



Believe in children

Child Sexual Exploitation

Our work with sexually exploited
children and young people

We believe in children

Child sexual exploitation is not just an issue found overseas. Current research reveals there are at least 3,000 children being sexually exploited here in the UK. These are vulnerable young people who are being coerced and manipulated into sexual activity - either receiving money, drugs or accommodation in exchange for sex, or being exploited in more 'formal' prostitution. The future is bleak for these young people. Without help, many will become involved in adult sex work, drugs and crime.

Barnardo's was among the first organisations to work with sexually exploited children and young people in the mid 1990s. Our pioneering front line work and research has put the issue high on the national agenda, persuading police and other agencies to stop treating these young people as criminals and see them as vulnerable children in need of protection.

Barnardo's North West expert staff work at sexual exploitation projects across the region, helping many young people escape and recover from exploitation. Because of the proven link between going missing and sexual exploitation, many of these projects sit alongside discrete 'missing' services.

Our services include:

Direct work: Working with young people on a one-to-one basis, with the initial emphasis on safety planning and building the young person's self worth and confidence, as well as exploring unhealthy relationships.

Group work: A six week programme covering relationships, confidence and self esteem, recognising grooming, drug and alcohol issues and techniques for staying safe.

Prevention: We run programmes and workshops for schoolchildren and have developed toolkits, DVDs and other material used in targeted education and prevention work.

Training for professionals: Training and awareness raising is crucial in enabling young people at risk to be protected. Our training highlights the early identification of those particularly at risk, and targeting early intervention work.

“People think we can just come in, wave a magic wand and everything will be OK. But there are no quick fixes. This is a long-term process. We are consistent and we persist with young people. We build their confidence and self worth, so they feel able to turn their backs on those who are exploiting and abusing them.” Barnardo's practitioner



How we make a difference

One of the biggest barriers to working with sexually exploited children is that they rarely identify themselves as being exploited, and are unlikely to be picked up by the child protection system.

In 2006, Barnardo's published the findings from a two year evaluation of its services, which revealed positive outcomes for young people. For those who were being exploited at the beginning of the programme, 75% showed a reduced level of exploitation, and of these, one third were in a stable situation and had ended all exploitative relationships at the end of the programme.



The most significant positive outcomes were:

- regular contact with a Barnardo's service and acceptance of support
- a reduction in the number of episodes of going missing
- reduced conflict and improved relationships with parents and carers
- attendance at school or college
- reduced alcohol/drug use
- access to safe, stable accommodation
- an improved ability to recognise risky and exploitative relationships
- increased awareness of sexual health risks and appropriate protection
- safety from abuse.

Chloe's story

At 14, Chloe was referred to Barnardo's Messenger Service in Oldham due to her 'risky' lifestyle, which included 'hanging out' in a flat with four older males and two other young people already known to the service. Chloe was regularly missing from home, was drinking increasingly heavily and had turned her back on education. She was appearing with unexplained new jewellery, clothes and a number of mobile phones.

Through long term one to one work with a Barnardo's worker Chloe's self esteem and confidence has improved, she is starting to recognise the situations she was in as dangerous and abusive, and has made a complaint to the police about an older male she thought was her boyfriend. Her missing from home episodes have now reduced and her relationship with her parents is starting to improve. She is thinking about returning to school following a period of home tuition. Chloe comments:

“Barnardo's has helped me understand that I do have choices and has given me the confidence and support to make the right ones.”

Working together

The vulnerabilities of sexually exploited young people are too complex to be met by one single agency and that's why we work in partnership with other agencies such as Children's Services, health, education and the police. This collaborative approach ensures all the complex needs of young people are met.

Barnardo's is committed to developing evidence-based practice, linked to research and evaluation. This has enabled us to develop a model of working across all our specialist sexual exploitation services - proven to achieve results.

We have introduced a robust outcomes monitoring framework, so that all our services can accurately demonstrate the effectiveness of their work on a year by year basis, while three-monthly assessments inform case planning and enable us to evidence reduction in risk over the period of intervention.

We work in partnership with commissioning agencies to raise awareness of key issues and deliver on Every Child Matters targets.

Barnardo's North West's sexual exploitation services can:

- reduce the risk of abuse
- reduce the number of 'missing' young people
- achieve positive outcomes for children and young people with substance misuse and emotional wellbeing issues
- improve safeguarding outcomes
- reduce the number of children entering the care system
- improve outcomes for looked after children.



What Next?

If you believe - as we do - that working in partnership to develop groundbreaking services can help even more sexually exploited young people change their lives, then call Barnardo's North West Service Development Team on **0151 488 1100**.



www.barnardos.org.uk

Barnardo's North West Regional Office,
7 Lineside Close, Liverpool L25 4UD.
Tel: 0151 488 1100 Fax: 0151 488 1101