

Scratching the surface...

... What we know about the abuse and sexual exploitation of young people by adults targeting residential and supported accommodation units.

March 2004



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This report would not have been possible without the support of my colleagues at Barnardo's Street Team. They have not only offered encouragement and insight but have, without complaint (not much!) picked up on work in my absence.

The Street Team makes contact with young people aged 12 – 25 years who come into Glasgow city centre and are vulnerable and are or may be at risk of sexual exploitation. Our service operates four nights a week between 6pm – 2am, undertaking streetwork, has a free phone service for young people and also offers a duty type service daytime.

I have worked for the Street Team as a project worker for over three years now. For the last 18 months, I have had a specific remit to develop our work with young people aged under 18 years.

This report has been compiled by conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key agencies that are involved in supporting vulnerable young people in Glasgow. These key agencies are named below. The interviews and focus groups took place between January and March 2004.

Glasgow City Council

- Leaving Care Services
- Young Women's project
- Social Work Service – Children and Family Team Leaders

ROC - Aberlour Project

Say Women

Barnardo's 16+

Good Shepherd Centre

Archdiocese - Glengowan Project

Blue Triangle Housing Association

- Somerset Place

Seamill Residential Children's Unit

Kerelaw Residential School

- Open and Secure Units

Strathclyde Police – Family Protection Units

Barnardo's Street Team

The following agencies were contacted, but were unable to contribute to this research. Agencies were unable to release staff for interview, or felt they had nothing to contribute to this research –

The Place, Sandyford Initiative

St. Mary's Kenmure Residential School
Springboig St. John's Residential School
Thanks also go to

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Barnardo's Street Team

Foreword

The Street Team have been involved in working in Glasgow city centre for over 10 years and during this time have gained considerable experience and credibility working with young people who are being exploited in street prostitution. However, in the last year we have increasingly received information from workers and young people regarding young people's involvement in 'organised' abuse through prostitution. This activity is occurring not on the streets of the city centre but behind closed doors - in flats and hotels, etc. Young people have reported being held against their will and/or participated in providing sexual behaviours to their boyfriend's friends.

We have defined this 'organised' abuse of young people in private or commercial properties, as **"off street"** prostitution.

Older young people currently involved in street prostitution have, over the years, also given anecdotal information to the Street Team regarding their experiences of being involved in "off street" prostitution whilst under the age of 18 years. This information may suggest a route into street prostitution for some young people.

From the Street Team's experience there appears to be a lack of confirmation of what others suspect to be the processes of off street prostitution. There is some evidence to suggest that adult men are targeting young people who are accommodated in residential units or supported accommodation. Therefore the core task of the report was to collate information on what those involved in the care and support of these young people actually knew.

Task

To find out -

- What awareness workers had of the issues around off street prostitution,
- The support needs of the young people involved, both in disclosing information and following disclosure
- How they gathered, recorded and shared information, in particular the anecdotal 'soft' intelligence. Things such as details of suspect adult persons, addresses where young people absconded to, car details, etc,
- What the training and support gaps were for workers
- Examples of good practice

The key aims and objective of the report is to –

- Reduce the risk of significant harm for young people
- Raise awareness of young people being targeted
- Consult with young people and involve them in identifying good practice
- Improve communication across all child protection agencies
- Improve joint working and training to enable earlier identification of risk and identify appropriate supports to prevent further harm

Awareness of “off street” prostitution

All participants interviewed had, at some level, an awareness of the occurrence of organised, targeting of young people for off street prostitution. Some had experience in very specific terms, which following investigation had resulted in concrete information regarding particular organised ‘cells’, that is, groups of organised adult men involved in the off street prostitution of young people. Others had considerable knowledge of young people, past and present, who they suspected were involved in some kind of targeted sexual exploitation and had suspicion that many more were being groomed and on the periphery of being abused.

It was difficult for workers to be able to give accurate numbers of young people involved, and there may be some crossover of agencies highlighting the same young people. However it is estimated from accounts of information that over 20 individual young people could be identified as being involved in off street prostitution. What workers were very clear about is that there is very definitely an off street prostitution scene happening in Glasgow -

- Young people attending parties in flats where they were introduced to older men, being offered alcohol and drugs in exchange for sexual favours
- A flat in North of the city that young people refer to as the ‘dungeon’, a room ‘kitted’ out for sex
- Individually named flats in Paisley and Glasgow where young people were known to be abused,
- Young women being drugged, and unable to recall what took place in the flats
- 2 young women being held in a flat by older men and raped
- Another young women raped at a party with only older men there
- 3 supported accommodation units being linked by 2 ‘cells’ of men who picked up young women and took them to flats
- Another 3 children’s units targeted by a ‘cell’ where young people were taken to a restaurant for sexual exploitation by adult men
- Young man groomed by sauna owner, ended up working in sauna
- One young man, having been targeted by a couple of men, then being passed around a paedophile net

In addition, workers had suspicion of many more young people being groomed and on the periphery of being abused.

Key Point:

Family Protection Units were unable to give an indication of investigated cases due to generalised methods of recordings. It was not possible to separate child cases from other cases of investigated sexual violence.

Targeting of Vulnerable Young People

It cannot be clearly understood if the young people who were suspected to be involved or on the periphery of off street prostitution were actually targeted at the units. However it was agreed by most of the participants that adult male abusers were likely to be targeting young people when they were away from the units - namely within the city centre, and often when in the company of groups of other vulnerable young people who hang about key areas of the city centre.

It was noted that these groups of young people were not all from residential units and that young people met up with other young people who were living at home or in their communities, but frequenting the city centre at night.

Areas that workers could identify included-

- Central Station
- George Square
- Clydeside
- Royal Exchange Square/Gallery of Modern Art
- Buchanan Galleries
- The Italian Centre
- The Barras (daytime at weekends)
- St. Vincent Street toilets

The adult abuser identifies and targets young people who are vulnerable by factors such as age, lowered self-esteem, sexual history, lack of family networks and as living in 'looked after accommodation'.

These adult men are aware that those living in residential accommodation may be very unhappy, desperate for freedom and excitement, for some young people there may be a need to be part of something different from the other young people they know, to have a story to tell.

Some have befriended the parents of some young people. Parents who may be experiencing chaotic drug or alcohol use, or who may have other difficulties in identifying safe relationships for their children.

The Grooming Process

Adults befriend these young people, initially showing an interest in them, offers of lifts in their car, and generally nurturing what the young people would see as a positive and gainful relationship. Young people will receive gifts of clothes, trainers, accommodation, money, alcohol, drugs and mobile phones. These gifts create a dependency on these adults but also enable absconders to 'survive' away from their units for longer. Significantly mobile phones are key to maintaining contact with the young people.

For many of the young people, particularly the young women, they identify the adults as their boyfriends, being taken out for meals, attending parties and being introduced to the boyfriend's friends. Elements of this would be considered normal in any new couple relationship, however these adult males range from mid twenties to fifty years old, with the young people being as young as 12 years old.

These relationships are key to the abuse process in which young people are involved. Young people are not recognising the exploitation as it is taking place, but they are instead flourishing in the attention that they are receiving. In some cases young people consider they are the ones who are doing the exploiting. They think that they are manipulating these adult men to gain alcohol, cigarettes, etc.

Young people as Conduits

Some young people are being used as conduits to introduce other young people to these adult men. Many are encouraged to bring their friends along for company. Details of flats identified as 'safe houses' are shared amongst absconders, enabling them to remain missing for longer periods.

Other young people are groomed to procure other young people –

- One young woman, also selling drugs for her adult male abuser also procured other girls to have sex with him
- Young people knowingly introducing other young people to these adult men as they were introduced, forming a vicious circle.
- Two units described young women who would be considered less sexually attractive to the men being paid in gifts, drugs, etc. to procure younger girls. They were instructed by the men in the type of girl they were looking for. There was no direct sexual involvement for these two young women.
- One young woman in supported accommodation that acted as a go-between.

“We were never sure if she was being sexually exploited herself, or if it was more about the excitement and buzz. She had very little regard for the safety or what was happening to the young women she had introduced. She had a network of young people who phoned her and turned up at the door looking for her”

One residential unit expressed concern that young people from the day school were being exposed and targeted. Many of the young people attending the day school were there because of specific learning difficulties. It was considered that many of these young people were unfamiliar with the lifestyles and experiences of the other, more 'streetwise' young people in the school and would therefore be less resilient to being exploited.

New Technology - Mobile phones.

The use of mobile phones was seen not only as a tool in the grooming process but also as a means for the adult men to maintain contact with the young people and for networking of those young people involved.

“As soon as a young woman has a mobile phone it raises our awareness, in terms of ‘Why?’ She never seems to make calls from it, she only receives calls”

Participants gave little evidence of young people being groomed or abused through the use of 3G mobile phones or the Internet. Residential staff supervised young peoples' access to the Internet within the unit. The use of 3G mobile phones and the Internet outside the unit is out with staff's control, however.

There are currently no reporting structures for young people to raise concerns about on-line/off-line possible abuse related concerns.

Although staff did not evidence current misuse of these new technological devices they were concerned by the implications of young people gaining greater access to these.

One supported accommodation unit had had difficulties with young women accessing chat line services within the unit. They found that some chat line services were free of charge to female callers and staff had been unable to 'bar' these outgoing calls, from landlines within the unit. The young women could access the chat lines even from those landlines that only allowed incoming calls.

They were aware of the sexualised nature of these calls and were concerned by how quickly face to face contact was made, by the young women and the men. There was suspicion that these young women were introduced to other adult men and that prostitution followed.

Given that young people are engaging in face-to-face meetings, it is imperative that we equip young people with the support and information to negotiate and interact with discussions regarding face-to-face meetings

"At the extreme end is sexual interaction with lots of men, and at the other end the chat line operates like a telephone sex-line"

"They [chat-line services] are advertised in a number of magazines whose target audiences are 13 – 16 year old young women"

Obtaining Information

Informally

Much of the information given thus far, by young people, is because of workers assessments of

- Indicators of grooming
- Changed behaviour in the young people
- Absconding behaviour.

Where staff have been able to illicit further information from young people, albeit anecdotal, it has usually been informally. Staff have found that some young people will be happy to share their experiences with other residents whilst in the company of staff members - telling their stories.

"You're always picking up these snippets of information that they don't even think they're giving you. That's our way of getting a lot of the stuff. We dread Monday mornings, when we get all the weekend stuff!"

Other times staff will initiate topical discussion, maybe of events in a soap opera, if they have suspicions something is going on. An environment that is relaxed, open, and with workers who the young people have developed a degree of trust and respect with are conducive to these situations.

It was recognised that they were only able to scratch the surface in getting young people to share information, but that this limited anecdotal information is crucial in

piecing together what is happening for the young people. Many staff described it as trying to build a jigsaw with one piece at a time.

Following Abstinence

Few young people give any information when interviewed on return from absconding. Even when questioned as to why they in particular areas or why they handed themselves into the police, young people will withhold specific details of persons they were with or addresses of where they stayed. Residential staff considered they were more likely to get information at a later, more informal time. The police had very considered views about why young people won't disclose to them.

"It's about the psychology; a child seeing the police as an authoritarian figure...not doing anything to help [at home], which builds up to a hatred of the organisation"

"When they're out in Glasgow City centre and police are routinely approaching them regarding their behaviour...that compounds their adverse reaction to the police."

In recognising the need to build positive relations with the young people, and to make the return interviews more effective, some community safety officers have endeavoured to respond to return interviews for young people in the unit. In doing this officers who are more familiar to the young people are much more likely to elicit information.

Factors Influencing Disclosure

Perception

The young people make very little direct disclosure. For some, this is because of their perception of what is actually going on. Workers considered many young people might not recognise that they are being exploited.

- There is anecdotal information to suggest that there may be a correlation between young people who have been sexually abused at home or in their communities as children, and those that are targeted and exploited later, as young people.

"They see it as a continuation of their sexual abuse, but this time they are actually getting paid for it, and some folk have made that analysis."

"Most of our young girls have been sexually abused as very young children and they have been trained to perform for males and they think that's what you do."

- For some young people lacking in loving care and positive attention, they enjoy the attention they are now receiving.

"We're dealing with girls who don't have intimate contact. As a consequence of their behaviour the physical contact from a male makes them feel good."

“What’s the big deal? It’s great fun. I’m getting a lot out of it”. They don’t see it as being abusive”

“They possibly feel that the relationship they’ve got is love and it might be the only love they’ve ever had in their lives”

Fears

Workers have identified other reasons they believe young people withhold information.

- Loss of supply of drugs or alcohol
- Loss of ‘boyfriend’/love and attention
- Fear of retribution from other young people involved
- Fear of domestic violence from the ‘boyfriend’
- Shame – everybody finding out what’s been going on
- Letting people down, including workers.
- For young men, fear of being labelled gay
- Not being believed
- Fear of being moved; threats of secure, separation from family
- Unable to control the reporting process – many other people involved, case discussions/conferences police interviews, court, etc.

Staff Understanding

Young people choose to disclose information to those they have a positive, trusting relationship with, and who they believe have a good understanding of the issue and won’t judge them. Many are looking for workers to take action on the information given and choose in confidence what workers will support them through this process.

The importance of staff having a good understanding and awareness of the issues when supporting young people at the point of disclosure was recognised. Some also had strong views on the need for greater openness, and to raise the profile of the issue in a proactive manner. The importance of creating an environment where the issue of sexual exploitation could be discussed not just when concerns had been raised but also as a means of ongoing education and information for young people.

“What I had said about young men’s involvement [in exploitation] made them comfortable in coming forward”

“If young people are aware that staff understand them and what’s going on then they are more likely to disclose stuff, and that’s what we’re looking for – young people to disclose stuff”

One supported accommodation unit’s lack of understanding and awareness affected their ability to identify and support young female residents who were being sexually exploited.

“We just deal with things as they come along...this isn’t really something we’re used to...we saw the girls go downhill but didn’t piece it together”

Some staff expressed concern that they and others may refrain from initiating conversation for fear of opening a 'can of worms' that they were unable to follow up on.

"It might push her even more under. It might cause her to disappear altogether. So it might jeopardise the whole lot"

"If staff are not able to say the words ... then how is the young person ever going to get the idea, the message that it is OK to talk about this?"

"In general, I don't know if it's their awareness or knowledge...it must be more about having the confidence around the issue"

"I'm sure some of it's been missed because people aren't thinking broadly enough about the exploitative nature of relationships"

Processes & Procedures

Issues regarding the processes and procedures that followed informal and formal disclosure were a recurring theme. Issues raised included -

- Staff only able to support young people to a point, thereafter the process is taken outwith workers' and young persons' control
- Need to inform and advise young people of the procedures which follows disclosure – this had positive and negative responses
 - Some young people chose not to disclose further as the prospect felt too traumatic
 - Other young people felt assured and supported during processes.
- Residential workers saw a need to be able to participate in formal disclosure interviews. Area Team Social Workers or the Police often controlled this.
- Residential staff often felt disempowered by formal Police and Social Work reporting procedures
- Need to adopt child friendly procedures. Young people dealing with adult issues and processes.
- The impact on staff of supporting young people through such processes and procedures.

"Staff have experience of going through the whole process with a young person. The trauma of being abused, but also the trauma that follows, with the procurator fiscal and with lawyers"

"A lot of the time we're talking about children, 12 and 13 years, who need a lot more support than even somebody at 15"

"Help me! Five minutes ago you were sitting here supporting me" ...somebody else comes in and they're firing all these questions, very matter of fact"

"You feel as though you've let that young person down, although you've followed procedures"

“It’s difficult for staff. A young person may pick someone who isn’t experienced in it; if that’s the best relationship they have. The job of the staff team is to ensure that the staff member is also getting support”

“Have to be clear about the process, and the support has to be there...and to be clear that in some circumstances the police might not be able to do anything”

Recommendation:

- Police to review statement-taking procedures, include support from keyworking staff.
- Area Team Social work staff need to include Residential /Key work staff in process
- Ensuring support mechanisms are in place for staff that are supporting young people.

Recording & Sharing Information

Internally

Agencies generally have good communication within their own teams with regard to sharing concrete information. Each had recognisable and accessible protocols for dealing with the disclosure of exploitation situations. The protocols consisted of verbal communication between colleagues, staff teams, management as well as internal recording systems.

There was disparity when it came to recording the ‘soft’ information, such as car registration details, names of suspected abusers, etc. Only a few had internal recording systems specifically for such information. Others had diaries or handover books where information was less accessible.

There were also clearly internal communication difficulties

- Two staff sharing the same office space only became aware of links between ongoing exploitation cases by accident. This occurred when a young person’s name was mentioned in informal discussion.
- A residential school with several units doesn’t have a central base to share or record information
- A worker hearing information regarding a young person involved in exploitation for the first time from a colleague, during a focus group that took place during this research!
- A manager not having access to information regarding a police investigation case involving the exploitation of several young people within their unit

“A team needs a trigger, for someone to say one wee thing and then build on it”

The Barnardo’s Street Team and the Young Women’s Project found they were able to identify patterns and indicators of organised networking because of their

opportunity to engage with young people from several accommodation units, within and outwith Glasgow. This variety of contact helps to build a bigger picture.

“We do find it’s the same names that come up”

“For us working with young people from different units brings all that information together.”

Recommendation:

- Develop clearly defined and accessible protocols to enable effective internal communication within units but also with area team social work staff.

Externally

Again there was inconsistency regarding the sharing of information with other agencies and/or departments, namely with the ‘soft’ intelligence. Staff felt unclear how far to proceed with information that has not been confirmed.

- Two residential units passed anecdotal information to their local Family Protection Unit
- Those who had access would share this information with their local Community Safety Officers
- Others would share information with The Barnardo’s Street Team (BST)
- At senior levels some managers were able to share information at other forums, such as Child Protection Committee, Police & Social Work Department (SWD) Liaison meetings.

Staff at a local level often shared information where they thought that it would be most effectively used. Sometimes this would be with BST, particularly if the young person was a frequent absconder and they considered this information might be helpful in engaging with the young person if met in Glasgow city centre. Other times it was to corroborate a piece of information as something they should be concerned about. Sharing anecdotal information with the Social Work Departments was very much dependent on whether or not the young person was allocated a social worker.

“If I had a phone number of someone who constantly looked at these trends, that would be quite useful!”

It was suggested that all anecdotal information received by the above agencies should eventually arrive at the Child Protection Unit, Pitt Street, where it would be fed into the Scottish Intelligence Database. However in practice participants found that some information failed to reach the CPU and remained within local police offices. It is unclear if formal protocols exist between local police offices and the CPU with regard to the sharing of anecdotal information concerned with the targeting, grooming and sexual exploitation of young people.

Good Practice:

Barnardo's Street Team (BST) operates an internal recording system for young people who abscond and young people considered to be at risk in the city centre, but with no pattern of absconding. Referrals are received primarily from SWD, residential units, and the police. The team monitors sightings of these young people and look for opportunities to engage, and support them to return.

A similar multi-agency protocol between BST / Strathclyde Police /Glasgow City Council SWD has been in pilot since June 2003. Subject to agreement following an evaluation of its effectiveness, this will be implemented in June 2004 for all young people who go missing and/or are aged 16 and 17 and are living in unstable accommodation and are believed to be in Glasgow city centre.

Agency Responses to Information Shared

All residential staff raised frustration with Police and the Social Work Department's response to information –

Police -

- Different agendas; lose interest if no concrete evidence to support a crime, governed by role of enforcement
- Response dependent on individuals rather than organisational approaches
- Poor understanding by some police officers of sexual exploitation of young people –

"Young people not getting heard by police, they're minimising what's happened to them...they put themselves in that position and consented to sex.' She's 13."

- 16/17 year old seen as capable of giving consent

"Once they are over 16 they are seen as an adult although in our eyes they are still under a supervision order so they are treated as a child in care"

- Lack of feedback – not accountable
- Punitive attitude to young people
- Failures to recognise workers assessment and role in gathering information
- Cases of clear and investigated exploitation had resulted in no charges being brought

"I think about that house...we know that at least 6 or 7 girls have been involved over a spate of 2 years and still it's going on."

Senior level social work staff did not share this view. All staff did acknowledge implications for the police around staff shortages, limitations of role and the need to ensure clear lines of investigation and evidence. They looked for a softer, less clinical approach when dealing with young people and recognised the effectiveness of Community Safety Officers being attached to residential units. Staff saw benefits in having named officers and a direct and clear route to pass information. All,

including the police, praised the significant improvement, in recent years, of joint and shared working by the police.

Social Work –

- Poor understanding of issues with some

“A senior social worker talked about ‘she’s addicted to sex, especially the rough stuff”

- Differing expectations of the role of social work
 - Non statutory agencies felt excluded
 - Failure by statutory agencies to recognise the shared responsibility of all agencies to promote the protection and safeguarding of young people against abuse and exploitation
 - Statutory agencies failure to enable non-statutory agencies opportunity to be part of the solution
 - Residential workers saw social work area teams’ role to provide solutions to problems
- Staff shortages within area teams
 - Pressure of prioritising cases
 - Some young people left unallocated
- No shared protocol with local authorities outwith Glasgow

Vulnerable Young Persons Procedures were recognised as benefiting the sharing and corroboration of information and enabling a multi-agency response. There were some questions raised of the benefits of such meetings for young people –

- Disempowering
- Terminology used by workers unfamiliar to young people
- Evidence of young people not understanding status or role of meeting
- Frequently seen as punitive
- Some attended by excessive numbers of workers, in some cases unknown to the young person
- Decisions sometimes made prior to meeting, therefore less likely to consider other creative solutions.
- Sometimes young person was not invited (even if not missing at the time)

Health & Education –

There has been evidence of difficulties with frontline health professionals presenting with differing views of exploitation and consent. One particular situation presented itself when social work staff were involved in the setting up of a local youth health service.

“We were quite taken aback by the views of health professionals around their perception that it was ok for older men to be having sex with younger girls”

The social work team involved resolved this issue with training to the frontline health professionals. The health managers who facilitated this training did not share the same views as the frontline staff.

There appears to be an ongoing issue of health professionals withholding information on account of Confidentiality Policies.

“A young girl, 13 or 14, said she was having consensual sex with an adult male ...to pass that on would be breaching the confidential nature of the service”

Very little was raised regarding education professionals. Explanations on this were that some young people are not attending school; therefore there is no information to be shared whilst others felt that education professionals were least likely to contribute positively to any discussion around young people who may also be presenting behavioural difficulties.

Voluntary sector agencies –

One voluntary sector supported accommodation unit caused concern to the researcher due to their lack of understanding and awareness and their failure to recognise a need to address this.

Little else was raised regarding voluntary sector agencies. When probed, participants were very positive about BST. However the researcher would suggest this was not necessarily an accurate reflection, being that the interviewer was a representative of this voluntary sector agency.

Confidentiality Policies and The Data Protection Act 1998

There was evidence across the board of insufficient understanding of the ethos behind internal Confidentiality Policies and of the Data Protection Act. This lack of understanding brought about inappropriate uses, inhibited sharing of information, and projected some agencies as being exclusive.

During a focus group a worker discussed practice, which highlighted a lack of understanding of young peoples’ rights, the details of which I will refrain from giving on the basis that doing so would identify the worker involved.

“I think there needs to be clear guidelines because I think people have a natural instinct of not wanting to breach peoples’ confidentiality, which is good practice, but there needs to be clear guidelines on when things can be shared because of child protection issues and with what agencies”

Recommendations:

- Guidance required on Confidentiality Policies and implementation of Data Protection Act
- Training on young people’ rights.
- Awareness and information on what agencies we share information with and why.

Prevention & Education

Staff are making considerable efforts to minimise risk of sexual exploitation of young people –

- Cognitive skills programmes
- Groupwork in residential school facilitated by external specialist staff
- Creating safe environments for young people to raise issues
- Availability of counsellors and psychologists in larger units on site
- Introduction of Community Safety Officers – breaking down barriers with young people
- Dedicated staff that interviews all abscondee when they return to the unit.

“If you take away the absconding, then you take away a lot of the risk...the cognitive skills have helped and our absconding rate has come down”

Good practice:

Kerelaw School identified that when young people on leave from the unit were returning at the same time they often meet up at Glasgow Central Station, usually with the intention of catching the last train back. However this resulted in some encouraging others to abscond. Staff found that by staggering curfew times for the young people fewer of them absconded.

But some staff felt that there were other factors that were inhibiting these efforts –

- Large residential units are thought to enable the procurement of young people by other young people
- Need for family support
- Need to change public view of child sexual exploitation
- Limited resources available to young men who are being sexually exploited.
- Services not available at point of need

“We almost always get better outcomes with young people outwith group living/residential units. The influence to participate in activities is not there”

Recommendations:

- Service developments for young men
- Provision of more foster/community carers.
- Recognition and use of foster/community carers’ projects set up by voluntary sector agencies.

Staff training / support needs

All agencies interviewed recognised a need for ongoing staff training
Specific areas identified included -

- Lack of knowledge of support services available to young people
- Training on Glasgow City Council Vulnerability Procedures
- Opportunities to discuss shared experiences, fears and frustrations

“We’ve never done actual training...we’ve given out information, not actually sitting down with workers and talking through practice issues”

Recommendation:

- Joint training available to statutory and voluntary sector on Vulnerability Procedures
- Collating and disseminating of information on services available to young people, and staff.

Conclusion

It is evident that there is a need to address the problem of adult males targeting and exploiting young vulnerable people.

This needs to be approached from several angles as highlighted by participants. Those who participated in this research are generally very aware of the risk to young people and the difficulties faced by professionals in supporting them.

Staff enthusiastically supported this research and the need to take the issues contained within it forward. This research will initially be presented to Glasgow’s Child Protection Committee for consideration of the information contained within and the recommendation of those staff who participated.

Whilst participants have been forthcoming with their knowledge and views it is clear that young people are those who hold the most information of their experiences. It is hoped that Barnardo’s will support further research involving young people in sharing their views and experiences of being involved in the targeting, grooming and sexual exploitation process.

Key issues that came out of this research include:

- Agencies understanding of the Grooming process
- Police recording/Investigative Procedures with regard to children and young people
- Young people as conduits
- Impact of new technology and the need for staff to receive training in the impact of this

- Importance of dedicated staff to work alongside residential staff in residential schools and units to develop relationships with young people who abscond
- Importance of ongoing education and awareness raising of sexual exploitation as risk behaviour.

Finally, the impact of new technology and how the internet in particular can act as an instrument of abuse needs to be grasped by all urgently to prevent the opportunities to abuse children and young people extending even further.

