

CSE Research: Short films for practice Research Briefing Note # 11



Multi-dimensional safety for children in care affected by sexual exploitation

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Text of the Film

“How do we protect young people in care who are in sexually exploitative relationships? We can try to disrupt the abuse by placing them out of the area – but those relationships are likely to be waiting for them when they return.

Our research suggests that safety has three dimensions. Firstly, physical - we need to make it as hard as possible for perpetrators to access young people, whether on the phone, or online, or in person. Secondly, safety is relational - we need to make it easier for young people to experience good, stable relationships that counteract the abuse and avoid the chronic instability that can actually increase the risk of sexual exploitation. And thirdly, it's psychological – we need to help young people find sources of self-identify outside of relationships that harm them.

Safety is more than physical protection, it's multi-dimensional.”

Research Summary

In recent years a series of research studies have identified that looked after children are disproportionately likely to be affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) (Beckett, 2011; CEOP, 2011; Jago *et al.*, 2011; OCC, 2012). Although some of these children will have come into care as a result of sexual exploitation, there have also been ongoing concerns about the capacity of the care system to effectively safeguard children from sexual exploitation. These concerns include: multiple placement breakdown as a risk factor for CSE; insufficient knowledge and awareness of CSE among carers and staff; the targeting of vulnerable children in residential care; and the use of out-of-borough placements to disrupt exploitation (summarised in Shuker, 2013a).

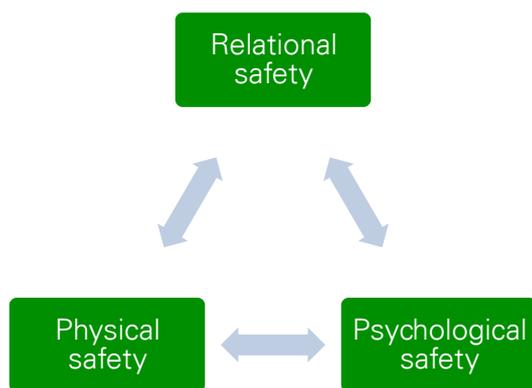
This film is based on the findings of a two-year evaluation (2011-2013) of a Barnardo's program of specialist foster care for children at risk or victims of child sexual exploitation and/or trafficking (Shuker, 2013b). Multiple sources of data were gathered as each of the 13 pilot placements progressed, including 87 one-to-one interviews, and 224 weekly monitoring logs.

The evaluation found that safety is multi-faceted. It takes time to progress from short-term physical safety to medium-term relational security (positive trusting relationships), and then

long-term recovery. Specialist foster carers helped to keep young people physically safe by employing a range of safety strategies as a result of the training they received, and ongoing support and advice from Barnardo's. These included applying boundaries consistently, removing or monitoring access to technology where this facilitated exploitation, and monitoring the young person's well-being and relationships.

Safeguarding mechanisms were often interpreted by young people as restrictive, and sometimes oppressive. It was possible for specialist foster carers to counter-balance this through expressions of care, understanding the young person's perspective, and sensitive communication. One of the clearest outcomes achieved across the placements was the development of warm and trusting relationships between young people and specialist foster carers. This relational security contributed to placement stability and enabled the achievement of wider outcomes, including engagement in education, development of hobbies or skills, positive friendships, and young people's participation in decisions that affected them. Where young people were able to engage and succeed in positive activities, this enhanced their self-esteem and contributed to a sense of psychological safety.

The evaluation concluded that relational security was a key that unlocked other positive outcomes.



Multi-dimensional safety for children affected by sexual exploitation (Shuker, 2013a)

Questions for practice reflection

You may want to consider the safety of a young person you work with using these different concepts:

- What needs to be done to disrupt abusive relationships, and to keep the young person physically protected?
- Do they have access to consistent support from people they know and trust?
- If they are looked after and have been moved between placements or out of borough for their own protection, how can you ensure they continue to be supported by people they know and trust, and don't have to start relationships all over again?
- What opportunities could you provide them to build a positive sense of self-esteem and self-identity?

**Is there someone you know who would benefit from seeing this short film?
If so, take a minute to pass it on <http://youtu.be/AlNeETuZHv0>**

To cite this film

University of Bedfordshire (2015) *Multi-dimensional safety for children in care affected by sexual exploitation*. Available at: <http://youtu.be/AlNeETuZHv0> (Accessed day, month, year)

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The International Centre

Increasing understanding of, and improving responses to, child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking

The International Centre at the University of Bedfordshire is committed to increasing understanding of, and improving responses to, child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking in local, national and international contexts. This is achieved through:

- academic rigour and research excellence
- collaborative and partnership based approaches to applied social research
- meaningful and ethical engagement of children and young people
- active dissemination and evidence-based engagement in theory, policy and practice



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Staff at the International Centre work collaboratively in teams with internal and external staff on applied research, evaluation, consultancy and training. We prioritise a focus on children and young people's participation, taking this seriously in all aspects of our work.

The University of Bedfordshire has been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education for The International Centre's pioneering research into child sexual exploitation. This prestigious prize is the highest form of national recognition open to higher and further education institutions in the UK.

What is Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)?

The following definition of CSE is that used in the government guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation' (DCSF, 2009, p.9)

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.