

**Believe in  
children**



**Barnardo's**  
Northern Ireland

## **News release**

**Date:** Friday 4 November 2011

**Media contact:** Anne Dawson, Barnardo's NI t: 028 9067 2366 or m: 07825 113303

**Spokespeople including report author are available on request**

**Strictly Embargoed Midday (12:00) Monday, November 7 2011**

### **Sexual Exploitation - Not a World Away**

A report by Barnardo's into the extent of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland has found that it is an issue of concern for almost two thirds of girls in residential care homes in Northern Ireland who were included in the study.

The report entitled 'Not a World Away' also found that sexual exploitation affects both male and females and that where cases of concern were identified in half of those cases the abuse lasted at least one year and in over 16% it lasted three or more years.

Report author Dr Helen Beckett said, "While the research reveals that some looked after children are at a higher risk of being targeted by abusers they are not the only ones, there are also cases of young people not known to social services being abused and the numbers are probably significantly greater than is currently known because it is such a hidden issue."

"In response to questions Barnardo's placed in the 2010 Young Life and Times survey which was conducted among 786 16 year olds, one in nine told us they had experience of an adult trying to groom them and that in three quarters of cases first contact was made in person, with online contact accounting for the rest."

Barnardo's NI Director Lynda Wilson said, "Child sexual exploitation is a form of child abuse but because it tends to affect older children and because the relationship may appear consensual it can be overlooked, however it is vital to remember that no child can consent to his or her own abuse. This report shows that sexual exploitation is a much bigger problem in Northern Ireland than we thought and is not a world away from our own front doors. Steps need to be taken urgently to protect our young people ."

Barnardo's NI is calling for the NI Policing Board to incorporate child protection including sexual exploitation as a priority in the forthcoming Policing Plans and for the Health and Social Care Board NI to draw together an action plan to tackle sexual exploitation head on. Barnardo's NI is also encouraging members of the public to join its campaign by signing up to an online petition asking the Policing Board NI to make child protection one of its priorities [www.barnardos.org.uk/cutthemfree](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cutthemfree) .

**Ends.**

#### **Notes to editors**

1. **Definition of child sexual exploitation:** Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a child or young person is exploited, coerced and/or manipulated into engaging in some form of sexual activity, in return for something they need or desire and/or for the gain of a third person. The 'something' received by the child or young person can include both tangible items such as food, somewhere to stay, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or money and more intangible 'rewards' such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging. Fear of what might happen if they do not comply can also be a significant influencing factor.
2. Sexual exploitation can manifest itself in many different forms, including grooming, abuse by an individual who has established a 'seemingly consensual relationship with a child or young person, informal 'introduction' to other (potential) abusers and the formal prostituting of the child. Children and young people can also find themselves exploited through the production and distribution of sexual images or through exposure to such images. Common to all these scenarios is an imbalance of power in favour of the abuser and some degree of coercion, intimidation, exploitation,

violence and/or enticement of the child or young person (adapted from National Working Group definition/DCSF 2009 Guidance).

3. For the purposes of the research and the report children and/or young people are defined as those under 18 years of age.
4. 'Not A World Away' was funded by the Department of Health.
5. A copy of the report is available on request.
6. Spokespeople are available please contact Anne Dawson mb: 07825 113303 to arrange.
7. Barnardo's NI online petition calling for the NI Policing Board to incorporate child protection including sexual exploitation as a priority in the forthcoming Policing Plans can be found at [www.barnardos.org.uk/cutthemfree](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cutthemfree)

We believe in the potential of every child and young person, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through. We will support them, stand up for them and bring out the best in each and every child.

Every year we help thousands of children turn their lives around. But we cannot do it without you. Visit [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk) to find out how you can get involved and show you believe in children.