

CSE Research: Short films for practice Research Briefing Note #9



Managing child sexual exploitation workers in multi-agency teams

Dr Julie Harris

Text of the Film

“As more agencies partner to tackle child sexual exploitation, there are some key considerations about how we best support specialist CSE workers in multi-agency environments.

First – workers need to be visible and accessible to referring agencies, and we know that in itself this helps to improve the identification of CSE. But young people can be put off if their worker is sitting in a police team or social services office – so workers need to think creatively and flexibly about where they meet young people.

Secondly, CSE workers need two kinds of support. They need regular clinical supervision to maintain their own emotional wellbeing, and they need the chance to confidentially and informally debrief with colleagues.

And lastly, there should be clear agreements in place about how and when information will be shared between agencies – and crucially, this needs to recognise that young people often only accept support on the basis of confidentiality.

Thinking these things through will help us provide more effective support to young people affected by CSE.”

Research Summary

In 2011 it was noted that less than one quarter of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) across England were proactively addressing CSE (Jago *et al.*, 2011). The Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England noted that only six per cent of LSCBs were fully meeting government guidance on safeguarding children from sexual exploitation (Berelowitz *et al.*, 2013). With support from independent funders, limited voluntary service provision has developed across the country to challenge child sexual exploitation (CSE) and to support victims. Research suggests that voluntary sector services can be very effective; multi-agency, co-located teams also represent pockets of best practice through responding holistically to needs and facilitating better information sharing and partnership working (DCSF, 2009; CEOP, 2011; Jago *et al.*, 2011; Berelowitz *et al.*, 2013; Home Office, 2014). Despite this, voluntary sector provision is invariably hindered by short term funding, and the impact of constrained local authority budgets in recent years.

The Child Sexual Exploitation Funders' Alliance (CSEFA) is a group of charitable funders who are aligning resources in order to bring about a step change in responses CSE. Using a 'hub and spoke' model of specialist service development, CSEFA is funding sixteen established CSE services to expand their geographical coverage, demographic reach and strategic influence by placing Spoke workers into new areas where the response to CSE is under-developed. This might be a neighbouring town, district, neighbourhood or authority. Spoke workers are supported by the Hub and draw on its expertise to increase awareness of CSE amongst key agencies, and to provide support to young people and advice to the professionals working with them.

Evaluating the Hub and Spoke development

There has been no research to date evaluating different providers or models of CSE service delivery, so the 'Hub and Spoke' evaluation should generate important learning. The evaluation is being undertaken by the International Centre and follows the progress of the sixteen Hub and Spoke services as they develop over a three period (2013-16). The overall aim of the evaluation is to provide knowledge about the potential of this model to trigger cultural and systemic change in the way that statutory and voluntary sector professionals and organisations locally respond to CSE, including its effectiveness in:

1. Safeguarding young people from sexual exploitation through service delivery;
2. Engaging young people as active participants in the development and delivery of services that impact on them;
3. Supporting and equipping Spoke workers to work effectively in host agencies;
4. Promoting stable CSE policy frameworks in new areas by raising awareness, developing procedures and advancing cultures of support from policy makers responsible for CSE.

The evaluation asks 'what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This approach allows us to draw conclusions and make recommendations about the local contexts in which a Hub and Spoke model is most or least likely to be effective. The research findings inform service developments as the programme rolls out whilst also providing a summative appraisal of the combined outcomes footprint of the project and its contribution to the success of the CSEFA strategy.

The specific research findings in this film will be published in the final evaluation report in 2017. For information and updates on the work please visit <http://www.beds.ac.uk/intcent/current-projects>

Questions for practice reflection

You may want to discuss or consider the following:

- What benefits does voluntary sector support bring to tackling CSE a) for statutory services working with young people and b) for young people themselves? What are the disadvantages of voluntary sector involvement?
- What are the practical and cultural challenges associated with developing multi-agency responses to CSE that feature voluntary sector specialist services?
- What practical arrangements could be put in place to overcome these?
- How can services best engage with young people so that their experiences and perspectives are reflected at individual level? How might young people collectively

participate in services and their voices be heard in order to ensure that services are timely and accessible to young people in need of support?

**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/aLzlw91IZrw>**

To cite this film

University of Bedfordshire (2015) *Managing child sexual exploitation workers in multi-agency teams*. Available at: <http://youtu.be/aLzlw91IZrw> (Accessed day, month, year).

References

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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.