want to answer, you just need to tell me, and I will move on to the next one. If you decide that you want to stop altogether that's ok too; just tell me and I will stop. We can agree at the start how you will let me know.

If after talking with me you decide you withdraw your consent, that is ok – I will immediately destroy all information you have given me.

**What if I have a problem?**

If you meet with me I will give you a leaflet with contact details at the end incase you need to speak to anyone afterwards or if you have any problem with the research. If you feel you want to make a complaint about me or the way you have been treated your worker will tell you what to do.

**What do I do now?**

Decide if you would like to take part in the research. If you have any questions or worries, talk to the worker who gave you this leaflet.

**When you have decided whether or not you want to take part in the research, tell your support worker.** If you want to take part, they will arrange for you to meet me.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

## Appendix 29



### Participant Information Sheet for Young Males with Learning Difficulties



Hi,

My name is Jacqui - that's me in the photo.

Sometimes boys can be tricked into doing sexual things and are given things in return for this, but it can be hard for them to talk about this. I plan to talk with some boys to find out why this is hard. I want to help make it easier for them to talk about this.

Your worker will have given you this leaflet to tell you about this work that I am doing. What you have to say is really important to me.

It is important that you know you don't have to tell me what happened to you. We can talk about other examples that I already have.

If you don't want to meet me that's ok - no-one will make you. Or if you start to talk to me and then change your mind I can destroy what you have said - that's ok too.

Talking about these kinds of things can sometimes make people feel upset. I will make sure that your worker is there for you. I would like to tape what you say to me but if you would rather I didn't that's ok - I don't need to tape it.

No-one else will know what you have said. I will not use your name in anything I write. If you tell me that you, or someone else, is in danger, I will have to tell someone else so that you or the other person is kept safe.

If you decide you would like to talk with me, tell your worker. They will let me know and I can come to meet you. You can bring your worker into the meeting with you if you want to.

If you want to complain about me, you have a right to do that and your worker will tell you how to do that.

Thank you.

Jacqui

## Appendix 30



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Information for Parents/Guardians**

##### **Why have I been given this leaflet?**

Research about the sexual exploitation of young males is being conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate at the University of Bedfordshire and your permission is being sought for your <sup>67</sup>son to take part. This leaflet will give you information about the research to help you decide if you are happy for your son to participate.

##### **What is this research about and why are you doing it?**

'Sexual exploitation' refers to a wide range of situations where adults, or other young people, might try to take advantage of young people sexually – this can include grooming them over the internet, taking advantage of them when they are under the influence of drink/drugs or getting them to engage in sexual activity in return for things, such as, money, food, cigarettes,

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<sup>67</sup> 'Son' will be changed according to the relationship between the young male and the adult/agency with parental authority.

somewhere to stay etc.

We know from research and practice that this happens to young males as well as young females, however, it is much more difficult to recognise when it is happening to males. This research considers why it may be difficult for young males to tell others what is happening to them and why it may be difficult for others to see when it is happening. It is important that we know the answers to this so that it can lead to improved practice and better protection for young males from this form of abuse.

### **Who is conducting and overseeing the research?**

The research is being conducted by Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin, who has 15 years' experience in the field of child sexual exploitation.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committee (HSC REC A), the University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee and Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee.

### **Why do you need to ask my son to take part?**

The voice of the young person is really important. It is important that we know what makes it difficult for young males to talk about this type of abuse in order to make it easier for them and so, protect them better. As professionals we cannot assume we know the answers.

**Does my son have to take part?**

No. This will, first of all be your decision, and if you agree, then it will be your son's decision as to whether or not he takes part. No one can persuade your son to take part and neither will there be any consequences if he doesn't.

**What will my son be asked to do?**

Your son will be asked to take part in a face to face interview with the researcher, Jacqui. She will make sure he has the support of his worker in the same building. If your son wishes, he can have the worker in the same room. The researcher will share scenarios with your son so that he can answer questions in relation to these rather than talk about his own life experiences, if he chooses not to. Discussions should last between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on how much he wishes to say.

The researcher will ask for your son's consent, before the interview begins, for the interview to be audio recorded. If he does not consent to this the interview can still proceed without audio recording. If he does provide consent for this, the recording will be erased once the interviewed is transcribed (typed up).

**What are the possible benefits/disadvantages of my son taking part?**

This will be a chance for your son's opinions to be heard and what he says could lead to other young males being better protected in the future. This can also sometimes help young people feel stronger.

This will mean your son giving some of his time to speak with Jacqui, so this will be really appreciated. Talking about these kinds of things can sometimes cause someone to become upset



but everything possible will be done to make sure that this is unlikely to happen. Supports will be in place to help him if he needs them.

**What will you do to safeguard my son if he takes part?**

It will be made clear to your son that participation in this interview is voluntary and that he can refuse to participate without any repercussions. He will have to give consent before taking part. Information will be provided to him to ensure he understands what he is consenting to and what will happen to the information he shares. The limits to confidentiality will also be clearly explained, and repeated if necessary.

There will be a named worker on hand, for support for your son. If he requires additional support following the interview this can be arranged by contacting the researcher. Information will also be provided to him as to who to contact should he feel unhappy about how he has been treated while taking part.

**What will you do with the information that you get from my son?**

Everything that your son tells the researcher will be kept confidential, unless he tells something that suggests that that he, or someone else, are at risk of harm or in danger, or information in relation to illegal or professional misconduct. Such information would have to be passed on to someone who could try to help.

What your son, and other people, tells will be used to write a report about the research. You can be assured that this information will be used in a way that no-one can tell it came from him. Anonymised personal data will be retained for 3-6 months.

### **What happens if my son and/or I change our minds?**

If you and your son decide that he will take part, and then you or he change your minds, consent can be withdrawn during the research or afterwards without there being any consequences.

Consent can be withdrawn by contacting the researcher via the contact details given at the end of this information sheet. If consent is withdrawn after interview, all data will be securely destroyed immediately.

### **What if there is a problem?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research or your son taking part, your first point of contact should be the researcher, Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin (details below). If you do not get a satisfactory response, or if you or your son wishes to make a complaint relating to Jacqui's conduct, you should contact Dr. Helen Beckett, the researcher's supervisor at the University of Bedfordshire via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk). You will be provided with a complaints procedure by the worker who gave you this leaflet.

### **What should I do now?**

If you have any questions or worries about your son taking part in the research, talk to the worker who gave you this leaflet or get in touch with Jacqui by email:

([jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)) or by phone: (07795676830). **Thank you.**

## **Appendix 31 - Young Persons' Interview: Parent/Guardian's Consent Letter**



Dear Parent/Guardian

### **Re: Research into the potential impediments to the recognition of sexual exploitation of young males under the age of 18**

I am conducting research on the sexual exploitation of young males, under the age of 18, as part of a Professional Doctorate at the University of Bedfordshire. I have worked in the field of child sexual exploitation for many years where young males and females have been taken advantage of sexually by others or those who are at risk of this happening to them. This can include grooming them over the internet, taking advantage of them when they are under the influence of drink/drugs or getting them to engage in sexual activity in return for things, such as, money, food, cigarettes, somewhere to stay etc.

We know from research and practice that this happens to young males as well as young females, however, it is much more difficult to recognise when it is happening to males. This research looks at why it may be difficult for young males to tell others what is happening to them and why it may be difficult for others to see when it is happening. It is important that we know the answers to this so that it can lead to improved practice and better protection for young males from this form of abuse.

One of the things I would like to do as part of this research is talk to some young males to find out why it might difficult for them to talk about what has happened and what would make this easier for them, so that they can be better protected. The voices of young males need to be heard.

### **Why am I contacting you?**

I would like to ask *(insert name, so they know which child)* if he would like to take part in this research. I understand that this is a sensitive issue and want to check if you are ok with this. I have not contacted your <sup>68</sup>son yet, but their social worker is aware of the planned research and has given their permission for you to be asked about this first.

*It is important that you know that giving your consent does not mean that your son will have to take part in the research – it just means that he will be asked if he would like to take part. Your son will get to decide for himself whether or not he wants to do this.*

To help you make a decision about this, I have put together an information sheet that tells you more about the research and what I will be asking your son to do. Please read this carefully before you make your decision.

If you have any questions or concerns after reading the information sheet please contact either *(insert name of social worker)* or Jacqui, the researcher.

*(name of social worker)* can be contacted by telephone at *(insert number)* or by email at *(insert email)*

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<sup>68</sup> 'Son' will be changed according to the relationship between the young male and the adult with parental authority.

Jacqui can be contacted by telephone at 07795676830 or by email at

[jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)

**What do I do once I have made my decision?**

If you are happy for your son to take part in the research, you can complete the consent form at the end of this letter and send it to *(insert name of worker)* by *(insert date)* – in the stamped addressed envelope.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin

**Consent Form: Parent/Guardian**

**Only complete if you consent to your son taking part in this research.**

**Please read or listen to these statements and tick the box if you agree with each one:**

1: I have been given, read (or have had read to me) and

understand the information sheet about the research.

☐

2: I have had the opportunity to ask any questions, raise any

concerns and have understood the answers.

☐

3: I understand that my son's name will not be used. ☐

4: I know that I and my son have a choice whether or not to take  
part in this research and can withdraw our consent at any time. ☐

5: I give my consent to my son being interviewed for this research. ☐

6: If you wish your son to be informed of the results of Yes ☐

this research his contact details will have to be kept until

it is complete. Do you wish him to be informed? No ☐

Name of child/young person: -----

Name of parent/guardian:-----

Signature of parent/guardian: -----

Date: -----

Researcher: -----

Date: -----

## Appendix 32



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18**

#### **Young People's Interviews: Professional Information Sheet**

The aim of this document is to inform you of your role in relation to young people's involvement in this research. I appreciate the sensitivity of the topic being studied, and so have attempted to provide you with as much information as possible so you are fully informed about what is being proposed. I would be grateful if you would read this document and contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding it. My contact details are provided at the end of this document.

Thank you,

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin

#### **1: The Purpose of the Research**

**'Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.'** (SBNI 2014 adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).

Although many professionals in the UK are now more aware of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) compared to five years ago, research suggests we do not yet have as good awareness about the sexual exploitation of young males compared to young females because there appear to be less identified cases of young males. This may limit the degree to which we can effectively protect young males from this form of abuse. It, therefore, needs to be addressed if we are to become better at preventing it and responding to it.

One of the key objectives of this research is to explore potential reasons why it might be difficult for young males to disclose their experiences of CSE and why professionals might find it difficult to identify this happening to young males. The research will also explore stakeholder views on how we could better respond to young males who are victims of this form of abuse.

## **2: Who is conducting and overseeing the research?**

Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin will be conducting the research. She has 15 years' experience in the field of CSE. The research will be overseen by Dr Helen Beckett from the University of Bedfordshire, supervisor of the researcher.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committees (HSC REC A), the University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee and Barnardo's Research Ethics Committee.

## **3: What is the reason(s) for involving young people in the study?**

Young males who have experienced sexual exploitation or been at risk of it will have an important contribution to make in helping others to understand the issues and will invariably bring a different perspective on the situation to that of professionals. The views of young males are therefore



integral to our learning and future developments in our practice if we are to ensure greater prevention and a more effective response to the issue, thereby protecting young males from this in the future.

#### **4: What will you ask young people to do?**

The young person will be asked to meet with the researcher to participate in a 1:1 interview for approximately 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the level of contribution the young person wishes to make. They will be offered the opportunity to have someone with them during the interview as long as this does not potentially increase any risk to them, however, it will, at least, be necessary for you as their worker to be present in the same building.

The interview will be set up for them to speak in the third person; however, if they wish to speak of their own experiences they can do so. Scenarios will be shared with them and they will be asked to reflect on the scenarios. This will enable them to share their views in a depersonalised manner. In this way they will also be asked for their advice on how we could better help young males disclose what is happening to them. The researcher will ask you for sufficient background information relating to the young person to prevent a scenario being used which is similar to their own experiences.

The researcher will ask, before the interview begins, for the young person's consent to the interview being audio recorded. If he does not consent to this, the interview can still proceed without audio recording.

#### **5: Do they have to take part?**

No. This will be the young person's decision as to whether or not he takes part. No one can persuade him to take part and neither will there be any consequences if he doesn't.

## **6: What is my role in this?**

You already know the circumstances and are therefore best placed to consider the potential risks and benefits associated with them taking part in the research. Please consider all the information in this leaflet. You will also be provided with a risk assessment to ensure all potential risks are considered prior to approaching a young person or their parents/carers. Please contact the researcher to discuss any questions or concerns and when you are in a position to decide on the appropriateness of offering a young person the opportunity to become involved in the research, please inform the researcher.

If a young person is considered appropriate for inclusion in the research, you will be asked to remain the 'gatekeeper' throughout the process, ensuring that necessary supports are in place for the young person and remain the point of contact should specific sensitive issues arise for him.

You will be asked to advise the researcher of what additional parental consent is required for them to participate in research. This will be required for those under the age of 16. Where additional consent is required, you will be asked to facilitate this, in order to maintain the anonymity of the individuals concerned. You will be provided with the necessary written information for this purpose. Where additional parental consents are required, the young person should not be informed about the research until after these have been obtained.

You will be asked to make the initial approach to the young person and will be provided with the necessary information to talk through with the young person. Our knowledge from research and practice experience tells us that young people are resistant to the use of the term 'CSE', therefore this term will not be used with them either verbally or in any written information.

If a young person is agreeable to taking part in the research, you will be asked to notify the researcher of this and arrange for the researcher to meet them and support them through this process.

### **7: What are the advantages for young people participating in the study?**

For young people taking part this can provide them with an opportunity to have their views and opinions heard and inform the outcomes of the research. The aim is that this will also inform future responses to the issue of male CSE. In considering the scenarios it may also enable them raise issues with their worker, leading them to identify any need for further support.

Each young person who participates in an interview will receive a £10 voucher in recognition of their contribution; however, it must be stressed that **they should not be informed about this in advance of the interview, so it does not influence their decision to take part.**

### **8: What are the disadvantages for young people participating in the study?**

For young people taking part it will involve a time commitment on their part. Given the sensitive nature of the topic it has the potential to cause upset or distress, however, as outlined in section 9 below, safeguards and supports will be arranged in advance to minimise the likelihood of this and to ensure that there is adequate preparation to manage it, should it occur.

### **9: What safeguards are in place to minimise risk of harm to participants?**

The researcher undertaking the interviews has worked in the social care field for 25 years and specifically in the area of child sexual exploitation for 15 years. They have been subject to enhanced child protection checks, a copy of which is available on request along with the researcher's CV.

A minimum age of 14 has been set for potential inclusion in the interviews. Only young males who are assessed to be at minimal risk (based on the risk assessment provided by the researcher) from involvement in the research will be considered for participation.

The researcher will ensure that the participant understands the process involved as well as the meaning of consent to participation. This will happen at the stage of initial contact and repeated at commencement of the interview. It will be made clear to the young person that they are not obliged to participate and that they can withdraw at any point without giving a reason. Participants will also be clearly informed about the limits to confidentiality, anonymity and intended use of the information they share.

The researcher will ensure that the welfare of the young person remains paramount at all times. To this end, the researcher will remain alert to signs of potential distress or discomfort throughout their contact with a young person. Should a young person become upset when sharing information, the researcher will stop the interview and attend to the needs of the young person. The interview will only recommence at the request of the young person and only if the researcher also judges it to be appropriate.

The researcher will confirm with the young person that their support worker will be informed when the interview is finished (unless they have remained in the interview with the young person). Each young person will also be given contact details for the researcher and relevant contact details of other support services in the respective nations. All young people will be fully debriefed at the end of their interview.

#### **10: What will you do with the information shared by a young person during interview?**

The information that young people share in the course of an interview will remain confidential to the researcher, unless any child protection, illegal or professional misconduct issues arise. Should this occur, the researcher will have a duty to pass this information on to the relevant authorities and will talk to the young person about it before this happens.

At the end of the interview the researcher will check that the young person is still agreeable to the information they have shared being used in the research. If they are still agreeable, the notes of their interview will be transcribed, anonymised and securely stored in a secure server system accessible only to the researcher. The tape recordings and handwritten notes will be destroyed immediately after transcription. Anonymised personal data will be retained for 3-6 months.

Within any report/publication/presentation produced by the researcher all identifying features of the young person will be removed.

### **11: What happens if a young person changes their mind?**

A young person can withdraw their consent at any stage during the interview or afterwards. They will be reminded of this at the start and at the end of the interview. During the interview, if they do not wish to answer particular questions they can inform the researcher of this.

If consent is withdrawn after the interview, all data will be securely destroyed immediately.

### **12: What happens if there is a problem?**

If you, or any young person, have any questions or concerns about the research, your first point of contact should be the researcher, Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin (contact details below).

If you feel you have not received a satisfactory response from this contact, or if you wish to make a complaint relating to the researcher's conduct, please contact Dr Helen Beckett, the researcher's supervisor at the University of Bedfordshire via email at: [helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk](mailto:helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk). A complaints procedure is provided alongside this information sheet.

### **13: What happens next?**

If you have any questions or concerns or would like any further information about the research or any element of this process, please contact the researcher.

If you are happy to consider a young person for interview on the basis of the information provided, please contact the researcher to inform her.

You can contact the researcher (Jacqui) by telephone at 07795676830 or by email at:

[jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.montgomery-devlin@study.beds.ac.uk)

**Many thanks.**

## PROCESS REGARDING YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 14 AND 15

Professional considers YP for interview (provided with Information Sheet and Risk Assessment)



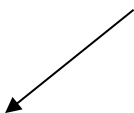
YP considered suitable based on IS



Professional contacts researcher to discuss



Professional undertakes Risk Assessment



Risks not considered manageable



Risks nil or manageable



Professional contacts parent/carer re consent

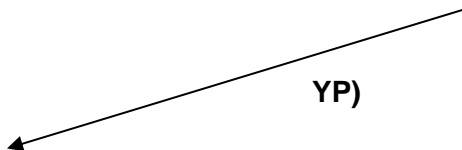
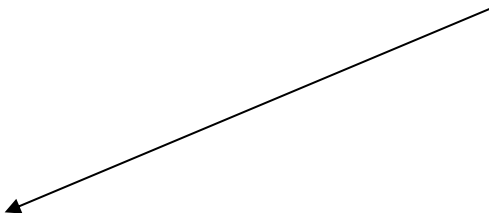


Parent/carer gives consent



Professional approaches YP

Parent/carer refuses consent



(on basis of IS for professional and IS for



YP)

**YP refuses consent**

**YP gives consent**

↓  
**Professional arranges YP and Researcher  
to meet (professional remains in building  
as support)**



**PROCESS REGARDING YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16+ (Parental consent not applicable unless learning disability present).**

**Professional considers YP for interview (provided with Information Sheet and Risk Assessment)**



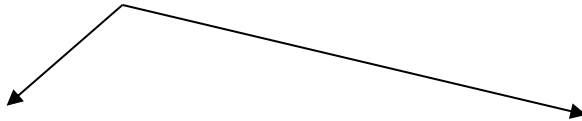
**YP considered suitable based on IS**



**Professional contacts researcher to discuss**



**Professional undertakes Risk Assessment**



**Risks not considered manageable**

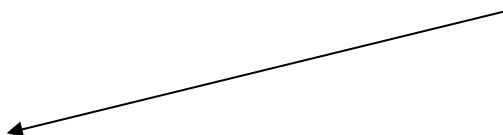
**Risks nil or manageable**



**Professional contacts YP**



**YP refuses consent**



**YP gives consent**



**Professional arranges YP and Researcher to meet  
(professional remains in building as support)**

## Appendix 33



### Young Person's Interview: Consent Form    Ages 14-18

**I would like to make sure that you are happy to take part in this research.**

**Please read or listen to these statements and tick the box if you agree with each one:**

1. I have been given, read (or have had read to me) and

understand the information sheet about the research.

☐

2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, raise any

concerns and have understood the answers.

☐

3. I understand if I tell you that I, or someone else, is being

harmed or in danger, or if I tell you information about a crime,

that you have to pass this on to social workers or the police. I

understand that you will keep everything else confidential.

☐

4. I understand what I say to you will be used to help you write

a report, my name will not be used, and that no-one will

know it was me who told you these things.

☐

5. I know that I have a choice whether or not to take part in this

research; I can say 'no' if I don't want to take part or answer

any questions I feel uncomfortable about.

☐

6: If you wish to be informed of the results of this

research your contact details will have to be kept

until it is complete. Do you wish to be informed?

Yes

☐

No

☐

So that I don't have to take notes during this interview I would like to tape it. If you don't want me to do this I will respect that. The interview can still happen without it being recorded.

If you are happy for me to tape the interview, please tick here:

☐

**Your name:**

---

**Your signature:**

---

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of person**

**seeking consent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(For young person under 16 yrs)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 34



### Young Person's Interview: Consent Form - Over 18 yrs

**Please read or listen to these statements and tick the box if you agree with each one:**

1. I have been given, read (or have had read to me) and  
understand the information sheet about the research. ☐

2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, raise any  
concerns and have understood the answers. ☐

3. I understand the limits to confidentiality and that the  
information I give will remain anonymous. ☐

4. I understand and consent to the information I share being  
used in a report/presentations/articles related to the research. ☐

5. I am voluntarily agreeing to take part in this research and

understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time during  
the interview of afterwards without any negative repercussions.

☐

6: If you wish to be informed of the results of this  
research your contact details will have to be kept

until it is complete. Do you wish to be informed? Yes

☐

No

☐

So that I don't have to take notes during this interview I would like to tape it. If you don't want me  
to do this I will respect that. The interview can still happen without it being recorded.

If you are happy for me to tape the interview, please tick here:

☐

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of researcher:** -----

**Date:** -----

## Appendix 35



### Young Person's Interview: Consent Form

#### Learning Disability

**I would like to make sure that you want to talk to me today. If there is anything you are not sure about just ask me.**

- **We will read the statements below together.**
- **If you understand and agree put a cross in the 'YES' box.**
- **If you don't understand or disagree put a cross in the 'NO' box.**

	YES	NO
Jacqui will talk to me about how boys can be tricked into doing sexual things		
I don't have to talk to Jacqui if I don't want to		
I can tell Jacqui not to use what I say		
Jacqui will use what I tell her in her work but won't tell anyone my name		
If I feel upset when talking to Jacqui I can stop. My worker will be around to check I am ok.		
If I tell Jacqui that me or someone else is being hurt or is in danger, Jacqui will tell someone to get help.		
I know I can ask any questions		
Do you want to talk with Jacqui today?		

When you talk to me I can record what you say in writing or on a voice-recorder or both.

Tick which way you would prefer:

In writing  ☐

 ☐

Your name	
Your signature	
Date	
Workers name	
Workers signature	I confirm that I believe ( <i>insert child's name</i> ) understands what this research is about, and the information discussed above:
Researchers name	
Date	

If you have any questions you can speak to your worker or call Jacqui on 07795676830.



## Appendix 36



### **Research into the Potential Impediments to the Recognition of Sexual Exploitation of Young Males Under the Age of 18 A Study Specific Disclosure Protocol**

This protocol sets out the ethical framework that will guide the conduct of the researcher in relation to disclosures by research participants.

Given the issue under consideration, it is likely that the researcher may become aware of safeguarding issues during the course of the research. As a practitioner and manager in the field of social care for 25 years, and specifically in the field of CSE for 13 years, the researcher is experienced in dealing with disclosures from children and young people.

#### **Circumstances:**

The circumstances in which confidentiality will need to be broken is where the researcher becomes aware that a child/young person (including the participant) is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm or where there may be a wider public protection concern. The information will then need to be shared with the relevant statutory authorities. Where disclosures are made in relation to historic allegations, the researcher will ensure that the same process of dealing with disclosures is used.

**Process:**

Participants will be informed in advance of the circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be maintained and the necessary action to be taken in such circumstances, including the accurate recording of information and the clear lines of responsibility. This fact will be initially addressed in the participant information sheets and reiterated with participants before interviews commence. Care will be taken to ensure that this information is presented in a manner and language appropriate to all participants, taking cognisance of age, ability and language of participants.

Consent forms include a section about anonymity and confidentiality, indicating understanding of procedures to be followed if confidentiality has to be broken.

Protocols will be agreed with each service/agency facilitating the research as to how disclosures will be dealt with should they arise and will be in line with the requirements established by the ACPC policy and procedures.

The researcher will ensure familiarity with the policies and procedures of the organisations with which they are working, confirming the name of the person with whom child protection concerns should be raised, the contact details of the local duty social work team or NSPCC service. If the researcher is concerned, they will:

- record what the participant has said in the participants own words, checking with them that this is an accurate record;
- speak to the named child protection person immediately after the interview;
- make contemporaneous notes about their concerns, decisions and reasons, and actions;
- discuss their concerns with their supervisor.

The supervisor should then send a letter to the manager of the organisation providing access, with a copy of the researcher's record of events. If a child/young person has made the disclosure the researcher should ensure that immediate support is provided to the child and that the child is kept fully informed about actions taken.

If the researcher observes behaviour or practice from a professional which does not raise child protection concerns but is considered unacceptable/ inappropriate, they should report these concerns to their supervisor who will feed back to relevant managers.

Research data given in confidence do not enjoy legal privilege and may be liable to subpoena by a court. In relevant circumstances, research participants should be made aware of this fact.

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