



Barnardo's

BELIEVE IN CHILDREN

EFFECTIVE WORK WITH SEXUALLY EXPLOITED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

For the last decade Barnardo's has been a leader in the field of sexual exploitation, developing and evaluating services and undertaking research into what works in protecting young people from sexual exploitation and in working with those who are exploited. We have undertaken extensive research in this area within our own services, for local authorities and devolved administrations across the UK, and in the European context.

Barnardo's expertise in this area has been validated externally; in 2007 our sexual exploitation services and research were reviewed by New Philanthropy Capital in their report '*Not seen and not heard: Child Abuse, a guide for donors and funders*', which said:

'Barnardo's has developed a strong body of knowledge about the sexual exploitation of children and young people the charity has a proven track record in engaging children and young people who are being sexually exploited, and reducing that risk. Its specialist knowledge is of value to both central government and local authorities'

Barnardo's is committed to developing evidence based practice, linked to research and evaluation and this has enabled us to develop a model of working across all our specialist sexual exploitation services which has been evaluated and proven to reduce the risk to young people. Adopting this rigorously evaluated model has led to the development of a robust outcomes measurement tool for this area of work, so that all Barnardo's services are able accurately to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work on a year by year basis.

Barnardo's has also developed a number of toolkits, DVDs and other materials that can be effectively used in targeted education and prevention work and in direct work with exploited young people.

This paper outlines Barnardo's expertise in this area, details our research reports and practice tools, and provides information about our model of effective practice and how we evaluate the outcomes.

Sexual exploitation - the policy context

Sexual exploitation of children and young people takes different forms, from young people being involved in sexually exploitative relationships and receiving money, drugs or accommodation in exchange for sex with one or more adults, to being exploited in more 'formal' prostitution. In all cases, those exploiting the young people have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, physical strength, or economic or other resources, such as access to drugs. While some element of coercion is common, the involvement in exploitative relationships is most significantly characterised by the lack of choices for, borne out of the social, emotional and economic vulnerability of the young person.

Until relatively recently, children and young people involved in exploitative relationships were seen to have made a 'choice' about their activities and, if apprehended for more formal prostitution, were treated as offenders under criminal law. A number of high profile campaigns by Barnardo's and others has led to changes being taken in the approach taken with such young people. They are now predominantly viewed and treated as 'children in need', who do not 'consent' to their abuse; and across the UK legislation and guidance encourages this approach.

The right for children and young people to be protected from sexual exploitation is enshrined in both domestic legislation and international conventions.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 34

State parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, State Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in unlawful sexual activity.
- The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual activity
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials

Article 39

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, exploitation or abuse.

Domestic legislation

In England and Wales, domestic legislation and policy within the 1989 Children Act guidance, *Safeguarding children involved in prostitution* (2000) and in the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* gives safeguards to children and provides more legal options to prosecute perpetrators. Similar provisions are also in place in Scotland in '*Guidance on young runaways and sexual exploitation*' and the *Protection of Children and prevention of sexual offences (Scotland) Act 2006*; and in Northern Ireland in the guidance '*Cooperating to safeguard children*'.

Key messages from research and evaluation

- The characteristics of children at risk of sexual exploitation
 - A disrupted family life, separation and being in local authority care
 - A history of abuse and disadvantage
 - Problematic parenting – inconsistency and poor relationships
 - Disengagement from education – exclusion or truancy
 - Going missing from home or care
 - Drug and alcohol misuse
 - Poor health and well being, low self esteem.
- Key findings from research
 - Prevention and early intervention are vital when indications of risk are first identified
 - Many young people at risk of exploitation have been failed by services at an early stage in their lives
 - A pro active approach to identify sexual exploitation and the development of detailed protocols are essential to effective intervention
 - Specialist services play a key role in engaging with this hard to reach and vulnerable group.
 - Continuity of care is essential.
 - Responses to young people at risk of sexual exploitation are undermined by resource constraints.

Barnardo's support services for sexually exploited young people

Sexual exploitation and 'missing' services - Barnardo's currently provides 20 specialist sexual exploitation services across the UK. Because of the proven link between going missing and sexual exploitation, many of these projects encompass or sit alongside discrete 'missing' services, of which there are 11 in total. In 2006-7, our projects supported almost 2,292 young people predominantly girls, at risk through going missing or involved in sexual exploitation.

These specialist services aim to achieve positive outcomes for young people by combining preventative education with effective child protection and therapeutic interventions which assist young people to 'escape' and recover from exploitation. This approach is delivered predominantly by adopting the following model and approach:

- Primary prevention through working with schools, pupil referral units, residential homes and other children and young people services to equip young people with the skills and confidence to assert themselves against sexually aggressive behaviour. Many young people becoming at risk of exploitation in adolescence, have been failed by services at an earlier stage of their lives, so improving the quality of services, particularly Children's Services, is an important aspect of prevention.
- Training for professionals (Children's Services, education, police, health etc). Early identification of those particularly at risk, and targeting early

intervention work through the provision of services is also necessary to prevent risk escalating. Young people do not readily disclose this form of abuse which is particularly hidden. Therefore practitioners must be able to recognise and respond to the indicators of possible sexual exploitation. Training and awareness raising is crucial to enable young people at risk to be protected.

- The vulnerabilities of sexually exploited young people are too complex to be met by a single agency and require a multi agency approach framed by local protocols for sexual exploitation. Although Children's Services need to co-ordinate services for young people, these may be more appropriately delivered by local specialist services which can provide the flexibility, accessibility and confidentiality that young people need to engage with services. The involvement of other services such as health, education and the police is also essential in meeting young people's needs. Specialist services are also better placed to provide the intensive support to provide young people with a high level of safety and security through the development of long term relationships with individual staff, to counter the 'pull' of sexually exploitative relationships and circumstances.
- Continuity of care and safe accommodation which promote stability and enable young people to remain in their community are vital for these young people who may have experienced multiple placements and interventions resulting in discontinuity and inconsistency. Therapeutic approaches build on known protective factors such as relationships with carers, friendship networks and education.
- As sexual exploitation occurs within a context of constrained choices, providing more and better choices is necessary. Barnardo's believes that the provision of specialist services within a multi agency partnership has proven to be the best way to engage with and protect this vulnerable group. Strategic involvement in multi agency forums such as Safeguarding Children Forums and Crime and Disorder Strategy Groups in England and Wales, Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland and Community Health Partnerships in Scotland, facilitates this joint approach.

Working with trafficked children and young people - Barnardo's have become concerned about the trafficking of young people, both from abroad and that of indigenous young people within the UK. We have undertaken some preliminary research in this area and have just been successful in obtaining funding for posts in three areas in England to scope the extent of trafficking and explore the specific support needs of trafficked children and young people.

Evaluating Service Effectiveness

In 2006, Barnardo's published the findings from a two year evaluation of its services, this research explored the characteristics of the young people, the range of exploitation they experienced, the model of service offered by Barnardo's and the outcomes for the young people involved. The research demonstrated that despite the challenges, Barnardo's services facilitate positive outcomes for young people, and as a result of their contact with our specialist services many young people's risk of sexual exploitation is reduced. The most significant positive outcomes are:

- a reduction in the number of episodes of going missing
- reduced conflict and improved relationships with parents and carers
- access to safe, stable accommodation
- an improved ability to recognise risky and exploitative relationships
- an increased awareness of their own rights

Building on this evaluation Barnardo's has developed a comprehensive outcomes framework for evaluating the effectiveness of our sexual exploitation services which is based upon the known risk indicators for child sexual exploitation. Three-monthly assessments inform case planning and enable us to evidence reduction in risk over the period of intervention. In addition to those described above, key outcomes include: the young person not associating with controlling/risky adults; attending school or college regularly; being aware of sexual health risks and protecting themselves appropriately; not being drug or alcohol dependent; not experiencing intimate violence; being able to assert their rights in relationships and being safe from abuse.

Barnardo's model of effective practice

The key elements of the direct support provided to young people by Barnardo's services are encapsulated as follows:

- **Access** – young people may access services via another agency or by self referral. All our services have contributed to the development of protocols to ensure effective referral pathways, including inter agency work to raise awareness of exploitation and increase identification of young people at risk. The majority of young people involved in or at risk of sexual exploitation have chaotic lives and a history of poor relationships with the helping professions. Consequently, accessibility has to be more than just making a service available. Efforts are made to ensure that services are provided in a safe, attractive environment, flexible and responsive to young people's needs, by staff who take time to build a trusting relationship. Providing support to young people on their own terms is crucial, as is honesty about the boundaries of confidentiality.
- **Attention** – Many sexually exploited young people have few, if any, concerned, attentive adults in their lives. With a history of abuse, family breakdown and poor parental relationships, often with a background of disruption in the care system, it is hardly surprising that young people are attracted to the attention offered by abusive, unsafe adults. Our services aim to provide a different kind of attention; attention that will 'hook' a young person out of unsafe relationships into safe and positive ones. This entails focusing on the issues that matter to the young person and persistence over time. Consistent and persistent attention from a specific worker enables the development of a protective, supportive relationship within which a young person feels safe enough to examine their lives and start to make changes.
- **Assertive outreach** – Establishing and maintaining contact is achieved through a range of methods, including regular texting, calls and cards, arranging to meet on the young person's 'home ground' or at venues

where they feel comfortable. The steady persistence of workers is eventually understood as being a genuine demonstration of concern and an indication of reliability. Such persistent engagement techniques are particularly important to counteract the influence of, often equally persistent, abusive adults.

- **Advocacy** – Effective support to young people has to involve a range of agencies. Many of the young people receiving a service from Barnardo's have been failed by previous services and a key role of staff is to ensure that they can advocate for the support and services they need. This advocacy can give rise to tension between agencies, but an important aspect of Barnardo's work is to establish and maintain effective inter-agency protocols and practices which keep the needs of young people at the centre.

Barnardo's publications on sexual exploitation

For over a decade Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit has developed an extensive research programme dedicated to promoting the link between research, policy, campaigning and evidence based practice, and what works to reduce the risk among vulnerable young people. Our services have used their expertise to develop a number of toolkits and other materials to assist professional working with young people at risk of or sexually exploited.

National research studies

1998 *'Whose Daughter Next – Children Abused Through Prostitution'* – this was a highly influential piece of research which launched Barnardo's campaign to protect young people at risk of sexual exploitation. The report was accompanied by a video which has been extensively used in training and awareness work.

2001 Following on from *'Whose Daughter Next'*, Barnardo's produced a short report and film highlighting the sexual exploitation of boys and young men – *'No son of mine'*. Both these reports were used extensively by Barnardo's in lobbying with Government and contributed to the Children Act guidance on sexual exploitation and to changes of legislation in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

2002 – *'Stolen Childhood: Barnardo's work with children abused through prostitution'* – highlighted the key issues faced by children and young people who are sexually exploited.

2004 – *'Just one click'* - examined in detail the issue of the risk of sexual exploitation using the internet and other new technologies.

2005 – *'The use of secure accommodation for sexually exploited young people'* – initially a piece of work undertaken for the Scottish Executive, this report looked at the use of secure accommodation across the UK and highlighted the inappropriateness of this as a response to young people who were sexually exploited

2006 – *'Reducing the risk'* – a two year evaluation of the effectiveness of the Barnardo's model of working with sexually exploited children and young people.

2007 – In response to anecdotal information about the movement of indigenous children and young people for the purposes of sexual exploitation within the UK, Barnardo's undertook a small scale and preliminary scoping exercise within our own 18 services. This report found that moving young people from one location

to another in the UK is a core technique adopted by many adults who seek to exploit children, but that the criminal justice system is failing to act effectively against perpetrators of internal trafficking despite the legal and policy reforms of recent years. Because of these concerns and a perceived underestimation of the numbers, Barnardo's will be repeating this survey in 2008.

Local/regional research

2005 – *'Meeting the needs of sexually exploited young people in London'* - this work described, for the first time, the nature and extent of the service need in the city. The two year study funded by Bridge House Trust found a significant gap between the numbers of young people at risk and the services available to them. This study had a considerable impact on policy and practice: it was used by the London Safeguarding Children's Board in its development of pan-London safeguarding protocols and heightened awareness among statutory authorities, of the prevalence of child sexual exploitation.

2007 – *'Failed and Forgotten'* followed up on the progress made since the pan London report, drawing on the experiences of two Barnardo's services working with sexually exploited young people in seven London boroughs. The report showed evidence of some progress, for example in the launching of the pan London protocols. However, despite pockets of good practice, many of the recommendations outlined in the original research had not been implemented and it was found that the protocols were only actively used where there was a specialist sexual exploitation services.

2004 and 2005 – Barnardo's undertook small scale mapping exercises for Ipswich and Buckinghamshire local authorities (where Barnardo's has since developed a sexual exploitation service informed by the research findings and recommendations).

2005 – *'Out of sight, out of mind'* – a scoping study into sexual exploitation among children and young people in Wales (where again Barnardo's has since been commissioned to establish a specialist service) commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government

2006 – *'Taking stock: Children and young people at risk of, involved in, abuse through prostitution in Stockton-on Tees'* – joint research between a local Barnardo's project and other local Children's Services

2006 – *'Tipping the iceberg'* - a year long study of young people at risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation in Sussex

International Initiatives

2004 – *'Daphne programme report – What works in child sexual exploitation: sharing and learning'*

2007 – *'Blue print of experience: Working to prevent and reduce child sexual exploitation in the UK, Netherlands and Estonia'* –

As well as undertaking extensive research in the UK, Barnardo's has been involved in EU funded initiatives to promote partnership work. The 2004 report analysed effective strategies for preventing child sexual exploitation and protecting the victims and highlighted models of good practice in the UK and the Netherlands. Following this report, Barnardo's secured further EU funding to undertake the AGIS programme, which involved NGO practitioners from the UK,

the Netherlands and from Estonia. This project combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies to identify best practice in the three countries.

Toolkits and other practitioner materials

- *'Offside'* - This film and workbook explore appropriate teenage relationships and challenge sexual beliefs that can be associated with inappropriate sexual behaviour. It provides individual and group exercises that help young people examine issues relating to healthy relationships.
- *'Protecting self and keeping safe'* – This pack has been produced to help social workers, teachers and youth workers to plan and deliver effective education on sexual exploitation. The pack will enable 11 to 16 year olds to explore safe and healthy relationships and develop positive attitudes and behaviours.
- *'Nae danger'* - made by young people who have been affected by sexual exploitation, *'Nae Danger'* looks at issues around risk and keeping safe. Designed for use with 11 to 16 year olds to explore keeping safe, sexual exploitation, internet safety and a variety of related issues, it includes an animated film (DVD), a selection of games and activity sheets, all stored in a handy record bag. The pack comes with comprehensive guidance on how to use it.
- *'Things we don't talk about'* – is an education resource pack for girls and young women aged between 11 and 18. Using an approach which promotes self-esteem, self-awareness, and moral responsibility, the pack tackles difficult issues like abusive relationships, sexual exploitation and abuse through prostitution and provides the opportunity to open up discussion of issues around relationships and sex. It fully supports PHSE curriculum and guidance on preparing young people for adult life.
- *'B Wise 2 Sexual Exploitation'* – This pack equips teachers, social workers and counsellors to educate young people about sexual exploitation with honesty and realism. The material is all based on the experiences of young people supported by one of Barnardo's specialist sexual exploitation services. Full resources for the activity based sessions are provided and there are thorough facilitators' notes with practical tips so facilitators feel fully confident in delivering this programme. It includes a CD Rom of the programme and resources for printing or projecting.
- *'Invisible lives, Strong Voices'* – is a hard hitting film based on two real life accounts of abuse. It uses the words and experiences of a young woman and a young man who have both been sexually exploited as children and as young adults caught up in the criminal world of illegal substance misuse and prostitution. Their accounts of these experiences will enable professionals to explore their own practice and value base and understand the difficulties young people face. It is imperative that front line services are aware of what to look out for when identifying risk and the DVD clearly conveys this message whilst raising awareness and understanding of the harsh realities surrounding sexual exploitation and adult prostitution
- *'You know me'* – is a DVD produced for the purpose of awareness raising amongst practitioners/professionals/policy makers on the issue of child sexual exploitation. Described as 'powerful' by those who have viewed the

film, it highlights the responsibility that professionals need to take in looking for, identifying and responding to the issue.

- *'Hidden'* – is another hard hitting drama based on the stories of three young people living in Wales who have experienced sexual exploitation. Intended to raise the awareness of the issue of child sexual exploitation, the film has graphic content that depicts the devastating impact that sexual exploitation has on children and young people. It may be used with professionals, commissioners and service planners or young people but because of the vivid content of the film, Barnardo's Cymru advises that any screening of the film should be facilitated by someone who has a background in child protection and is able to lead a discussion around these issues.
- *'The Keeping Safe Resource Pack'* – is designed to help girls and young woman identifying the risks they may face and find ways of dealing with and overcoming those risks. The focus is on prevention and the resource is interactive and friendly, and was designed and piloted with the help of our service users.

If you would like any further information about Barnardo's sexual exploitation research, policy or practice development, please contact Carlene Firmin, Assistant Director, Youth Justice and CSE: carlene.firmin@barnardos.org.uk, telephone 020 8498 7746