

# Safe Choices: Responding to the changing nature of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland

**No.16** Policy and  
practice briefing

**Believe in  
children**



**Barnardo's**  
Northern Ireland

October 2013

By Mary Anne Webb and  
Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin

**'Since I started to work  
with Safe Choices, I have  
become more confident...  
I understand what  
happened with my abuser  
and why it happened.'**

(Young person, Safe Choices)





## Introduction

The sexual exploitation of children is child abuse and as such should be recognised as a mainstream child protection issue for all children under the age of 18. This form of abuse can have a devastating and enduring impact on children's lives, leading to low self-esteem, substance misuse, self harming, mental ill-health and offending behaviour.

Through our Safe Choices service, Barnardo's NI has been providing support to sexually exploited children in Northern Ireland (NI) since 2001. We recently published a two-year piece of exploratory research *Not a world away*, which indicates that sexual exploitation exists in NI and what we are aware of is only 'the tip of the iceberg' (Beckett, 2011). The research found that both looked after children and those in the general youth population were at risk.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is an umbrella term covering a range of different possible scenarios in which children or young people are 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. Fear of what might happen if they do not comply can be a significant influencing factor. Exploitation can also occur without physical contact, for example, when children are groomed to post sexual images of themselves online.

## About this briefing

There has been increasing public awareness about CSE, mainly

as a result of media publicity surrounding several high profile court cases in England.<sup>1</sup> In Northern Ireland the police have recently launched a major CSE investigation involving a number of young alleged victims and multiple perpetrators.<sup>2</sup> An independent, expert-led Inquiry into CSE in NI is also being set up by the Health Minister and the Minister for Justice.

Although by its very nature sexual exploitation can be difficult to detect, a growing body of evidence has given some indication of the extent of CSE, the different forms it takes and its impact on victims (Home Affairs Committee (HAC), 2013; Berelowitz et al, 2012; Beckett, 2011; Jago et al 2011; Pearce, 2009). It shows that children are being sexually exploited in various contexts, for example, by lone perpetrators, groups or gangs.

This developing evidence base and increased awareness of CSE has led to some progress in better preventing exploitation and protecting children. There have been important changes to policy and guidance across the UK,<sup>3</sup> however it is also recognised that systemic failures by statutory agencies to effectively respond to and protect children from sexual exploitation requires urgent action (HAC, 2013; Berelowitz et al, 2012).

In Northern Ireland the issue of CSE has been prioritised within the three-year strategic plan of the Safeguarding Board for NI (SBNI, 2013), suggesting that an important conceptual shift is underway in recognising older children need protecting from abuse outside the home. Under these new safeguarding structures a multi-agency approach is beginning to emerge

and a sexual exploitation risk assessment tool has been regionally implemented.<sup>4</sup>

Barnardo's NI welcomes the progress made to date; we remain committed to working in partnership with all statutory, voluntary and community agencies to achieve the strategic framework required for a more effective response to CSE in Northern Ireland. To continue informing and supporting the development of CSE policy and practice here, this paper outlines some priority action areas. It also discusses some emerging trends we are identifying in our direct work with children and young people who are, or are at risk of, being sexually exploited. The work of Barnardo's NI Safe Choices service is highlighted throughout as a model of good practice.

## Priority issues

### Data recording

Barnardo's NI research on CSE, *Not a world away*, provided important evidence for the first time about the nature and extent of the issue in NI; however there are no definitive figures on the prevalence of CSE here, for a number of reasons:

- practitioners often do not identify it/there are inconsistencies around the collection and recording of data
- young people do not always recognise it as abuse
- it is not identified as a specific crime in sexual offences data/national criminal statistics
- it is not a recognised category of abuse in standard child protection procedures.

A recent Home Affairs Committee CSE Inquiry welcomed attempts being made in England to

1 Mainly involving adult males of British Pakistani origin and White British female victims. See examples at [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9347305/Rochdale-grooming-trial-how-the-case-unfolded.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9347305/Rochdale-grooming-trial-how-the-case-unfolded.html) (21 June 2012) and [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-23079649](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-23079649) (27 June 2013).  
2 *BBC Newsline* 'Thirty arrests made in child sex abuse investigation' (16 September 2013) and *UTV Live News* 'Sex abuse investigation could be huge' (14 September 2013).  
3 For example, in England a national action plan for tackling CSE was published in 2011 (DfE, 2011), followed by a progress report a year later (DfE, 2012); The Public Petitions Committee is currently holding an Inquiry examining the nature and extent of CSE in Scotland; In Wales statutory safeguarding guidance is in place to protect children from sexual exploitation (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011).  
4 Following a recommendation made in the Barnardo's NI research (Beckett, 2011).

improve police IT systems to flag crimes associated with CSE (HAC, 2013). As well as helping map the scale and extent of CSE nationally the information can be used to improve conviction rates. The Committee recommends all police forces ensure that their IT systems are able to identify all CSE-related incidents and whether multiple perpetrators have been involved. It also highlights data sharing through a co-location of services, known as a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), as a model of best practice for agencies coming into contact with sexually exploited children.

### **Prosecution**

An apparent failure to hold abusers to account was one of the most frequently identified sources of frustration within the Barnardo's NI research (Beckett, 2011). As CSE is not recorded as a specific offence, but covers a range of different forms of serious criminal conduct and a number of individual offences, the prosecution rate in NI is unclear. In our experience of working with sexually exploited children in NI since 2001 there have been very few successful prosecutions for CSE-related offences, reflecting the generally low levels of prosecution across the UK. This is despite the introduction of various new offences that recognise the grooming, coercion and control of children via the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008; and a range of promising practice being progressed in the criminal justice system here (Beckett, 2011).

The Home Affairs Committee CSE Inquiry in England expressed concern that changes to the criminal justice system were not translating quickly enough into actual prosecutions. To

tackle this, recommendations made by the Committee include the priority implementation of plans put forward by the Director of Public Prosecutions and Association of Chief Police Officers to overhaul the way the criminal justice system approaches child sex abuse<sup>5</sup> (HAC, 2013).

### **Looked after children (LAC)**

Evidence suggests that a disproportionate number of children living in residential care are at risk of sexual exploitation compared to the total number of children in care (Berelowitz et al, 2012; All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), 2012; Beckett, 2011). Among the LAC population in NI almost one in five was assessed to be at significant risk of sexual exploitation; and sexual exploitation was identified as an issue of concern for almost two-thirds of young females in residential care.<sup>6</sup> Echoing the findings that children in care homes are at particular risk, both the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) Inquiry into CSE in England (Berelowitz et al, 2012) and a parliamentary report on children who go missing from care (APPG, 2012) have recommended the Government undertake an independent examination of residential care provision.<sup>7</sup>

### **Missing and runaway children**

All the recent available evidence shows that the issue of missing (Berelowitz et al, 2012; Beckett, 2011) and runaway children (Smeaton, 2013) is inextricably linked to CSE. Children had gone missing from home or from care as a result of sexual exploitation in 58 per cent of calls for evidence submissions to the OCC Inquiry into CSE in England (Berelowitz et al, 2012). Going missing in NI was also frequently noted to

propel young people towards individuals who would harbour them, provide them with alcohol and/or drugs and subsequently exploit them (Beckett, 2011). Recent media reporting about potential CSE in NI suggests that police discovered the alleged abuse as they began to look back at cases of children going missing from care.<sup>8</sup>

To provide an effective safety net for this vulnerable group, appropriate risk monitoring and other arrangements for collecting and sharing data on runaway children and those who go missing from care are essential.<sup>9</sup> A parliamentary report from the joint Inquiry into children who go missing from care in England provides some helpful recommendations focused on removing bureaucratic barriers, and developing a best practice, multi-agency approach to sharing information and supporting and protecting children who are at risk (APPG, 2012).

### **Professional awareness and understanding**

The Barnardo's NI research highlighted a lack of awareness and understanding about CSE as a particular area requiring redress among professionals (Beckett, 2011). Despite some of the reasons being clearly outlined in recent serious case reviews,<sup>10</sup> a lack of understanding remains among some professionals working with sexually exploited children in NI about why they maintain links with abusers, and their capacity to consent to sexual activity. This is often reflected in language used when talking about young people, and also directly to them, which suggests they are somehow complicit in their own abuse.

<sup>5</sup> Includes the scrapping of all existing policy in place of one overarching and agreed approach to investigation and prosecution of sexual offences to be applicable in all police forces; and new guidance from the CPS to ensure consistent best practice.

<sup>6</sup> Figures based on a sample equating to two-thirds of the overall LAC population, aged 12-17 years (Beckett, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Including profile of children, location and type of homes, recruitment, qualification and training of staff.

<sup>8</sup> *BBC Newsline* and *UTV Live*, see Note 2.

<sup>9</sup> Following a proposed Private Member's Bill tabled in the NI Assembly in 2010, a Strategic Action Plan on Children Missing from Home or Care was produced by the HSC Board in August 2010. The Board has advised this was updated in January 2011 and that a data collection process to monitor children going missing has been introduced, with other key commitments in the plan incorporated into the Board's core business.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board, *Review of multi-agency responses to the sexual exploitation of children*, September 2012.



Recent reports in England have also highlighted the misuse of language as a problem (Berlowitz et al, 2012; Education Committee, 2012), citing instances of frontline staff referring to young people as 'promiscuous'<sup>11</sup> and 'prostituting herself', 'sexually available' or 'asking for it'.<sup>12</sup> The Home Affairs Committee CSE Inquiry strongly recommends that:

'Assumptions about 'consent' must be challenged – it should be the fundamental, working assumption of all frontline staff working with children and young people that sexual relations between an adult and a child under the legal age of consent are non-consensual, unlawful and wrong.' (HAC, 2013, p14)

Barnardo's NI Safe Choices is working to improve professional awareness and understanding through a range of activities<sup>13</sup> which are also aimed at tackling inconsistencies in identification and risk assessment. In the form of workshops, one-day conferences and web-based resources these activities all promote greater inter-disciplinary working and aim to increase service-user engagement. The SBNI has also

led a multi-agency approach in the development of information leaflets which will help equip parents and professionals to spot the signs and keep young people safe.<sup>14</sup> These are all positive initiatives; however greater, sustainable investment in professional competency and capacity building across all agencies working within the area of CSE is required.

## Emerging trends

### Use of technology

Digital and online technology is central in the lives of children and young people today and can have a positive impact on social interaction and learning potential. Unfortunately people who want to sexually exploit children are also using the Internet and other technology for grooming and to organise and maintain direct exploitation<sup>15</sup> (Berelowitz et al, 2012; Barnardo's, 2011). Websites which are popular with young people tend to have a low parental presence (Kernaghan and Elwood, 2013), a key factor for potential abusers. Perpetrators are also increasingly sophisticated and more able to hide their identity online and avoid detection. Sexual

exploitation using technology typically includes:

- using social networking sites, chat rooms and Internet-connected gaming devices to make contact with children
- filming sexual abuse, including rape, and threatening to post images online
- harassment and bullying by text messaging/sexting<sup>16</sup>
- buying mobile phones for young people and then sharing their numbers among groups of men.

This trend has become more evident in Barnardo's NI Safe Choices service where mobile phones and social networking sites are regularly being used as mechanisms to make contact with, groom and threaten young people. This is mainly perpetrated by older adults but some young people have also experienced sexual exploitation by their peers in school, with technology playing a key role.<sup>17</sup>

### 'Beth'

Beth was 13 when she struck up an online friendship with John in a chat room for 13 to 18-year-olds. John said he was aged 15; although it later emerged he was in his 20s and had lied about his age. At this time in her life Beth had low self-esteem and was very depressed, feeling unwanted, ugly and alone. John gave Beth the attention she craved and over time she became very emotionally attached to him.

After a while John began to talk to Beth about 'gently touching' her. He progressed to sending obscene text picture messages, encouraging Beth to send

11 House of Commons Education Committee, *Children first: the child protection system in England*, para 92, cited in HAC (2013) p12.

12 Office of the Children's Commissioner, Interim report, p47 cited in HAC (2013) p12.

13 In partnership with a number of agencies through the Knowledge Transfer Scheme (Public Health Agency); research evidence from *Not a world away* is also shared and implications for policy and practice explored.

14 Information for children has also been put together by young people to help raise their awareness of what grooming and exploitation can look like.

15 'Offenders may target hundreds of children at a time... and once initial contact is made this can escalate into threats and intimidation. The online abuse can be an end in itself without any contact offences taking place, although in some cases contact offences may then occur' (CPS, 2013, p5).

16 The 'exchange of sexual messages or images' and 'creating, sharing and forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images'. NSPCC (2012) *A qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting'*. NSPCC, London.

17 The OCC Inquiry found that some professionals describe this type of peer exploitation as 'sexual bullying', sometimes blaming the victim for being promiscuous and therefore responsible for the exploitation (Berelowitz et al, 2012).



back graphic, sexualised images of herself. She wasn't comfortable with this but trusted John because he said that he was in love with her and that she was beautiful. Things changed quickly and Beth became frightened when John put increasing pressure on her to send more photos, threatening to tell her parents if she didn't do what he said. Beth felt she had no choice and lived in terror for a year before the abuse ended. With the help of Barnardo's NI Safe Choices she is slowly recovering and hoping to do well in her exams.

### General youth population

While a disproportionate number are living in residential care, evidence suggests the majority of sexually exploited children are living outside the care system (Berelowitz et al, 2012). It has been reported that, as well as children with pre-existing vulnerabilities, children from loving and secure homes can also be sexually exploited, with those for whom there are no protective measures in place at greatest risk (HAC, 2013; Berelowitz et al, 2012). Barnardo's NI Safe Choices service is working with growing numbers of young people with no obvious vulnerability factors. They are young people living at home, often performing well at school, but who have been victims of online grooming and other forms of CSE.

A survey of the general youth population conducted as part of the Barnardo's NI research (Beckett, 2011)<sup>18</sup> found concerning evidence of grooming and other forms of sexual exploitation. This included that one in nine had experienced grooming by an adult; and one in 15 had been given drugs/ alcohol and been taken advantage

of sexually while under their influence; and one in 20 had been offered something in return for sexual activity.

### Internal trafficking

The term internal trafficking<sup>19</sup> refers to the organised movement of local children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It usually involves a group of abusers targeting vulnerable children, including, but not confined to, those who are looked after. This type of abuse can include situations such as:

'The group typically makes initial contact with victims in a public place such as a park, cinema, on the street or at a friend's house. The children are offered gifts and treats – takeaway food, sweets, cigarettes, alcohol or drugs – in exchange for sex, sometimes with dozens of men on the same occasion. There will often be occasions where they are missing from home although such times may be less than 24 hours. The children sometimes identify one offender as a "boyfriend", and might regard the sexual abuse by multiple offenders as "normal".' (HAC, 2013, p5)

This model of CSE has been the main focus of considerable media coverage and subsequent serious case reviews in England about sexual exploitation. Although there have been comparatively few prosecutions, internal trafficking is increasingly visible in Barnardo's CSE practice across the UK (Barnardo's, 2011), including the Safe Choices service in NI. Significantly, in conjunction with the Police Service for NI (PSNI) and health and social services, in 2011 Safe Choices NI identified seven cases of local young people who met the criteria for being internally trafficked. Following referral to the UK Human Trafficking

Centre (UKHTC) using the National Referral Mechanism, all were positively identified by the UKHTC as being victims of trafficking, although there have since been no successful prosecutions. The recent media reporting into potential CSE in NI suggests some of the abuse under investigation bears the hallmarks of 'internal' child trafficking.<sup>20</sup>

'They arranged for a car to pick them up and take them to a house and within an hour of them disappearing they were being plied with alcohol and cocaine and plans were being made to book hotel rooms and move them up there.' (PSNI in Beckett, 2011, p56)

### 'Cassie'

Cassie (14) had a difficult time growing up; both her parents misused alcohol and have mental health problems. As a result she spent time in and out of the care system, most recently living in a residential children's home. Over six months she began regularly going missing from the home, gradually for longer periods of time. Staff from the home always attempted to follow her and contacted the police on each occasion to notify them. Cassie usually returned back to the home in a dishevelled and disorientated state; she also had unexplained sums of money and new mobile phones. Considered to be at significant risk of sexual exploitation, Cassie was eventually referred to Barnardo's NI Safe Choices service. With support she finally disclosed how she had been contacted via text messages or calls by different men who would arrange to

<sup>18</sup> The research included a series of questions in the 2010 Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey distributed to all young people in NI who turned 16 in February or March 2010 and yielded 786 responses (a 21 per cent response rate).

<sup>19</sup> Sometimes described as localised grooming, for example, in the Home Affairs Committee Inquiry (HAC, 2013). It is also important to recognise that child trafficking presents as two distinct forms: children trafficked into NI from abroad, and those who are 'internally' trafficked.

<sup>20</sup> *Mid-Ulster Mail* PSNI warning on child trafficking, 16 September 2013.

pick her up in a car close to the children's home. From there she would be taken to parties in various houses or flats where she would be sexually abused by numerous older men. Cassie is struggling emotionally to cope with what has happened to her and will require therapeutic support for some time.



### Boys and young men

Barnardo's NI Safe Choices works predominantly with young women and girls, however we also deliver services to young males. While the majority of victims of sexual exploitation identified in research and in high profile criminal cases are young females, boys and young men can also be targeted in a variety of ways. The OCC Inquiry for example identified the use of young adolescent boys to groom and sexually exploit girls and young women, before passing them on to older men (Berelowitz et al, 2012). Significantly, it also reported that when services actively went looking for boys and young men who are victims they found them. A number of interviewees in the Barnardo's NI research (Beckett, 2011) shared knowledge of male exploitation that had never been

formally reported by the young men affected.

Boys and young men who are gay have been reported at risk; for example, it can be difficult for them to meet potential partners so they are more likely to use the Internet to meet others, which can render them susceptible to sexual exploitation (Smeaton, 2013). It has also been suggested there is an acceptance by some professionals of older men having sex with underage males, who view this as males exploring their sexuality rather than young people being sexually exploited (Smeaton, 2013). Professionals generally have very little understanding of the sexual exploitation of boys and young men (Kirtley, 2013), and in our experience, knowledge about its nature and extent in Northern Ireland is very limited.

### 'Marcus'

Growing up, Marcus (15) had a troubled and chaotic childhood. He witnessed severe domestic abuse at home from a very young age and social services were involved with the family on a regular basis. Following his parents separation his mother 'Alicia' had a number of partners, some of whom were also violent towards her. Social workers became concerned that Marcus may have been sexually abused by at least one of Alicia's partners, although no charges were ever brought and he remained in his mother's care.

When he was aged 14, Alicia expressed concerns about Marcus being in the company of much older men within the local community. He began to be very angry at home, which was out of character, and was sometimes violent towards

Alicia and his siblings. He also became secretive and regularly returned home with money, cigarettes and other items, which it later transpired were 'payment' to engage in sexual activity with many men who were sexually exploiting him. Marcus was referred to Barnardo's NI Safe Choices for specialist therapeutic support and has made good progress.

### Multiple adversities

Research shows there is a strong, graded relationship between the number of childhood adversities experienced and a wide range of negative outcomes in adulthood.<sup>21</sup> The 'toxic trio' of parental substance misuse, mental ill-health and domestic violence are common multiple adversities presenting in the backgrounds of sexually exploited young people Barnardo's NI works with in our Safe Choices service. Many have also experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse as children. The presence of childhood multiple adversities like these is also strongly evidenced in the recent OCC CSE Inquiry in England (Berelowitz et al, 2012). It found that living in a chaotic household or having previous experience of abuse within the family makes children more vulnerable to CSE.

## Responding to need and supporting young people – what works?

### Barnardo's NI Safe Choices

Barnardo's NI Safe Choices (formerly 'Beyond the Shadows') has been in operation in Northern Ireland since 2001, becoming fully operational in 2005. It currently provides a direct therapeutic service to children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation, at risk of it and/or going missing from home

<sup>21</sup> Felitti et al (1998) and Dube et al (2003) in Davidson, G; Bunting, L; Webb, M (2012) *Families experiencing multiple adversities: A review of the international literature*. Barnardo's NI, Belfast.



or care.<sup>22</sup> Increased voluntary funding from Barnardo's NI and additional funding from the HSC Board is enabling Safe Choices to increase its staffing capacity and help reduce the waiting list for our services.

The service also provides consultations to other practitioners and delivers training to various audiences across NI. This includes police, education, health and social services, carers, voluntary and community sectors; and multi-agency training. The service also leads the way in the design and delivery of innovative and collaborative solutions to the issue of CSE in Northern Ireland, most recently through a model of co-located working in partnership with the PSNI.

An evaluation of Safe Choices by the Queen's University of Belfast found the service to be effective in supporting young people and children who go missing from care and in its training programmes for professionals (Devaney, 2011).

### **Co-located response – Safe Choices NI/Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Pilot Service**

Funded by Barnardo's NI and PSNI Assets Recovery, Safe Choices co-located a worker in the Public Protection Unit (PPU) at Belfast's Willowfield Police Station in June 2012 to work with children going missing from home. The Safe Choices worker, alongside the police, identifies what led to the young person going missing, in order to help prevent them being sexually exploited and/or entering care. The worker's remit was expanded after 10 months in post to include victims of

internet grooming and some young people going missing from children's homes within that police district.

The University of Bedfordshire has been commissioned by Barnardo's NI to evaluate the project's impact on the effective safeguarding of young people, and identify relevant learning for the future development of similar initiatives in other geographical areas.

Due to report by May 2014 the evaluation will assess the project's contribution across a number of key areas, including monitoring of missing patterns; increased awareness amongst professionals and young people; reduction in missing episodes; and a more coherent inter-agency response to the issues of missing and CSE.

### **Collaborative, multi-agency working**

Victims of CSE can be identified by a range of different agencies; evidence suggests that on the few occasions where agencies such as the police, social services and the voluntary sector have worked proactively together, offenders were held to account and victims identified and supported (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, 2011). The recent Home Affairs Committee CSE Inquiry highlighted the vital role played by the voluntary sector. It recommended that 'where voluntary organisations are effectively supporting official agencies in tackling CSE, resources are made available to continue the partnership.' (HAC, 2013, p51)

A collaborative, multi-agency approach is vital to achieve the strategic framework required in NI to ensure a more effective response to sexual exploitation

(Beckett, 2011). This approach must proactively address the prevention of sexual exploitation, the protection of sexually exploited young people and the prosecution of abusers.

### **Health and education**

Health and education settings have a particularly important role in identifying children at risk of sexual exploitation, and in providing opportunities to raise awareness.

■ **Education:** In schools, teachers are well placed to notice changes in a child's behaviour and raise concerns at an early stage. Dedicated support is required for staff members so they can identify the signs of sexual exploitation, while awareness-raising among pupils is also required (HAC, 2013). Barnardo's NI Safe Choices service is experiencing increased demand from schools to deliver awareness-raising sessions with pupils and teaching staff separately. Limited resources are currently impacting on our capacity to deliver this critical preventative work.

■ **Health:** Within the health community, sexual health services have been identified as having a significant role in recognising CSE (Kirtley, 2013). Barnardo's NI Safe Choices is currently delivering group work in partnership with a sexual health nurse in one Health and Social Care Trust area, but would hope to expand this across all Trusts in future. Given the importance of sexually transmitted diseases as a marker for CSE, it has been recommended that sexual health services consider how information might be shared in order to better identify children at risk (HAC, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Since it became operational the service has worked individually with 232 children/young people and with over 100 more on a group work basis. The youngest was aged 10, and the average ages are between 12 and 16 years.

'Children have only one chance at childhood. For too long, victims of child sexual exploitation have been deprived of that childhood without society challenging their abusers. Such a situation must never happen again.' (HAC, 2013, p11)

## Next steps

Barnardo's NI would support developments in the following areas, which will require a collaborative, multi-agency approach:

- a sexual offences recording system which enables the police to record multiple perpetrators, and allows for a CSE flag.
- the incorporation of child sexual exploitation as a priority issue in NI policing plans.
- development of a national CSE action plan for Northern Ireland, which includes:
  - multi-agency working
  - data collection and monitoring
  - professional competency and capacity
  - best practice models.
- revisions being made to existing safeguarding and child protection guidance should include the complex nature and impact of sexual exploitation; supported by the development of detailed inter-agency procedural guidance for practitioners.
- regular review of current risk monitoring and other arrangements in NI for collecting and sharing data on runaway children and those who go missing from care.
- a preventative approach to sexual exploitation to raise awareness of the issue among children and young people, professionals and wider society. This should specifically include a public

health campaign on CSE; and awareness-raising across a range of education, youth and health settings, notably schools and sexual health services.

- progression of the SBNI's planned strategy to tackle safeguarding issues in relation to digital technology.
- investment in research to identify risk of sexual exploitation amongst boys and young men; and vulnerable young people experiencing multiple adversities.

## References

- Barnardo's (2011) *Puppet on a string*. Barnardo's, London.
- Beckett, H (2011) *Not a world away: The sexual exploitation of children and young people in Northern Ireland*. Barnardo's NI, Belfast.
- Berelowitz, S; Firmin, C; Edwards, G; Gulyurtlu, S (2012) *I thought I was the one. The only one in the world. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups*. Interim Report. Children's Commissioner in England, London.
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2011) *Executive Summary: Out of Mind, Out of Sight; Breaking down the barriers to understanding child sexual exploitation*. CEOP, London.
- Coy, M (2009) Moved around like bags of rubbish nobody wants: how multiple placement moves can make young women vulnerable to sexual exploitation. *Child Abuse Review*, 18(4), pp254-266.
- Crown Prosecution Service (2013) *Interim guidelines on prosecuting cases of child sexual abuse*. Director of Public Prosecutions, London.
- Department for Education (2011) *Tackling child sexual exploitation: National action plan*. Department for Education, London.
- Department for Education (2012) *Tackling child sexual exploitation: National action plan progress report*. Department for Education, London.
- Devaney, J (2011) *An evaluation of the Barnardo's Safe Choices service*. Queen's University, Belfast.
- Education Committee (2012) *Children first: the child protection system in England*. House of Commons, London.
- Home Affairs Committee (HAC) (2013) *Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming: Second report of session 2013-14*. House of Commons, London.
- Jago, S et al (2011) *What's going on to safeguard sexually exploited young people*. University of Bedfordshire. Available at [www.beds.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/121873/wgoreport2011-121011.pdf](http://www.beds.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/121873/wgoreport2011-121011.pdf)
- Kernaghan, D; Elwood, J (2013) All the (cyber) world's a stage: Framing cyberbullying as a performance. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 7(1), article 1. doi: 10.5817/CP2013-1-5
- Kirtley, P (2013) *Report of a grass roots survey of health professionals with regard to their experiences in dealing with child sexual exploitation*. National Working Group Network. Available at [www.cambslscb.org.uk/user\\_controlled\\_lcms\\_area/uploaded\\_files/Shine-a-LightHealth%20Professionals%20Survey%20Di%20Kirtley.pdf](http://www.cambslscb.org.uk/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Shine-a-LightHealth%20Professionals%20Survey%20Di%20Kirtley.pdf)
- Pearce, J (2009) *Young people and sexual exploitation: It isn't hidden, you just aren't looking*. Routledge Falmer, London.
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) (2013) *SBNI Strategic Plan 2013-2016*. SBNI, Belfast.
- Smeaton, E (2013) *Running from hate to what you think is love: The relationship between running away and child sexual exploitation*. Barnardo's, London.
- The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for runaway and missing children and adults and the APPG for looked after children and care leavers (2012) *Report from the joint Inquiry into children who go missing from care*. House of Commons, London.
- Welsh Assembly Government (2011) *Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation: Supplementary guidance to safeguarding children: Working together under the Children Act 2004*. Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff.

Believe in  
children



Barnardo's  
Northern Ireland

[www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

542-544 Upper Newtownards Road,  
Belfast BT4 3HE Tel 028 9067 2366

Barnardo's Registered Charity Nos.  
216250 and SC037605