

'It could be anyone'

Research Evaluation of the London Prevention Education Programme (Child Sexual Exploitation) by Barnardo's (2007)¹

What was the research evaluation about?

The researchers worked with Barnardo's practitioners to monitor how effective the Prevention Education Programme (PEP) sessions were for young people in schools, PRU's, & residential units and also for social workers, youth workers and teachers who received training from Barnardo's as part of the PEP.

In order to decide if the PEP had been effective, the researchers used three different techniques -

- ❖ Getting people to complete questionnaires
- ❖ Holding follow-up discussions in small groups ('focus groups')
- ❖ Carrying out individual interviews.

Using all these approaches the researchers invited young people and adults who had participated from Croydon, Lewisham and Southwark to give feedback on their experience and if they had learnt anything from the Barnardo's sessions².

The PEP had aims that it wished to achieve for young people in schools, PRU's, & residential units and through the training of professionals -

- ❖ **Aim 1:** To help young people to stay safe and healthy through raising awareness and understanding of sexual risks, rights & responsibilities.
- ❖ **Aim 2:** To promote young people's confidence and ability to resist unwanted sexual experiences.
- ❖ **Aim 3:** To improve professional identification of sexual risk to help divert young people away from abuse through sexual exploitation.
- ❖ **Aim 4:** To educate professionals who work with young people about how to meet their needs, if they experience sexual exploitation.

The researchers used these 4 aims to decide if the PEP had been effective.

What information did we gather?

From professionals	From young people in schools	From young people in PRUs/residential units
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 135 sets of questionnaires from social & youth workers & 12 questionnaires from teachers;- Feedback from 20 professionals, by group discussions or individual email/telephone interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 561 questionnaires completed by pupils from five schools;- Feedback from 105 young people through six group discussions and 3 interviews with teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Feedback from 17 young people from three pupil referral units and 1 interview with a PRU staff member;- Four 1-2-1 interviews with young people from four residential units. Interviews with 7 residential staff.

What did we find out?

From young people in schools

- ❖ The questionnaires found that following the school sessions, young people's knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with sexual exploitation, risky adults and situations was good.
- ❖ Some young people still had difficulty in identifying certain risky adult behaviours that might lead into sexual exploitation.
- ❖ Young people in schools where questionnaires were filled in immediately after the sessions, were significantly more accurate in their responses than those who completed them 2-3 weeks later. This might be because young people found it hard to remember details from a one-off session later.
- ❖ The follow-up group discussions revealed that young people overall were satisfied with the sessions. The discussions also revealed that there was some longer-term impact on young people in terms of awareness-raising and promoting their ability to avoid risky situations.

From the delivery to PRUs and Residential Units

- ❖ The follow-up groups and interviews showed that where young people engaged with the sessions, they found them enjoyable and worthwhile.
- ❖ Young people believed their awareness of sexual exploitation had been raised; some said that they would not have been aware of risks associated with certain situations but for attending the sessions.
- ❖ Young people's knowledge was strongest when describing the impact of sexual exploitation, services available to young people at risk and recognising risky individuals and relationships.
- ❖ The majority were less clear about 'routes into' exploitation and deliberate targeting by adults through 'the grooming process'. Some of the young men involved in discussions expressed homophobic ('anti-gay') attitudes.
- ❖ The follow-up discussions also revealed a longer-term impact on some young people's attitudes, in terms of awareness raising and promoting their ability to avoid risky situations.

From the delivery to professionals

- ❖ The majority of the adults showed a marked improvement in their knowledge of child sexual exploitation, particularly in relation to identifying risk indicators and awareness of ways to support young people affected.
- ❖ A majority who were unable to answer questions at all about child sexual exploitation pre-training, were able to do so afterwards.
- ❖ Some adults had better knowledge than others from the outset, particularly about how to support young people affected by sexual exploitation³.
- ❖ Follow-up consultations with professionals were very positive; the majority believed that their awareness of child sexual exploitation had been raised and they had attempted to put this into practice following the training.

Conclusions

There are good indicators from the research that the PEP (CSE) delivery in schools achieved its aims for the majority of young people in the short term, with regard to raising awareness of sexual exploitation and promoting young people's confidence and ability to resist exploitative situations. The research suggests that the knowledge gained was sustained in the longer term for a reasonable number of young people from schools.

There are also promising indicators from the research that the PEP (CSE) delivery achieved its aims for young people from PRUs and Residential settings in the short term. However this finding is based on information from a much smaller number of young people and more research would be needed to know how accurate this is.

The evaluation finds that PEP (CSE) delivery to adult professionals successfully achieved its objectives with regard to promoting professionals' ability to identify risk and how they can meet the needs of sexually exploited young people. .

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank all the participants who made the evaluation possible, especially the young people who volunteered their time to talk about the PEP.

The full report of the PEP Evaluation, including Executive Summary, can be accessed free for download from –

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research_and_publications.htm

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¹ *The Prevention Education Programme (PEP) on Child Sexual Exploitation was funded by London Councils and delivered by Barnardo's practitioners in the London Boroughs of Croydon, Lewisham and Southwark over a two-year period, between 2005 and 2007. The quote is from a young person who took part in the research.*

² *Professionals were from Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB), Residential Social Workers (RSWs) or Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) teachers.*

³ *Participants from the LSCB tended to have a better knowledge than RSWs, particularly of policies and legislation.*