Title: 'Helping me find my own way' Sexually exploited young people's involvement in decision-making about their care

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Professional Doctorate

22 March 2013

University of Bedfordshire

'HELPING ME FIND MY OWN WAY':

SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING ABOUT THEIR CARE

by
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A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Children & Young People's Services Leadership

Institute of Applied Social Research

22 March 2013

Abstract

This thesis explores the role and relevance of the concepts of participation and service user involvement for work with sexually exploited children and young people. The central research questions are: how do young people at risk of, or affected by sexual exploitation, experience their rights to involvement in decision-making processes about their care? What is the meaning and value of the concept of participation from service users' own perspectives? And what are the gains of involving these young people in decision-making processes about their care?

The research involved in-depth qualitative interviews with twenty young service users and ten practitioners. Three theoretical frameworks underpin the study; a constructivist approach to childhood; sociological approaches to agency, and discourses of children's participation rights. The analysis of data was informed by both narrative and grounded theory approaches.

The thesis argues that young people's perspectives on professional welfare, though rarely recorded or allowed to inform policy and best practice, shed new insight onto the efficacy and limitations of existing child protection practice with adolescents at risk of sexual exploitation. Consideration is given to how young people experience and respond to services, including their decisions about disengaging from or circumventing professional support. The thesis concludes that these demonstrations of agency and power, though often interpreted as deviant, are essentially rational and often protective. Through this lens young people's agency is recognised as a resource rather than a problem. The thesis concludes by arguing that the ability of support services to protect young people affected by sexual exploitation is contingent on the degree to which they involve young people in decision-making about their care. Rather than standing in opposition to paternalistic approaches to protection, the narratives suggest that participation and empowerment are necessary conditions of a protective service, especially for those considered most marginalized or vulnerable.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Professional Doctorate at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Word count (exclusive of appendices and bibliography): 78,854 words

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

ACPC Area Child Protection Committee (*precursor of LSCBs*)

ACPO Association of Chief Police Officers

ADSS Association of Directors of Social Services

ADCS Association of Directors of Children's Services

CAQDAS Computer assisted qualitative data analysis system

CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CEOP Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

CoE Council of Europe

CROP Coalition for the Removal of Pimping *(National charity supporting parents of children affected by sexual exploitation – Recently re-launched as PACE)*

DCSF Department of Children Schools and Families (*now Department for Education*)

DE Department for Education

DH Department of Health

GSCC General Social Care Council (*Since August 2012 regulation of social work profession and education has transferred to HCPC).*

HCPC Health and Care Professionals Council

HO Home Office

IFSW International Federation of Social Workers

LSCB Local Safeguarding Children Boards

NGO Non Governmental Organisation

NWG National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People

OCC Office of the Children's Commissioner for England

PRU Pupil Referral Unit

SAL Barnardos Streets and Lanes Project, Bradford

SCIE Social Care Institute for Excellence

SCIP Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution (HO/ DoH guidance)

SCYPSE Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (DCSF guidance)

SECOS Barnardos SECOS Project Middlesbrough

SOA Sexual Offences Act 2003

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UKHTC United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre

WWFU What Works For Us, national advisory network of young sexual exploitation service users

YOS Youth Offending Service

YOT Youth Offending Team

Part one: context, methods and theory

Which kinds of narratives work to empower people and which degrade, control and dominate? Some stories may work to pathologise voices, or turn them into victims with little control over their lives; other stories may sense human agency and survival, giving the voice a power to transform and empower.

Ken Plummer, 1995: 29

Notes about definitions

The definition of **child sexual exploitation** which is adopted in this thesis is that developed by the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG, 2008) and applied within relevant English and Welsh government policy (DCSF, 2009):

> The 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 performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.
>
> Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no 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. (NWG, 2008)

The term **child** is used in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to mean any individual aged 17 years or under. The terms **adolescent**, **young person, young woman** and **young man** are used interchangeably within this thesis to refer to young people aged 11 – 19 years inclusive. These terms are used to differentiate children in adolescence from those in 'early' or 'middle childhood', acknowledging significant experiential differences in this period. A wider discussion of the socially constructed nature of childhood is included in chapter three.

At times I utilise the phrase **children involved in prostitution** to discuss historical approaches to this issue. Where included, this reflects terminology used within the policy, research or practice discussed. A more critical discussion of the use of this phrase is included in chapter two.

The term **service user** is adopted throughout to refer to children and young people using sexual exploitation support services. It is used in preference to alternatives such as 'client', 'consumer', or 'participant'. While recognising that all such terms are contentious and may serve to restrict individuals' identities, **service user** is adopted in accordance with the terminology favoured by several 'user' groups engaging with statutory social care (see for example: *Shaping Our Lives* and *User Voice*). In these contexts the phrase has been reclaimed as an active and positive term which recognises shared experiences

among those using services and foregrounds the value of a collective voice in influencing and shaping service development (Charnley et al., 2009:196; Shaping our lives, 2012).

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Overview of thesis

This thesis seeks to explore the experiences of young people accessing professional support services for issues relating to child sexual exploitation, focusing specifically on the relevance of principles of service user involvement and participation. The central research questions addressed within the thesis are:

- How do young people affected by sexual exploitation experience their rights to involvement in decision-making about their care?

- What is the meaning and value of the concepts of *service user involvement* and *participation* from service users' own perspectives?

- What are the benefits and challenges of involving these young people in decision-making processes about their care?

These three questions are considered in relation to contemporary discourses on young people and sexual exploitation; children's participation; and discussions of service user agency. In part, this thesis is a continuation of a previous discussion (Warrington, 2010) in which I proposed that upholding sexually exploited young people's participation rights (Article 12, UNCRC, 1989) may directly support professionals' abilities to protect them from harm. Undertaking the research for this thesis has afforded me an opportunity to explore these issues in greater depth primarily through the perspectives of service users. The rationale underpinning this endeavour is drawn from academic, policy and personal influences.

1.2 Rationale

The study is predominantly framed by two policy and practice contexts which have informed my recent professional thinking in both academic and practice based settings.

The first is the body of work from the last twenty years pertaining to child sexual exploitation in the UK and in particular focusing on service and policy responses. The second is literature focusing on children's participation spanning both theoretical and practice perspectives. In the following section I outline the rationale for this study in

relation to both of these contexts. This is preceded by a brief introduction to my personal relationship to the subject which continues to influence my approach.

A word about my own background and perspective

My work in the field of child sexual exploitation began in September 2008. At this time I joined the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young people (NWG) as their first project coordinator. The role supported the NWG's developing UK network of practitioners, researchers and policy makers and part of my remit included the development of children's participation within the network.

Prior to undertaking this role my professional background had predominantly been based within youth, community and voluntary sector settings. My work had been characterised by a focus on principles of participation and empowerment with a variety of different groups and communities including care leavers, young refugees and Gypsy and Traveller children. My interest in 'participation' was itself rooted in an MA in Applied Anthropology and Youth and Community work at Goldsmiths College, London. During my studies I was introduced to the work of both Paulo Freire (1970, 1973) and Robert Chambers (1983, 1997), whose concerns with power and paternalism in contexts of care have proved enormously influential. Bringing these perspectives into my work with the NWG raised a new raft of challenges and questions. In particular I was interested in how both youth work and social work principles were integrated within the sector and whether children's participation could fit alongside child protection practice and its dominant concerns with the minimisation of individual risk. It is these early questions that prompted the research questions explored within this thesis. In the section below I explore the emergence of these interests in more detail, charting them against developments within the wider sector and my own learning.

Policy and practice context 1: responding to child sexual exploitation in the UK

Soon after joining the NWG I was asked to engage with the latter stages of the then UK government's national consultation for its revised guidance: S*afeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation* (DCSF: 2009). This was my first introduction to policy work in this area and provided an insight into attempts to develop a consensus around best practice for children affected by sexual exploitation.

The DCSF guidance was informed by extensive consultation with both researchers and practitioners. In addition it built on two decades of existing academic and practice based knowledge within the UK (Barrett, 1997; Pitts, 1997; Melrose, Barrett and Brodie, 1999;

Phoenix, 2002; Pearce et al., 2002; Melrose and Barrett, 2004), alongside the campaigning work of several children's charities (see for example: Lee and O'Brien, 1995; Swann et al., 1998; Palmer, 2001; Swann and Balding, 2002; Scott and Skidmore, 2006). The guidance itself was formally launched in June 2009 and continues to frame current practice across England and Wales. It is broadly supported by those in the field and considered to represent 'sound advice' in relation to LSCB's and their partner agencies tackling of child sexual exploitation (Jago et al., 2011: 11).

The full nature of this history and the influence of the guidance is explored in chapter two, but perhaps most significantly it marked the mainstream rejection of discourses of child prostitution and a consensus that child sexual exploitation should be understood first and foremost as a child protection concern. This approach rejected ambiguities about children's agency or victimhood in relation to their abuse, and brought their status as child abuse victims to the fore of considerations about how best to respond to them.

From my own perspective, and given my remit and background, the development of the guidance was marked by a striking absence of opportunities for consultation with young people and service users themselves. Consequently though the guidance itself positioned *child centred practice* and *children's rights* as central principles of work with sexually exploited young people (DCSF, 2009: 13) it failed to explicate the meaning of such principles or embed them in the development of the policy itself. In addition the absence of children and young people's involvement stood in contradiction to wider policy frameworks. This included the Council of Europe (CoE) *Convention on the protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (2007a) which specifically notes that the development of policy in this area: 'must of necessity be informed by children's own views and experiences in accordance with their evolving capacity' (CoE, 2007b, note 67).

Despite the new clarity of paradigm and purpose represented by the DCSF guidance, the overarching framework for work with sexually exploited young people in England and Wales had at its centre an absence of the direct voices of children and young people. It had missed the opportunity to learn from service users' own experiences about what makes effective support.

These observations raised a number of questions. What were the reasons and barriers for the absence of service users within this particular consultation process? Did this absence reflect a wider lack of young people's participation within the sector? And were there factors specific to the issue of child sexual exploitation that meant children or young people's participation was difficult or even inappropriate?

Closer consideration of these issues through meetings with NWG members and practitioners revealed a number of challenges to developing this work. Particular concerns were raised about the relevance of policy level consultation to young people's lives; individuals for whom consultation and revisiting experiences of care may pose a risk of additional upset or trauma; and limitations on project resources that led to participation work being overlooked in favour of a range of competing priorities such as crisis intervention and case-work. I was also aware that the predominantly personal and individualised nature of issues facing victims of sexual exploitation did not easily lend itself to the more politicised work, or social change agenda, traditionally associated with participatory initiatives (Save the Children, 2005). In addition, several NWG members revealed the absence of cultures of group work within local services, stemming largely from concerns about the risks young people posed to one another.

I observed that these concerns reflected a wider set of tensions outlined within the research literature on social care. This highlighted particular challenges for practitioners when supporting victims of abuse in: simultaneously reconciling the need for care and control (Lipscombe, 2007); recognising and responding to both agency and victimhood (Phoenix, 2004) and supporting children's rights to participation and protection (Healy, 1998; Chase & Statham, 2004; Brown, 2006; Pearce, 2009). These issues are explored in more depth in chapter two.

Yet despite the challenges a number of pieces of work had already proved the feasibility of involving sexually exploited children and young people in research and consultation (Pearce et al., 2002 ; Taylor Browne et al., 2002; Brown, 2006; Coy, 2008). Furthermore there was some evidence from a number of local sexual exploitation projects of the successful involvement of service users in a range of more participatory initiatives. These included the development of arts projects ('Sex, Lies and Love': Walsall Street Teams/ Walsall Youth Arts, 2005); preventative education videos (Walsall Street Teams, 2008); creative writing projects (Barnardos SECOS, 2008; Streetreach/NSPCC London, 2010; Taking Stock, 2010) and the production of peer support and awareness raising websites (Barnardos FACE, 2007).

Encouraged by these precedents, and as part of my remit for participation within the NWG, I began to develop work that explored the possibilities for children's participation in the sector on a national scale. This work commenced with the development of a young people's photography project, supporting service users to respond creatively to their experiences (NWG/Photovoice, 2010). The project engaged twenty-eight young people nationally and led to the development of an ongoing national advisory network of service users: *What Works for Us* (WWFU). Simultaneously I supported the dissemination of a

number of other pieces of work with similar goals (Streetreach/NSPCC London, 2010; Taking Stock, 2010). While this work was not without its challenges, in all these endeavours I was struck by the power and value of bringing groups of young people together and the merits of disseminating these 'seldom heard voices[1]' more widely – both to other young people and professionals.

Meanwhile I grew increasingly aware that though these initiatives were creditworthy, they were only ever capable of engaging a small number of service users. Elsewhere within the sector, I recognised that participation work appeared to remain dependent on the priorities of individual practitioners and tended to be based on discrete, time limited initiatives. Children and young people's involvement was neither part of a wider policy consensus about best practice nor was it supported by an evidence base that might demonstrate the potential value of working in this way. In addition, while the studies and initiatives outlined above included young people's testimonies about their experiences of child sexual exploitation, very few specifically addressed their views and experiences regarding the support they had (or had not) received.

The questions raised, about the absence of young people's perspectives on their support were also set against a growing recognition that many child protection frameworks are ill-suited to the needs of adolescents. While the DCSF guidance sought to bring young people fully under the fold of child protection, research elsewhere pointed to particular difficulties facing older young people supported within this very framework. These difficulties were attributed to a number of factors including: the historical tendency of focusing child protection resources on babies or young children at risk of abuse within the home; the different nature of risks faced by older children; and the need to work within and alongside the choices that older young people make for themselves (Cook, 2009; Rees et al., 2010; Radford, 2012). As part of this body of research, calls were raised for promoting the involvement of young people's own perspectives on their care as a means of promoting the efficacy of services (Munro, 2011; Radford, 2012).

This thesis seeks to build on these calls and consider their relevance specifically to young people affected by sexual exploitation. It is my belief that children and young people's own perspectives on care may provide critical understanding about how best to support

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[1] 'Seldom heard' is a term used by a number of organisations (including the children and young people's mental health coalition and SCIE) to 'describe groups of people who don't have a collective voice and are often under-represented in consultation and involvement activities about developing services' (Community Care, 2008). It has often been used to replace the term 'hard to reach' as a means of situating responsibility for a groups marginalisation with those seeking to engage them. It communicates the idea of individuals whose 'invisibility' within public or policy forum is compounded by the experience of multiple vulnerabilities. See Begum (2005) and Robson et al. (2008) for more details.

them within a field characterised as complex and challenging. Through involving young people I also hope to consider some of the practical barriers to participatory practice, reflecting on the feasibility of their involvement in decisions about their care.

Before presenting the structure of the thesis, I present details of the particular approach to children's participation that I have adopted within this study.

Policy and practice context 2: children's participation and service user involvement

As I discuss at greater length in chapter three, there is no single agreed upon definition of 'participation' and it is invariably used interchangeably with terms such as 'consultation', 'service user involvement' or 'empowerment' (Banks, 2006; Charnley, Roddam and Wistow, 2009). Despite gaining near ubiquity within discourses of children's rights and welfare, the concept of children's 'participation' remains broad and abstruse (Robson et al., 2008). Consequences of this ambiguity include the indiscriminate use of the term 'child participation', and subsequent cynicism surrounding its meaning and relevance.

In its widest usage children's participation is used to characterize a spectrum of activities and approaches aiming to promote children and young people's involvement in decision-making processes (UNCRC, 1989; Hart, 1992; 1997; Shier,2001; Hinton, 2008). For the purposes of this thesis I have adopted the definition provided by Hart who articulates children's participation as:

> the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is a means by which democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. (Hart, 1992: 5)

This definition is interpreted in its broadest terms, where 'sharing decisions' is understood to require enabling agency as well as 'voice' and involves fostering young people's sense of 'active citizenship' (Woodhead, 2010).

Historically there has been a tendency to conflate children's participation solely with initiatives that seek to formalise children's representation and influence within strategic and policy fora (see for example Kellet, 2005; Franklin & Sloper, 2006; UK Youth Parliament, 2007; 2008). This aligns to assumptions that children's participation is exclusively concerned with involvement in decision-making at organisational, community, or political levels. However, while these consultative and political initiatives provide a laudable means of promoting the visibility and influence of children in public and collective decision-making, they have been critiqued for their dependence on promoting

select groups of young people as spokespeople for wider communities (Robson et al., 2008).

In many ways my initial idea for this study sought to reproduce these interpretations of children's participation by exploring where and how sexually exploited children and young people were afforded opportunities to influence policy and practice. However, as noted in the preceding section, closer observations of the sector (occurring through my work with the NWG), suggested that examples of such practice were rare. Furthermore, I recognised that this type of formal participation was likely to hold limited meaning for those service users who had not participated in such opportunities. Against this backdrop I began to reframe my research focus and consider whether my interest in 'service user empowerment' and 'participation' could be viewed through a different lens.

What resulted was my choice to move to a more micro level analysis, exploring young people's involvement in decision-making primarily in relation to their personal experiences of welfare and safeguarding support. This sought to investigate how service users exerted influence in relation to their own experiences of professional care; examining evidence for the presence of 'cultures of participation' rather than discrete participation initiatives (Robson et al., 2008). Consequently this focus explores the integration of participatory principles and practices into all aspects of service delivery. It closely aligns to what Wright et al. (2006), Moriarty et al. (2007) and Charnley et al. (2009) term a 'whole systems' approaches to participation. This approach seeks to move away from considering 'that involvement in, or control of, top-level decisions should be the goal' (Robson et al.,2008: 4). Instead these approaches recognise participation's relevance to services at interlocking levels of professional culture, structure, practice and review (Charnley, et al. 2009). Within this study the focus is predominantly on participatory principles at the level of practice although at times other aspects are referred to as a result of the interrelated nature of participatory principles within systems of care.

This approach aligns to a small number of existing studies that specifically explore children's participation within decision-making at the level of everyday social care practice and case work. These studies have included those focusing on 'looked after' children (Thomas and O'Kane, 1999; Shemmings, 2000; Thomas, 2000; Cossar et al., 2011); children in divorce cases (Trinder, 1997); and children engaging in a range of social care services (Kirby et al., 2003). To date there have been no studies on the concept of participation or service user involvement in relation to young people affected by sexual exploitation.

As a means of integrating both method and research focus I set out to explore these issues primarily through the experiences of young service users at risk of, or affected by sexual exploitation. What I hope is that this contribution helps to redress the absence of service users' perspectives on practice and demonstrates the practical potential for eliciting children and young people's views about service provision and support.

1.3 Thesis structure

The main body of this thesis is divided into three sections. The first includes an overview of the research and policy context, the theoretical frameworks informing the work and an outline of the research process (methods used, methodology and ethical concerns); the second part presents key findings from the research; and the third section draws together discussion, conclusions and implications for practice that emerge.

Part one: background to the study - research and policy context; theoretical framework and methodology

Chapter two begins by presenting an overview of the existing research and practice knowledge base regarding child sexual exploitation within the UK. This primarily focuses on work developed over the past twenty years and provides the foundation of contemporary practice. In addition, I present the policy context that has responded to, and informed, this research and practice base. Chapter three details the theoretical frameworks that have underpinned my enquiry. These include a constructivist approach to concepts of childhood and adolescence; sociological theories relating to young people's agency; and discourses on children's participation. Chapter four outlines the methodology for the research including details of data collection and analysis alongside the ethical issues involved.

Part two: findings from primary data collection with service users

Chapters five to nine provide the substantive findings from my research with young people and professionals. These are grouped thematically according to topics arising from analysis and in relation to the main research questions. Chapter five begins by exploring young people's perspectives on becoming service users in relation to risks or experiences of sexual exploitation. Chapter six outlines interviewee's accounts of engaging with sexual exploitation services and attempts to identify values through which young people's assess their experiences. Chapter seven explores how service users are informed about, and involved in decision-making processes about their care and the management of their personal information. In chapter eight I consider how young people may make decisions to disengage from and resist service intervention and how these demonstrations of young people's agency may be interpreted. Finally in chapter nine I

present professionals' perspectives on service user participation in sexual exploitation support. This aims to reflect on findings from young people's interviews from within the context of constraints imposed on those delivering services.

Part three: discussion and conclusions

Chapter ten concludes the main body of the thesis by summarising my contribution to knowledge in this field. This is followed by a consideration of the implications of these findings for practice and some final reflections.

Chapter two: Literature and policy context

2.1 Introduction

As outlined in chapter one, the central focus of this thesis is young people's experiences of involvement in decision-making processes relating to support for child sexual exploitation. However, before examining these experiences in detail, it is expedient to consider the discursive and socio-political contexts from which the current understanding of child sexual exploitation and professional responses have emerged.

The purpose of this chapter is thus to provide a contextual overview of child sexual exploitation policy, research and practice across the UK over the last two decades. Space precludes a comprehensive account of these developments but I attempt to highlight the shifting discourses in which young people are variously framed in terms of complicity or victimhood, and as children or adults. The chapter builds on this discussion to present factors known to exacerbate risk and vulnerability in young people's lives, and knowledge about effective service delivery.

It contends that dominant discourses and responses may leave little space to consider the role of service user involvement, and actively foreclose the possibility of young people's participation. In addition it argues that how victims of child sexual exploitation are conceptualised, in terms of their agency and victimhood corresponds to the degree to which they are considered legitimate partners in responding to this issue.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. Part one provides an overview of the discourse and policy context which has developed over the past twenty years and shapes current practice. It starts with a consideration of the conceptual shift in the 1990s which repositioned children 'involved in prostitution' as 'victims of sexual exploitation'.

Secondly it explores the corresponding developments in relevant government and police policy. This introduces the place of children's participation in contemporary guidance and presents a gap between policy intentions and implementation.

The chapter then turns to explore current knowledge about vulnerabilities and risk factors associated with child sexual exploitation comparing individual and structural accounts of risk and demonstrating the value of the concept of constrained choice to reconcile questions of young people's agency and victimisation.

The fourth part of this chapter provides an overview of service responses to the issue. This introduces the known challenges facing those implementing policy in practice and presents findings about 'what works' to support victims.

Finally the chapter concludes by exploring the impact of the participation agenda within this sector. This argues that young people's own perspectives on sexual exploitation support remain marginalised within both policy and research due to enduring prejudices about their capacities.

2.2 Child sexual exploitation: discourse and policy context

Child Sexual Exploitation in the 1990s: new understandings of old problems

Although invariably framed by media as a 'new problem' (Papadouplous, 2010; Norfolk, 2011) the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation is neither recent or local. Documented evidence throughout history and across cultures indicates the presence of children involved in prostitution and sexually exploited (Melrose et al.,1999; O'Connell Davidson, 2005). Several writers draw attention to the relevance of concerns about child prostitution raised in England during the 1880s (Gorham, 1978; Pearce, 2009). Significantly they expose antecedents of contemporary debates about children's victimhood and agency in descriptions of child prostitution as a 'veritable slave trade' (1880, Pall Mall Gazzette cited in Gorham, 1978). Yet notwithstanding these early public attempts to distinguish between child and adult prostitution, the relevant policy and legal context remained relatively unaltered in the century which followed.

This means that despite evidence of shared historical and cross-cultural concerns, contemporary approaches to child sexual exploitation in the UK are primarily informed by research and practice from the early 1990's onwards. It is in this period that major shifts occurred to both the understanding of what constitutes child sexual exploitation and the terminology used to describe it.

Early Research

In the early 1990s, during the course of research on children missing from home, the Children's Society identified a number of children selling sex. In turn this prompted the publication of *The Games Up,* the first UK dedicated policy research focusing on children involved in prostitution (Lee and O'Brien, 1995).

Most notably the research drew attention to the contradictory legal status facing this group. It noted that between 1989 and 1993, over three thousand young women and ninety-four young men, aged 12-17, were cautioned or convicted for offences relating to prostitution in the UK. Paradoxically this took place in a context where children were unable to legally consent to sex until sixteen, and it remained illegal for adults to have sex with a child under this age (Melrose et al.,1999)[2].

The Games Up also drew attention to 'factors that precipitate [children's] involvement in prostitution' (Lee and O'Brien, 1995: 3) emphasising the limited choices facing many of those involved due to social or economic constraints. Importantly for this thesis, the report suggested that within this context, prostitution may be perceived by some children as a means of exerting power and control. Through these assertions, *The Games Up* engaged with some central complexities of this subject, calling for a recognition of children's vulnerability and victimhood while simultaneously acknowledging their need to exercise self determinism and resist structural oppression through the limited means available.

In the same year as publication of *The Game's Up* the children's charity, Barnardos, co-funded and developed the UK's first specialist child sexual exploitation project, supported and jointly funded by Bradford Local Authority (Swann et al., 1998). Barnardos 'Streets and Lanes' Project (SAL) became operational in March 1995 and provided support, through qualified social work staff, to girls and young women up to the age of seventeen at risk of, or involved in prostitution (Swann, 2000).

The development of Barnardos SAL service, alongside Lee and O'Brien's report, marked the beginning of an ongoing voluntary sector lead in supporting victims of child sexual exploitation and campaigning for policy change. Both drew attention to the absurdities of children's situations that simultaneously positioned them as victims and criminals, caught between statutory provisions of care (social work) and control (policing). Swann poignantly illustrates this through an account of two men charged with unlawful sexual intercourse with a fifteen year old selling sex. She notes:

> Judge Adams said in his summing up that this girl has been a prostitute since she was thirteen years old, that if the men had waited three more months, until she was sixteen, there would have been no case to answer. He considered that the trial had been a complete waste of time. Both men were acquitted. (Swann, 2000:284)

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[2] This inconsistency is particularly notable given that the Criminal Law amendment Act of 1885, responsible for raising the age of consent to 16, was in part motivated by campaigns to protect children from prostitution (Pearce, 2009).

Similar approaches to policing and prosecuting child prostitution were documented elsewhere and clearly undermined children's vulnerability both on an individual level and as a group within wider public consciousness (Melrose et al., 1999; Barrett and Ayres, 2000; Chase and Statham, 2004). The failure of such children to adhere to traditional images of child abuse victims all too often resulted in them being re-inscribed as adults in all but name. When identified as subversive and blameworthy, responsibility to identify and meet their needs could be overlooked and punitive responses justified (Lee and O'Brien, 1995; Swann, 2000).

For children's charities and campaigners, this prompted a need for unambiguous messages about children's involvement in prostitution as a form of abuse. They demonstrated a need to foreground the criminality of those purchasing sex from children and challenge the idea that children freely consented to transactional sex.

A central part of this endeavour was a reconsideration of semantics in an attempt to further uncouple the experiences of children from adults engaged in selling sex. In particular the term 'prostitution' was seen by many to imply ideas about choice that risked disassociating it from concepts of abuse (Barrett, 1997; Pitts, 1997; Melrose et al., 1999; Swann, 2000). The terms 'commercial' or 'child sexual exploitation' were posited as alternatives and a widely adopted narrative of 'grooming' repositioned 'pimps and punters' as perpetrators of abuse (Swann et al. 1998)[3]. Although not adopted invariably (see Shaw and Butler, 1998 for alternative views), these lexical shifts gained widespread support from charities, researchers and campaigners, and children's involvement in prostitution was increasingly characterised as children being sexually exploited. While there are compelling arguments that this has resulted in the use of an overly simplified narrative to counter the ills of child blaming (O'Connell Davidson, 2005; Melrose, 2010; Phoenix, 2012) there is compelling evidence that it has contributed to a reduction in the criminalisation of children for prostitution related offences[4].

Shifts in partnership and guidance

One concrete example of the influence of this work was the response of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) who recognised the need to redirect the police's legal

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[3] This work was shared internationally at the World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996 and subsequently played a significant role in promoting and influencing the development of government guidance on safeguarding children abused through prostitution (Scott and Harper, 2005).

[4] Home Offices Statistics provided by Phoenix (2012) show a dramatic decline in charges and convictions for soliciting or loitering for the purposes of prostitution against those under 18 years old since 1999. Between 1990 and 2000, 1808 children had been prosecuted for prostitution related offences. After 2000 this fell steadily year on year and in 2006 no children were prosecuted (figures from Home Office, quoted in Phoenix, 2012).

duties towards a focus on the protection children under the Children Act 1989 and away from their prosecution (Brain et al.,1998).

ACPO's response drew upon cross-sector cooperation, from national children's charities, adult sex work projects, the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) and Police. This work resulted in the development of new ACPO guidance (ACPO, 1997) which 'formalised new protection focused approaches to policing' (Pearce, 2009:23) and promoted the role of the voluntary sector as the appropriate provider of direct support. Significantly for this thesis, this approach explicitly framed safeguarding as a *partnership* between young people and project workers, positioning 'trusting relationships' as the primary basis for support (Brain et al.,1998).

The ACPO guidelines were piloted in Nottingham and Wolverhampton and evaluations judged them a success both in terms of their efficacy and feasibility (Brain et al. 1998). In both areas, one consequence of adopting these new approaches was the realisation that children's involvement in prostitution was both more extensive and diversified than previously assumed. Perhaps unsurprisingly an approach which had professed to work in partnership with children had enabled police and social care to develop new intelligence about both the scale and nature of children's involvement in prostitution. However, many recognised that in order to replicate and build on these developments the need for a wider policy steer remained (Melrose et al. 1999; Barrett and Ayre, 2000).

A changing policy context

The publication of *Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution* (SCIP) (DH/HO, 2000) responded in part to this need and built on the aforementioned ACPO guidelines (1997). Crucially it helped to embed the conceptual shift towards a welfare response in government guidance (Melrose, 2003). The entire emphasis of the guidance was noted to focus on diversion of children from prostitution 'using a welfare based approach … that should be adopted in all cases' (DH/HO, 2000; 27). Specifically the guidance placed responsibility for the protection of children involved in prostitution with Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs), and stated a dual aim of protecting children and proactively investigating offenders.

In addition, and of central relevance to this thesis, SCIP also stated a commitment to children's own role in safeguarding suggesting they were 'an important contributor in addressing these issues' (2000:21). This built on learning from the ACPO pilot studies and reiterated the idea of safeguarding as a form of partnership. It also reflected shifts in wider childcare law and policy promoting the inclusion of children's own views in decision-

making about their lives (Children Act, 1989, UNCRC, 1989). Yet despite this rhetoric, the failure of SCIP to fully articulate what children's participation meant in practice, appeared to prevent recognition of young people as 'contributors' in any meaningful way.

Furthermore, contrary to commitments to child-centred practice and welfare responses, SCIP retained the potential use of conviction, in exceptional cases where young people's involvement in prostitution was understood to be 'persistent' and 'voluntary'. SCIP notes that while 'the vast majority of children do not freely and willingly become involved in prostitution… it would be wrong to say that a boy or girl under 18 never freely chooses to continue to solicit, loiter or importune' (2000:27-28).

The paradox of simultaneously arguing for increased recognition of children's coercion, while maintaining the possibility of positioning them as 'knowing' offenders, represents a continued contradiction at the heart of policy about how to deal with 'difficult' children and young people (Phoenix, 2010). While it accepts that the right and proper approach is a protective one and commends this principle throughout, it retains the possibility of prosecuting children when their continued problematic behaviour is seen to exempt them from protection. In many ways this is illustrative of questions at the heart of this thesis about how best to respond to young people perceived to be wilfully exacerbating their own vulnerability. In professional's minds such individuals are often caught between notions of child and adult where, evolving capacity and continued immaturity equally beg for recognition (Coleman, 2011).

Yet despite this seeming contradiction, SCIP appeared to contribute to a dramatic reduction in the number of children prosecuted for prostitution related offences. While Phoenix argues that this decline had commenced before the introduction of the guidance (2012:9), the dramatic reduction from 2001 onwards suggests that the 'paradigm shift' in policy (Melrose, 2003) had directly influenced policing practice.

In other areas progress translating policy into practice was noted to be less effective. Swann and Balding's review of SCIP's implementation in 2002 found that though the guidance had put the issue on the ACPC agenda, the influence on changes to practice was noted to remain marginal and patchy.

These findings were echoed by a later study which established that six years on, despite a growth in local authority protocols, there was a continued lack of assistance for victims of sexual exploitation, and ongoing barriers to successful prosecution (Jago and Pearce, 2008). This later study strengthened the call for a broader definition of child sexual exploitation to support lower thresholds for intervention. Furthermore it reiterated calls for

multi-agency working; increased training and awareness raising; and the development of robust local systems and protocols. Importantly for this thesis it also restated messages from earlier research and evaluation (ACPO, 1997; Pearce et al., 2002; Scott and Skidmore, 2006) about the importance of the voluntary sector, acknowledging its success in responding flexibly and creatively to cases which many mainstream services appeared poorly equipped to handle (Jago and Pearce, 2008).

Revising government guidance

As noted in chapter one, in 2009 following extensive consultation, the government replaced SCIP with new guidance titled '*Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation*' (SCYPSE). This provided supplementary guidance to the government's revised central safeguarding framework: *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government, 2006) and sought to incorporate references to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (SOA)[5].

Perhaps most significantly, as its name suggests, SCYPSE marked the mainstreaming of the language of child sexual exploitation and the adoption of a broader definition (see page 3). Alongside this change in terminology, the guidance also sought to develop a comprehensive outline of local authorities' responsibilities and the appropriate structures and processes through which these could be realised.

Overall, the 2009 guidance was broadly welcomed by those working in the sector though again questions were asked about how implementation would be enforced and upheld. The disjuncture between the intentions of policy and the realities of practice continued. While responsibility now sits clearly with local safeguarding children boards (LSCB's), traditional child protection responses are noted to remain poorly equipped to recognise and thus respond to the issue (Harper and Scott, 2005: Clutton and Coles, 2007; Jago et al., 2011) and specialist provision remains sparse[6].

In relation to children's participation, the 2009 DCSF guidance built on the commitments of SCIP, reiterating the need for children's involvement in the process of safeguarding. SCYPSE highlighted 'child centred practice' and 'children's rights' as key principles for

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[5] SOA specifically introduced a series of relevant criminal offences including the commercial exploitation of a child (Section 47-53); trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation (Section 57-59) and meeting with a child following sexual grooming (Section 15).

[6] From a sample of 100 LSCBs contacted in 2010 only thirty-eight had a specialist provision that was either in place or planned (Jago et al. 2011).

work with sexually exploited children and young people. Moreover it reiterated a need for young people's involvement in decision-making about their care, noting:

> the wishes and feelings of children and young people, as well as the concerns of parents or carers should be sought and taken into account in reaching decisions about the provision of services which affect them. (DCSF, 2009:13)

At one level the inclusion of this statement nominally brought the guidance in line with broader policy commitments articulated in documents such as *Learning to Listen* (2001), *Every Child Matters*, (2003) and *Care Matters*(2008). Yet just as the SCIP guidance was recognised to be a 'missed opportunity in terms of promoting participation with young people involved in prostitution' (Brown, 2006:309), so SCYPSE also failed to articulate the meaning of these principles in practice.

Overall the commitment to participation within the guidance remains abstruse and ill-defined. The 'child centred principle' is itself tempered by the need for professionals to 'be aware that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative and abusive situation' (DCSF, 2009:13). This caveat - a reminder of the need to place limits on the autonomy of children and young people's narratives, symbolises the difficulty of balancing children's own self determinism with their need for protection. It supports Phoenix's observation that government policy and safeguarding procedures are unlikely to be 'structured to recognise both the victimisation of young people and their desires and abilities to fashion their own lives' (2004:282).

Exploring how this tension is experienced by young service users represents a central focus for this thesis, recognising that while both approaches (participation and protection) purport to have children and young people's best interests at heart, to some degree they still remain at odds. Evidence for these difficulties was nowhere more apparent than in the aforementioned consultation process that led to SCYPSE's development - a process from which children and young people's voices were wholly absent.

Where are we now?

Turning now to the current situation finds the same policy frameworks in place but a changing public discourse driven by a series of high profile prosecutions and related media interest. Operation Retriever, the first of such prosecutions, ended in January 2011 and resulted in the conviction and sentencing of nine men for grooming and sexual exploitation of girls in Derby. Lessons learnt during the course of this operation have

influenced wider policing responses and supported a series of similar prosecutions with comparable high profile media responses [7]. In addition, the ethnicity of defendants fuelled unprecedented levels of public interest and the conjuncture of race, sex and childhood proved to be a particularly potent mix in political and media narratives despite negligible evidence of its significance (Cockbain et al., 2011; CEOP, 2011) [8].

In many ways these developments are too recent to fully account for their impact. Arguably there is evidence that levels of public interest in this and subsequent cases have contributed to an increased commitment from both local and national governments, police and CPS to address this issue (DfE, 2012a/b; ACPO, 2012; OCC, 2012; CEOP, 2013)[9]. However these developments and the associated press may have inadvertently promoted an unduly narrow understanding of what constitutes sexual exploitation. Media responses have tended to focus on a specific model of child sexual exploitation and singled out cases where perpetrators are non-white[10]. Similarly the language of 'sex slavery', much quoted within recent media (Norfolk, 2011; BBC, 2013) undoubtedly heightens anxieties and attention but does little to elucidate the wider problem. Within such a context, attempts to consider children's own voice and rights are likely to be overshadowed by reinvigorated desires to rescue children from the horrors of individual perpetrators.

Aspects of these particular narratives can also been seen projected within third sector awareness raising. Barnardos recent campaign which states 'children cannot consent to their own abuse' (2009; 2011; 2012) and its associated 'puppet on a string' imagery, provide powerfully emotive rhetoric but may inhibit discursive spaces for broader explorations of causality and young people's own resilience. The imagery used here and in related newspaper commentary closely align to what Andrijasevic (2004) terms the 'spectacle of misery' in a critique of anti-trafficking campaigns. While providing an

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7 See for example: *Operation Chalice* (Telford, Shropshire); *Operation Central* (Rotherham); *Operation Bullfinch* (Oxford); *Operation Span* (Greater Manchester Police)

8 For example: Jack Straw, MP for Blackburn noted a 'specific problem' in some areas where Pakistani men 'target vulnerable white girls'. Mr Straw added: 'These young men are in a western society, in any event, they act like any other young men, they're fizzing and popping with testosterone, they want some outlet for that, but Pakistani heritage girls are off-limits and they are expected to marry a Pakistani girl from Pakistan, typically...so they then seek other avenues and they see these young women, white girls who are vulnerable, some of them in care... who they think are easy meat'. (Today Programme, 2011). Such comments were widely condemned but undoubtedly reflected aspects of an ongoing public response to these issues (Wynne-Jones, 2011).

9 Central government's publication of a *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan* (DfE, 2012a); ACPO's publication of their own *Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan* (2012); CEOP's commitment to update their thematic assessment (2013, forthcoming) and the ongoing *OCC Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups* (November 2013, forthcoming) are all suggestive of climate of renewed energy to address this issue.

10 It is interesting to note the lack of national press interest in 'Operation Kern' where seven of eight men convicted of sexual exploitation related offences were White British.

effective means of capturing public attention Arocha notes how such images potentially contribute to:

> the victimisation, objectification and stereotyping of [victims]...presenting situations of helplessness, immobility and entrapment and, inadvertently, encouraging a certain voyeuristic (adult and male) gaze. (2012:22)

In many ways the language of current campaigns echoes that of a previous age, and the sensationalism of Stead's campaign in the 1880 Pall Mall Gazette. In addition, continually reframing child sexual exploitation as a 'new problem' fuels a moral panic and obfuscates the complexity of many children's circumstances and the structural issues which underlie it. It is to these complexities that I now turn, considering some of the diverse patterns of risk and models of exploitation outlined within research.

2.3 Vulnerabilities, risk and models of exploitation

The previous section sought to present the changing discourses and policies that frame contemporary responses to child sexual exploitation. I now move closer towards a focus on issues for service delivery. This starts with a review about what is known about those affected by child sexual exploitation. This considers both risks and indicators, questions of gender and ethnicity and 'models of exploitation'. Primarily this seeks to present how we understand and articulate 'service users' and their experiences. However particular attention is drawn to tensions between individualised and structural explanatory models. In addition I examine the place of individual agency within this evidence, questioning the absence of a consideration of resilience and presenting the concept of constrained choice as a means of reconciling victimhood with self-determinism.

Risk factors and vulnerabilities

UK research into child sexual exploitation has highlighted the significance and interplay of a number of key risk factors known to make young people more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. These include a history of abuse or neglect, being 'in care' or looked after by the local authority, prolonged absences from education; homelessness, poverty and a history of running away or going missing (Biehal and Wade, 2000; O'Neill, 2001; Pearce et al., 2002; Phoenix, 2002; Chase and Statham, 2004; Scott and Skidmore, 2006, Coy, 2008;2009; CEOP, 2011, Brodie et al., 2011, Beckett, 2011). Within UK based research additional vulnerabilities associated with child sexual exploitation include bereavement, poor physical and mental health, experience of bullying, low self-esteem, learning or physical disabilities, and problem substance misuse (Chase and Statham, 2004; Jago et al., 2011).

Interestingly despite the strength of the research base, there remain prominent gaps in knowledge about risks to sexual exploitation. Little is known for instance about the risks facing children and young people with physical or learning disabilities or the impact of structural issues such as class or ethnicity on vulnerabilities (Pearce, 2009). Debates also continue on the relative significance of some of these factors and the means through which children are exploited. Children's risk of sexual exploitation can be the consequence of a single issue or the interplay of a combinations of factors, often described as 'push' and 'pull' factors (Chase and Statham, 2004). This may compound confusion about the extent to which these issues occur *as a result* of being sexually exploited rather than themselves *causing* children's heightened risk. In addition Melrose (2010) argues that there is a tendency to simplify often complex inter-relationships between the issues faced by young people which subsequently risks overlooking socio-structural explanations in favour of individualised alternatives.

Indeed the significance of economic or structural factors is interpreted differently by different authors and organisations, in part reflecting changing definitions of child sexual exploitation. Early research on children involved in prostitution evidenced the strong correlation between poverty, social exclusion and children's exploitation (Lee and O'Brien, 1995; Melrose et al., 1999). References to prostitution or 'commercial sexual exploitation' drew attention to the economic aspect of abuse and emphasised the particular risks posed by low or uncertain incomes. Melrose notes problematic consequences of this shift away from the terminology explaining:

> '[terms such as 'child sexual exploitation'] overlook the material conditions that make involvement possible and instead provide individualized explanations that focus on the role of predator and/or abusive adults… removed from the social conditions in which the problem arises. (2010:13)

Melrose's fears are evidenced in contemporary campaigns and media which specifically seek to emphasize the universal risks of sexual exploitation (CROP, 2012; HC Hansard, 2011; Norfolk, 2011)[11]. These narratives choose to highlight the risk of sexual exploitation facing all young people, regardless of circumstances or existing vulnerability. Such approaches are led in part from concern that there is a tendency to overlook victims for whom known risk factors are not evident, and to avoid stigmatising parents of victims

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[11] The influence of this approach was apparent in June 2011, when Tim Loughton, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education stated in parliament: 'The problem [of sexual exploitation] is also classless, affecting many middle-class, apparently stable families' (HC Hansard, 2011). Such a statement refutes the social and economic context in which certain well documented risk factors emerge individualising the risks of child sexual exploitation and locating them solely around particular perpetrators.

(CROP, 2012). In these accounts vulnerability is almost solely attributed to contact with perpetrators.

Contrary to these accounts, recent research (Beckett, 2011) and media attention focusing on the 'Rochdale case'[12] reignited the public debate about the role of existing vulnerability and social exclusion on children's risk of sexual exploitation. Both examples brought renewed attention to particular risks of sexual exploitation faced by young people in residential care. And, while it is acknowledged that the majority of victims of child sexual exploitation are not 'looked after', the risks faced by those in residential care are noted to be dramatically disproportionate[13]. While debates continue about the relevance of these findings to broader cases of sexual exploitation, they highlight dangers of professionals misinterpreting challenging behaviours and subsequently overlooking or disregarding indicators of young people's exploitation.

Gender

Understandably, approaches also differ on how much emphasis to place on the role of gender in considering vulnerability. Feminist and gender-based models have been central to research into sexual exploitation. They have drawn attention to the role of the feminisation of poverty upon young women's choices (Kelly and Regan, 2000; O'Neill, 2001; Coy, 2008; Brodie et al, 2011) and the 'social context of normalised sexual violence towards women' in which sexual exploitation flourishes (Harper and Scott, 2005:5). Statistics from recent research supports the significance of gender, indicating that between 91% (Jago et al., 2011) and 92% (CEOP, 2011) of recorded victims are girls or young women and that 95% of recorded perpetrators are male (CEOP, 2011).

Yet despite these figures there is also a consensus that numbers of male victims are likely to be under-represented in existing figures (Palmer, 2001; Lilywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Ward and Patel, 2006). Lilywhite and Skidmore (2006) suggest that the victimisation of young men is less likely to be recognised because dominant ideas of masculinity do not match traditional notions of 'victim'. There also appears to be a tendency to interpret young men's relationships with older men as experimentation (McMullen, 1987; Darch, 2004) and assume that those at risk are gay or bisexual (Chase

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[12] The Rochdale Case refers to the successful conviction of nine men, in May 2012 for offences including rape, trafficking girls for sex and conspiracy to engage in sexual activity with a child. Following the verdicts the Secretary of State asked the Deputy Children's Commissioner to report to him urgently on emerging findings from her inquiry into *Child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups*. He asked that the report focus particularly on risks facing children living in children's homes, reflecting particular concerns about the number of victims in the case identified as residents in residential children's homes at the time of the abuse. (DfE, 2012)

[13] Beckett's research (2011) suggests that child sexual exploitation is an issue of concern for 40% of the residential care population, rising to 63% when solely considering females within this group.

and Statham, 2004). It appears that though progress in identifying and responding to the dynamics of young women's sexual exploitation has been made, misunderstanding about young men's choices prevails (Jago et al., 2011).

Clearly perspectives which overlook the possibility of boys and young men's sexual exploitation can and must be challenged. The distinct nature of stigma for young men who identify as victims of sexual abuse, and the impact on their willingness to disclose, may create a further barrier to identification, exacerbating difficulties understanding the scale of the problem. Recent work from Barnardos suggests that where they adopt a proactive approach to identifying young men's exploitation, over a third of service users are male (Barnardos, 2012: 4).

Despite these findings there may be a related danger of assuming gender to be irrelevant. As with class, the role of broader gender relations may be overlooked when relying on individualised accounts of the risks of sexual exploitation and gender clearly needs to be considered as part of the wider context which constrains young people's choices and facilitates young people's exploitation (Phoenix and Oerton, 2005).

Ethnicity
As with male victims, it is recognised that certain minority ethnic groups are likely to be significantly under-represented within child sexual exploitation service user groups (Ward and Patel, 2006). A number of reasons are given including the additional stigma associated with sexual activity for young people from some minority ethnic or faith groups, and particular distrust of the police within some communities, resulting in lower reporting rates (*Ibid)*. Likewise where services fail to adopt proactive outreach strategies for awareness raising, the likelihood of identifying cases from non-white British communities may be limited (Patel and Pearce, 2004; Ward and Patel, 2006; Jago et al., 2011).

Alternatively victims from black and minority ethnic communities may be solely recognised in relation to certain forms of sexual exploitation, such as abuse associated with gangs (Firmin, 2010; 2011). The aforementioned Times campaign (Norfolk, 2011) has drawn particular attention to the vulnerability of white girls in relation to 'Asian' males. This particular narrative, challenged by research (Cockbain et al., 2011; CEOP, 2011), potentially presents further dangers for non-white victims who may increasingly be overlooked by professionals versed in this particular model. Clearly there remains a lack of understanding about how ethnicity intersects with other aspects of young people's identities and social exclusion to render them more or less vulnerable to exploitation or isolated from support.

Risk or resilience?

Before concluding this section on risk factors and vulnerabilities I briefly turn to consider related questions of resilience within child sexual exploitation literature. Overall it would appear that regardless of whether an emphasis is placed on individual or structural explanations of risk, there is a focus on vulnerabilities which almost invariably overlooks related questions of resilience. The attention given to deficits in the lives of children affected by sexual exploitation represents important research knowledge but does little to help us understand how children challenge or overcome these experiences (Pearce, 2009). At a time when increasing research on adolescent risk has incorporated a focus on coping and resilience (Luthar, 2003; Compas, 2004; Newman, 2004; Coleman and Hagell, 2007;) this oversight appears significant. It limits our understanding about how children avoid, resist or move on from exploitative relationships. Additionally this also holds potential consequences for children's participation within safeguarding; potentially overlooking sexually exploited young people's own resources in contributing to their own protection. This is a subject to which I will return after briefly considering the 'models of child sexual exploitation' used to articulate and explain variable patterns of abuse.

Models of Exploitation

The range of risk factors outlined above in part reflects the diversity of 'model's' through which children and young people are understood to become exploited. Swann and Balding's aforementioned 'pimping and grooming' model (2002) has dominated discussions of how young people are exploited. This illustrates grooming as a four stage process which included 'ensnaring'; 'creating dependency'; 'taking control' and 'total dominance'. This model has been extremely influential both in policy (DCSF, 2009), awareness raising (CROP, 2012) and direct work with young people[14]. More recently a similar model of 'localised grooming' (CEOP, 2011) has been described which focuses specifically on grooming in public spaces, and acknowledges a debt to the Barnardos model[15]. The associated concept of 'internal trafficking' has also gained increasing recognition, referring to the movement of children and young people from one location to another within the UK, for the purposes of exploitation (Stacey, 2009). Parallel processes of grooming via the internet and other mobile technologies are also understood to play a

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[14] This forms the basis of the Barnardos '*Grooming line*' activity which has been used widely with young people in both preventative and one to one case work (Barnardos, 2007).

[15] Localised grooming is here defined as: 'a form of sexual exploitation – previously referred to as 'on street grooming' in the media...whereby one or more offenders meet a child in a public place, then groom and sexually abuse them in a variety of locations in the local area and potentially beyond it, over an extended period of time' (CEOP, 2011: 35).

growing role in children's sexual exploitation (CEOP, 2011; Jago, 2011 et al.; Beckett, 2011).

Recent research points to a number of alternative patterns of child sexual exploitation, more difficult to reconcile with a traditional grooming model (Chase and Statham, 2004; Scott and Skidmore 2006; CEOP, 2011; Jago et al. 2011). These include: 'exploitation linked to poverty and social exclusion' (Jago et al. 2011:54) describing the opportunistic abuse of a young person in need of help (such as through offering accommodation in return for sex); peer exploitation, where young people themselves are involved in the recruitment and coercion of peers into exploitative situations (Beckett, 2011); exploitation within the context of gangs (Firmin,2010; 2011); and exploitation emerging within the 'party house scenario' (Beckett;,2011: 22; Melrose , 2012).

An alternative scheme proposed by Pearce et al. (2002) categorised three forms of child sexual exploitation: i) risks of exploitation due to relationships or lifestyle; ii) exploitation of those engaging in swapping sex for things such as accommodation, cigarettes or alcohol; and iii) exploitation of those who defined themselves as selling sex. This model, developed out of in-depth interviews with young people has formed the basis of a number of risk assessment tools (Sheffield SES, 2009; NWG, 2010). Pearce herself notes that young people move fluidly between these different forms of exploitation and that boundaries between categories are often permeable.

Categorising young people's experiences of exploitation according to any model is fraught with difficulty (Creegan et al.,2005). As one practitioner cited in Brodie et al. notes:

> this is more difficult than it seems. I increasingly realise that young people I've worked with rarely fit into these hard and fast definitions –[the] commercial or financial aspect is often not a factor and specialist projects themselves work with quite open definitions. (2011:31)

Clearly there remains a lack of cohesion between definitions of child sexual exploitation and the realities of children's experiences, creating difficulties for practitioners responding to aspects of young people's behaviours or activities that remain ambiguous or may not easily be identified as exploitative.

For some writers, attempts to develop wide and inclusive definitions have become less useful, bearing little relation to the diverse experiences of exploitation in young people's lives. Melrose (2012) and Phoenix (2002; 2012) both note the very different dynamics involved in sexual exploitation occurring through the internet, peers or 'party house'

scenarios compared to that occurring through prostitution or commercial exploitation. They both argue that conflating such different models minimises services' abilities to respond appropriately to individual needs and ignores the complexities surrounding 'youth prostitution'. Phoenix proposes that the reluctance of practitioners to acknowledge links between child sexual exploitation and prostitution amounts to a form of 'discursive closure', prioritising individualised explanatory models over structural ones. She goes on to suggest that this forecloses the possibility of questioning the indiscriminate application of child protection responses to victims of sexual exploitation (Phoenix, 2010). Within a thesis that hopes to raise questions about the nature of child protection responses in this context, recognition of these broader dynamics seems crucial.

Constrained choice

Risk factors and models of exploitation draw attention to mechanisms through which young people become vulnerable to exploitation, providing a partial explanation of causality. As noted above, debates continue about the degree to which explanations tend towards individualised or structural models. I have noted an increasing tendency towards individualised causal models which emphasise children's victimisation at the hands of perpetrators, regardless of circumstances. Yet I have also presented evidence that exploitative relationships are often characterised by an individual's limited available options resulting from their social, economic and/or emotional vulnerability. Within these contexts, choices and behaviour seemingly voluntarily adopted by young people may indeed place them at increased risk. A key difference between these two models is the degree to which they allow for a consideration of young people's agency, alongside recognition of victimhood.

Several writers attempt to address these issues by reconciling the need to acknowledge young people's vulnerabilities and victimisation with recognition of their own self efficacy (Coy, 2008; Pearce, 2009). Here the allied concepts of '*constrained choice'* (Chase and Statham, 2005; Harper and Scott, 2005) and '*bounded agency'* (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2007) have proved useful tools in responding to calls for a more nuanced understanding of victimhood and coercion (Phoenix and Oerton, 2005). These concepts recognise agency and decision-making but consider it within the wider context where young people's options are severely limited or constrained due to social, economic and/or personal circumstances.

Historically the concept of 'constrained choice' has been strongly associated with financial limitations that act as key drivers on young people's decisions to engage in commercially exploitative relationships (Davies and Feldman, 1997; Melrose, 2010;

Phoenix, 2012). However a number of writers also argue the need to take account of the psycho-social or 'psychic' preconditions that enable young people to accept the terms of exploitative relationships. O'Neill (2001) citing McMullen (1987:39) argues that alongside economic disempowerment there is a need to acknowledge sexually exploited young people's 'poorly experienced and underdeveloped sense of personal power...a deep feeling of being inconsequential to anyone or anything'. Similarly Coy's work (2008; 2009) draws links between the emotional insecurity evoked by young women's experiences of residential care and their willingness to engage with risk and abusive relationships. She notes that: 'the powerlessness that young women described from the lack of consultation over placement moves led them to seek ways to exercise their agency, even where this involved harmful environments' (2009:263).

The value of such an approaches is that they enable us to look beyond oversimplified notions of children as powerless, passive and innocent. Instead they demonstrate the ways in which even the most vulnerable young people exert influence, demonstrate resilience and undertake decision-making (De Sas Kropiwnicki, 2007; Pearce, 2009). In addition O'Neill suggests that a focus on individuals' resilience may facilitate more empowering patterns of support. She explains:

> treating children and young people as victims is not necessarily going to engender positive outcomes....Analogous to the literature on domestic violence, treating young people as 'survivors' rather than 'victims' may be a better approach. (2001:98)

This position is also supported by those suggesting that many victims of child sexual exploitation fail to identify with a victim identity (Dodsworth, 2000). Writing in the related field of adult sex work Harding and Hamilton (2008: 1133) note how 'the rhetoric of 'victimhood' is noted to be frequently ignored by [those] it seeks to assist'. They argue that such terms rarely resemble the subjective meanings that individuals themselves use to describe their own experiences.

This position is strongly supported by limited examples of research and consultation which directly involve children and young people themselves (Taylor-Browne, 2002; Pearce et al., 2002). In 2002, Taylor-Browne undertook research, focusing on young women's experiences of entering prostitution as a child. Striking elements of the resulting testimonies are the limited and constrained choices that led to young people's involvement (pp.1-2) and the articulation of young people's resilience and strengths, alongside descriptions of coercion, marginalisation and abuse. The distinctive tone of the work suggests an important role for self-representation in complicating and diversifying narratives about suffering and marginalisation.

Similarly Dodsworth (2000) and O'Connell Davidson (2005) present cases where young people describe themselves as actively making choices to sell sex. These cases present even greater challenges to popular understandings of both children and victims. They are accounts in which children's pathways into, and return to, abusive scenarios directly involve their own autonomy and indeed choice (albeit severely limited by circumstance). Interestingly O'Connell Davidson (2005) notes how such stories are largely excluded or silenced by campaigners or children's charities due to fears about their ability to undermine broader awareness raising aims.

Throughout all these accounts it is apparent that young people's lives rarely fit neatly into models of risk and vulnerability. And yet these models provide vital tools for professionals, aiding identification of child sexual exploitation. I now turn to consider how these contradictions are managed, reflecting on models of service provision developed to respond to victims of child sexual exploitation.

2.4 Responses to victims – the practice base

While initial responses to child sexual exploitation emerged from a number of sectors (including adult sex work services, domestic violence provision and children's safeguarding) it is a safeguarding and child protection response that has, almost invariably, come to define the sector, reflecting the shift in discourses discussed above.

However, as noted, child sexual exploitation requires a distinct response to safeguarding to normal child protection services, due to factors that distinguish it from other forms of child sexual and familial abuse. These factors include its association predominantly with risks outside the family and home; the influence of children's own choices and patterns of behaviour on their risk of abuse; children who may not recognise the abusive nature of their relationships, and behaviours that may present as particularly challenging to practitioners (Jago and Pearce, 2008). These patterns, though not unique to child sexual exploitation, when combined, raise significant difficulties for children's services. They require services to demonstrate a commitment to young people who are often highly resistant to engagement; and to work with a high level of ambiguity within assessment and casework, often relying on proxy indicators as the basis of intervention (Harper and Scott, 2005; Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Pearce, 2009; Sheffield SES, 2009). There are well documented difficulties for practitioners in balancing children and young people's own wishes with their professional duties, and whose power to reduce contact between young people and perpetrators may be limited (Clutton and Coles, 2007). In the following section I present models of practice through which these challenges have been met and consider how these may align or diverge with models of child participation.

Mapping practice

The research evidence from the last twenty years indicates that although there are examples of good practice in supporting sexually exploited young people generally there has been a 'dearth of specialist service provision'[16] (Brodie et al., 2011:27). From the development of Barnardos SAL in 1995, specialist practice has tended to emerge in piecemeal ways, often reliant on the commitment of a single individual, or as a response to high profile cases, serious case reviews or the death of a young person or sex worker (Jago et al., 2011)[17]. While there is some evidence of a growing number of specialist services developing in recent years (in December, 2012 the NWG recorded 55 specialist projects across England) overall provision continues to remain extremely patchy[18].

A brief review of existing specialist provision and the associated literature suggests that current provision can be characterised according to three main models. These can be categorised as: i) multi-agency teams with representation from both statutory and voluntary sector[19]; iii) voluntary sector specialist projects[20] and iii) individual project workers embedded within broader statutory or voluntary sector provision[21] (Jago and Pearce, 2008). Alongside this variation in models, specialist provision also differs enormously in terms of size and scope, ranging from single workers to large teams and pan-county working (NWG, 2010). It is also important to acknowledge that many other types of services will knowingly support victims of child sexual exploitation. These include sexual health providers, runaway or missing projects, young people's drug and alcohol services , YOS's and adult sex work projects. Although these projects are not the primary focus of this thesis they should be recognised as an integral part of the national response to this issue.

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[16] Specialist projects are defined as those with a specific remit for supporting victims of child sexual exploitation.

[17] See for example the history of Blackpool AWAKEN, Sheffield SES; Barnardos SECOS; Ipswich Make a Change Team and CROP all of which developed partially in response to the death of young women who were sexually exploited or involved in selling sex.

[18] It is noteworthy that service provision remains extremely unevenly distributed across England. So for example, of the 55 identified specialist services, 17 are located within the North West of England with a population of 6.9 million (ONS, 2011); 4 are present in the greater London area with a population of 7.8 million (ONS, 2011) ; and 3 within the South East of England with a population of 8.5 million (ONS, 2011).

[19] See Blackburn ENGAGE project for an example of a co-located multi-agency team.

[20] See Barnardos SECOS, Middlesbrough, or Safe and Sound, Derby for examples of specialist voluntary sector project.

[21] See the AWARE project for an example of individual project workers embedded in broader voluntary sector provision.

Styles of service provision

Detailed accounts or publically shared evaluations of sexual exploitation provision remain extremely limited[22]. In the main, evidence is available through descriptive accounts in local service documentation such as annual reports, service leaflets, project websites, seminars or conference presentations (Streetreach, 2007; Sheffield SES, 2009; 2010; Safe and Sound,2012). A small body of research literature provides descriptive accounts of individual services (Swann, 2000; Melrose and Barrett, 2004); evaluative reviews of Barnardos provision (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Clutton and Coles, 2007; Barnardos, 2010; Shuker, 2013 forthcoming) and broader reviews of national practice (Pearce and Jago, 2008; Jago et al, 2011; Barnardos 2012). Throughout this knowledge base, service users' own perspectives on provision are strikingly absent. Although there is some evidence that they have informed models indirectly through practitioners, there are no examples which systematically record and incorporate service users' perspectives on care.

What is known from the existing research and descriptive accounts suggests that though specialist services differ depending on their management and funding, there appear to be a number of cross cutting characteristics and values which underpin provision and have come to define good practice within the sector (Swann,2000; Pearce et al, 2002; Melrose and Barrett,2004; Scott and Skidmore,2006; Clutton and Coles,2007; Jago and Pearce, 2008; Barnardos,2010; Jago et al.,2011).

Articulating 'best practice'

Across the aforementioned body of literature, a number of models are identified which continue to hold relevance. These include the development of 'outreach' and out of hours drop in services (Foley et al, 2004; Wilkinson-Shaw, 2004); 'therapeutic outreach'[23] (Patel and Pearce, 2004; Sheffield SES, 2009); holistic provision that supports joined up working practices (Wilkinson-Shaw, 2004, Jago and Pearce, 2008; Jago et al. 2011); the need for long term work (Darch, 2004; Barnardos, 2012); and a simultaneous focus on prosecutions of offenders and the use of casework approaches tailored to individual young people (Melrose and Barrett, 2004; Jago and Pearce, 2008). Additionally both

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[22] I am aware that there are a number of internal project evaluations across the sector although these are predominantly delivered for funders and internal learning. Even where I was aware of the presence of these documents they were often not available for me to reference and review publically.

[23] *Therapeutic outreach* is described by Pearce and Patel as a commitment to continuing to reach out to young people even when they reject support. It recognises that 'the times that the young women were most in need were often the times that they had rejected support' (2004:90). It considers that the message conveyed by this approach can be therapeutic in and of itself. It is similar to the concept of 'persistence and perseverance' described by Darch (2004) and *assertive outreach* highlighted in Scott and Skidmore (2006).

Clutton and Coles (2007) and Jago et al. (2011) expound the particular efficacy of co-located multi-agency teams.

Within these accounts particular values which are highlighted include: persistence and perseverance (Darch, 2004)*;* inclusive, non-judgemental and non-discriminatory provision (Swann, 2000; Darch, 2004; Clutton and Coles, 2007); flexibility and accessibility (Jago et al. 2011) and the centrality of developing trusting relationships between the worker and the young person (Foley et al., 2004, Clutton and Coles, 2007). In addition, underpinning the majority of services described in this body of literature is an influence of youth work principles including the voluntary engagement of service users.

Similar values are also reflected in Scott and Skidmore's (2006) work which provides one of the few public evaluations of service provision within the sector, and the only comparative study. The resulting report, *Reducing the Risk* evaluates the impact of Barnardos' work across ten projects and articulates a distinct model of practice. It is a particularly important analysis given the influence of Barnardos in this field across the UK. This influence is both direct, with over a third of specialist services (n=22) either wholly delivered by Barnardos or represented as part of a multi-agency team; and more indirectly through the dissemination of its service model, or through its campaigning and policy development work[24].

In *Reducing the Risk* Scott and Skidmore express the Barnardos model of provision in terms of 'four A's': 'Access', 'Attention', 'Assertive Outreach' and 'Advocacy' (2006:5). This proposes the need for services to: i) attempt to minimise young people's barriers to accessing services through a broad range of creative approaches (*Access*); ii) offer consistent and persistent attention to young people that forms the basis of protective and supportive relationships (*Attention);* iii) use *'*persistent engagement techniques' to counteract the influence of abusive adults (*Assertive Outreach*) and iv) work with other agencies to ensure that young people's needs are placed at the centre of decision-making (*Advocacy*) (Scott and Skidmore, 2006:5)*.*

Across all the aforementioned accounts of services, it is striking to reflect that specialist provision does not follow traditional approaches to child protection. Apart from the adoption of a case work model, other key characteristics such as the importance of voluntary engagement, long term relationship based work, advocacy, outreach and

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[24] Recent evidence from reviewing a range of examples of grey literature suggests the adoption of similar approaches out-with Barnardos service provision (Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service, 2010; Safe and Sound Derby, 2011).

holistic child centred practice, all reflect the distinct contribution of the third sector in this field.

Interestingly, the influence of the voluntary sector may itself be reflective of the historical failure (outlined earlier) of many to recognise sexual exploitation as a child protection issue. While undesirable and deeply problematic, this may have incidentally created a space in which alternative approaches to child protection have gained a foothold.

Though not articulated in these terms, the flexibility afforded by the independence of voluntary services and the principles of youth work which underpin the sector, are potentially more supportive and enabling of service user involvement and participatory practices. Clutton and Coles (2007) explicitly speak of a need to provide young people with 'real choices and promote a sense of positive control'. Jago et al. also emphasise the need to uphold SCYPSE's commitment to take young people's 'wishes and feelings into account in reaching any decisions about the provision of services which affect them. (2011:68). However beyond this there remains little acknowledgement of a specific need to consider children's participation or even empowerment within the field in any detail.

The acknowledgement in Scott and Skidmore's work of the importance of 'advocacy' perhaps provides the closest alignment to participatory principles. The prominence given to advocacy suggests recognition of the importance of representation and rights as core values in Barnardos work with sexually exploited young people. Yet it is important to acknowledge that the language here focuses on placing young people's *needs* rather than *young people themselves* in the centre of decision-making. In this way it stops short of arguing for the adoption of young people's direct involvement in care planning and service development.

From these accounts and evaluations of services it remains unclear whether embedding participatory approaches is appropriate or feasible within the sector, something I aim to explore further in the main body of this thesis. Though it is clear that such work is valued and promoted in places it remains peripheral to core messages of best practice. In the final section of this chapter I turn to consider examples where more participatory approaches have been adopted within the sector and lessons arising from this work.

2.5 Conclusion: framing children's participation in sexual exploitation services

Throughout this chapter attention has been drawn to how changing discourses of child sexual exploitation have aligned to shifting understandings about young people's power

and agency. The earlier sections of this chapter argued how, in the early 1990s, the actions of young people engaged in exploitative relationships were largely considered to be self-determined. Young people's agency, though recognised, was here considered in oversimplified and transgressive terms. The efforts to redress this problematic account subsequently constructed a starkly contrasting view in which children were understood as passive victims in need of 'rescue' and young people's encounters with services were framed squarely under a child protection agenda.

Although this shift has been broadly welcomed it is not unproblematic. Brown (2006) notes how sexually exploited children and young people's experiences of mainstream safeguarding services (specifically police and social care) have too often been characterised by an undue focus on victimhood, a lack of opportunity to demonstrate agency, and an understandable, though potentially disempowering, tendency to address risks, as opposed to resilience and protective factors.

Brown goes on to suggest that there are scenarios where young people who are sexually exploited 'feel disempowered in the child protection process' and where the limited choices offered to young people by services 'mirror the limited choices in their lives' (2006: 310). This is strongly supported by comments from *WWFU* who note:

> A lot of people..have pushed us into things, have forced us to do things and made a lot of decisions for us and we don't need the people who are there to help us, to do it as well. (WWFU cited in Jago et al., 2011:63)

In some ways the descriptions of voluntary sector services outlined in the previous section go part way to provide alternative, potentially less disempowering approaches to child protection. However as noted above, these models in the main fall short of embedding participatory principles or articulating aims in terms of young people's empowerment.

Despite these difficulties, it is possible to identify participatory practice developing within the sector. Since commencing work as the NWG project coordinator in 2008, and continuing research in this area, I have identified two child sexual exploitation projects (out of a possible 55 services) whose work is explicitly framed by a commitment to children's participation[25]. These are Street Safe Lancashire (Children's Society), whose work on sexual exploitation emerged within a broader children's rights project, and the nia

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[25] I refer here to projects whose service descriptions and related literature states an explicit commitment to children's participation.

project, a London based VAWG service delivering support to young people from an explicitly feminist perspective[26]. It is interesting to note that in both these cases the projects are structured by a clear ideological framework. Another interesting development, in November of 2012, was the appointment of the first 'specialist participation worker' appointed to a local sexual exploitation project in Derby[27].

Several local projects have also developed 'stand alone', 'participation initiatives'. These include the Barnardos FACE project (2005); Barnardos SECOS (2008) and more recently Taking Stock (2010), Streetreach/ NSPCC London 2010), NWG/Photovoice (2010), WWFU (2011) and AYPH (2013, forthcoming). These organisations have demonstrated the use of creative writing, photography and online spaces to support young people to make decisions about how they and their experiences are represented to others and contribute to awareness raising[28].

Nationally, despite the failure of government to involve young people in the development of SCIP or SCYPSE there have been a small number of attempts to integrate young people's voices into policy dialogue. The aforementioned work by Taylor-Browne (2002) marked the earliest example. This resulted in the publication of 'One More Chance'; a consultation with women and girls involved in prostitution. The report stated a hope that it might represent the 'first step towards facilitating the participation of children and young people abused through prostitution in the decisions that affect their lives' (Veitch in Taylor-Browne, 2002:ii). This was followed by 'the National Youth Campaign' a joint initiative by ECPAT UK and the Children's Society which included a range of young people's creative initiatives and informed the Home Office prostitution strategy (Brown, 2004). More recently the Children's Society supported members of its young runaways campaign to contribute informally to the government's *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan* (DfE, 2011). As noted in chapter one, my own work supported the development of *What Works for Us* – a national advisory network of young people affected by sexual exploitation. This initiative has supported young people to contribute to a range of national initiatives including CEOP's thematic assessment (2011); the Council of Europe's campaign on sexual violence (2010), a national review of practice (Jago et al., 2011) and Missing People's peer guidance (2013, forthcoming).

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[26] NSPCC CTAC service would also fall under this banner but has not been included here due to its focus on international child trafficking rather than sexual exploitation specifically.

[27] Personal communication with service manager, C. Connor 19 November 2012.

[28] Links to the following projects are available in the bibliography Face up2it; Pieces of Me ; Out of the Box; In a New Light; How we see it too and Be Healthy

Within research there are also important examples where young people's views have been sought directly. Works by Melrose et al. (1999) Pearce et al.(2002), and Coy (2008) all draw on the testimonies of those affected by sexual exploitation as a central basis for analysing the issue. Furthermore, both Pearce and Coy's work utilise participatory action research methods to elicit data, one central aim of which is to promote the control of research subjects in how they are represented.

However welcome these initiatives are, they are all time limited and, in the main, focus on promoting children's voice and self-representation to wider audiences. Though they represent a vitally important aspect of promoting participation rights they do little to elucidate the meaning of participation in the context of day to day sexual exploitation service provision and support, or consider how young people directly influence decision-making about their own personal care. In addition they remain very much exceptions to the rule, reliant on the interests and skills of individual workers and generally outwith the 'core business' of projects and provision (Pearce,2009; Warrington,2010). As Jago et al. note, the reality remains that service providers find 'the prospect of involving young people to be daunting and have struggled to make it a comfortable experience for young people' (2011:68).

In Warrington (2010) I considered the reasons for this conspicuous absence in more detail and presented barriers that appeared to prevent children's participation becoming embedded in both sexual exploitation services and related policy.

At a practice level possible barriers were identified from both practitioners and service user perspectives. Obstacles for practitioners included: questions about the value and worth of participation; concerns about managing the risks posed by participatory work including fears about group work; difficulties in resourcing and prioritising participation within crisis focused practice; and tensions between children and professionals' perspectives. Barriers for young people were identified as: cynicism arising from experiences of being engaged in tokenistic or manipulative processes; the burden of responsibility that may accompany opportunities; practical and logistical barriers, and the necessity for their individual needs to be addressed alongside the broader aims of the project, organisation or policy (Warrington,2010).

Another key barrier at a more conceptual level appears to be that when sexually exploited young people's expertise, input and knowledge is sought, it is wanted primarily in relation to their experiences of abuse rather than in terms of their resilience or support. Young people's capacity and expertise appears to be limited in many professionals' eyes by their victimisation.

Similarly Brown (2006) argues that even where victims of sexual exploitation are perceived to be competent they may still be viewed as too chaotic or vulnerable to feed into service or policy decision-making. This is poignantly suggested by a young woman interviewed in Taylor-Browne consultation:

> Jessica: We should be part of the decision-making. We're certainly capable of doing that but I think society tends to think you lose your brains or something when you become a prostitute. (2002:18)

Such a perspective appears rooted in normative assumptions about both children's limited capacity (James and Prout,1990; Jenks, 2005; Lansdown,2005) and enduring prejudices about the rationality of those in society deemed marginalised, vulnerable or labelled 'hard to reach' (Young,1999; Dorling, 2011). A similar point is raised by *WWFU* who allude to key tensions entrenched in a risk focused approach.

> [you don't want people] mollycoddling you, as if you can't do it yourself and like treating you like you can't, and treating you like maybe you don't have a future. (WWFU cited in Jago et al., 2011:63)

Twum-Danso provides insight on these comments suggesting that the primary concern for sexually exploited young people is 'protecting [them] from society rather than considering the opportunities for them to participate in it' (2005:3). The suggestion here is that these two objectives (participation and protection) are positioned as incompatible and subsequently prioritised, invariably in favour of the former. Addressing this bias in how we construct and limit the identities of victims of child sexual exploitation is vital. The inclusion of children in decision-making may be recognised as one important aspect of enabling victims to shift their status from outsiders to active members of their communities and the wider networks they inhabit.

Before considering this issue from service users' perspectives, the next chapter examines the theoretical perspectives that support an analysis of these issues. Specifically it considers constructivist perspectives on childhood, sociological theories of agency and discourses of participation.

Chapter three: Theoretical Underpinnings.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain the main theoretical perspectives that have informed the development and shape of this research. These premises underpin my initial research question and have been used to interpret the data. They can be divided into three areas. The first of these is a social constructionist approach to childhood (Jenks,1982; James and Prout,1990). This challenges the discrete nature of the categories 'adult' and 'child' and thus provides a means of interrogating responses to individuals based upon their membership of either category.

Secondly I turn to explore the notion of agency and its intersection with the concept of 'constrained choice' outlined in chapter two. This draws on Giddens' structuration theory and the application of his perspective to welfare service users and children's participation.

The third set of theoretical premises are derived from discourses of children's participation. Although there is no recognised 'theory of children's participation' this section attempts to elucidate key principles underpinning this diverse body of work and consider their application to this research question.

3.2 The social construction of childhood

As noted in chapter two, much has been made of the need to differentiate children from adults in relation to sexual exploitation. This is illustrated through the use of language to distance 'child sexual exploitation' from adult prostitution. Central to this is an acknowledgement that children's physical and emotional immaturity are among the characteristics that those abusing them often desire and consciously seek to exploit. In other words children's vulnerability is, in part, a product of biological difference.

In this context, questioning accepted differences between the social categories of child and adult may seem perverse. From the outset it is important to explain that adopting an approach which recognises childhood as socially constructed is not to deny biological differences between children and adults. Nor is it to dismiss the reality of childhood as a period of evolving capacities and distinctive maturity (Archard, 2004). Suffice to say, the deconstruction of 'childhood' taken to its extreme is not particularly useful in an applied

study, refuting a lived reality in which childhood, whether socially constructed or not, is experienced as tangible and distinct from adulthood.

Rather, the adoption of this theoretical framework helps explore how particular understandings and experiences of childhood are shaped by the social, economic and cultural contexts in which they exist. It recognises that in turn such influences inform the child protection and welfare policies that govern children's lives. It accepts that 'the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture' (Prout and James,1990:7).

The emergence of the social constructionist perspective on childhood

Initial ideas about the social construction of childhood arose in response to dominant psychological traditions that dominated the study of childhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jenks,1982; James and Prout,1990). These traditions presented a developmental view that understood childhood as a series of universal pre-determined stages moving from irrational infant to rational adult (Piaget,1929). They presented child development as a naturalised process that existed independently from the influence of social, cultural or economic contexts.

Questions about the universality of this view of childhood came to prominence through the work of Aries (1962). His historical analysis proposed that in some eras the concept of 'childhood', understood as a self-conscious distinction between child and adult, was not apparent.

Such bold assertions have since been challenged, and a re-examination has suggested that rather than 'childhood' being wholly absent from these eras it was simply conceived differently and as such may be unrecognisable to modern scholars (Archard,2004). Yet despite these caveats, Aries work remains influential. For, having established the historical specificity of conceptions of childhood it undermined the notion of it as a fixed, natural and universal experience (Denzin,1975; Jenks,1982).

The far-reaching influence of these approaches is evidenced through the degree to which recognition of the socially constructed nature of childhood is incorporated not only into sociological but also increasingly psychological traditions (Coleman, 2011). The joint influence of these approaches can be seen, for example, within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) which though framed by a developmental perspective rejects the idea of a universal, age based developmental

process, acknowledging that children acquire competencies at different ages (Lansdown, 2005).

The acceptance of not one, but many 'childhoods' is also reflective of wider poststructuralist thinking that sought to critique universalising or hegemonic concepts and expose the role of discourse in disguising the contextual and constructed nature of phenomena (Foucault, 1978; Qvortup 2005; Qvortup et al.,2009). This body of work supported considerations of childhood as a 'historical, cultural, political, economic and social production' (Denzin, 1975:2) and catalysed detailed analyses of how contextual influences played out.

Dominant constructions of childhood

The relevance of these concerns to research with children was demonstrated by James and Prout (1990) whose edited work documented the tenacity and continued authority of fixed notions of 'natural childhood'. Their self declared, emergent paradigm for the sociology of childhood (1990) brought together theorists and researchers who subscribed to their approach and elucidated the influences and assumptions underpinning contemporary ideas about childhood.

Among this group, Hendrick (1990) and Mayall (1994) asserted that current ideas about childhood have roots in dramatic changes to the Victorian labour market. They explain how changes in public understanding of the role of children in society was driven by both instrumental and moral concerns. Instrumentally speaking they served the changing needs of an industrialised economy that relocated children from the labour force to extended education. Subsequently these shifts in children's role, from labourer to student, re-inscribed childhood in moral terms as a time of innocence, passivity and socialisation, clearly bounded from adulthood. More recently Mayall has argued that an additional consequence of the dramatic reduction in children's economic contributions was reduced recognition of them as social actors (2002:111). He notes that within the labour force children's productivity and agency are explicit. When re-positioned within education these qualities are obscured and they become 'dependents' rather than contributors; receptacles of adult knowledge as opposed to holders of their own. Thus children's new 'position' is determined by the needs of an emerging industrial economy. Within this functionalist account children are preparing to 'become' social actors in the future rather than having influence and 'being' in the present. Although their future potential is valued they remain overlooked as of interest in their own right.

Critics of functionalist accounts of childhood highlight the creation of fixed roles and expectations for children within society (Prout and James, 1990; Mayall, 1994). They argue that these prescriptive views position polarised divisions between children and adults as natural, thereby reducing the space for alternative trajectories. Morrow argues that the implications of this account are greatest for children who do not fulfil the expected life course, compounding their existing marginalisation by rendering them failures or invisible:

> The social construction of childhood as a period marked by dependency and an absence of 'responsibility' prevents us from 'knowing' about those cases of children working and taking responsibility. (1994:142)[29]

Nancy Lesko builds on these theories considering their particular relevance for adolescents. She describes how a concern with keeping children 'socially young' builds on prevailing ideas about childhood innocence (2001). Children whose lives breach this by entering into adult activities 'before their time' are then considered transgressive, having violated a normative chronology (2001:135). This parallels examples provided by Dodsworth and O'Connell Davidson in chapter two, where young people's behaviour (in this case their involvement in selling sex) contravenes expectations of a developmental perspective. The spaces for children's idiosyncratic movement towards adulthood are narrowed or closed here: if demonstrating expected and timely socialisation they are accepted, but when demonstrating 'adult' behaviour 'too early', they are rejected and labelled 'deviant', or in need of controlling.

Raby provides a similar analysis when looking at young people's sexual behaviour. Describing the 'liminality of adolescence' (2006:10) she highlights contradictory formulations of young people as either 'dependent and vulnerable or independent and responsible' (Feld, 1999 cited in Raby, 2006:10). She goes on to suggest that the state selectively chooses between these two constructs to manipulate young people's legal status and justify social control. This can be applied to recent criticisms of contemporary child protection provision, which suggests it has developed around a homogenous idea of childhood that serves older children particularly poorly. The ability of such services to respond appropriately to older children's 'liminality' appears to have been overlooked by a a construct of all children as equally dependent and vulnerable (Stein et al., 2009; Rees et al., 2010).

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[29] Boyden's work on child labour in the global south echoes this sentiment and draws attention to the cultural as well as historical specificity of dominant views of childhood (1991). Her work critiques the universalising tendencies of a western view of childhood and the consequences in ill fitting policy in diverse cultural and economic contexts.

Childhood as a period of innocence

Kitzinger applies these ideas directly to the concept of child sexual exploitation, expounding risks of promoting normative conceptions of children and victims. On the one hand Kitzinger acknowledges the value of constructing children as 'innocent' in avoiding the 'long tradition of victim blaming which views abused children as active participants or even 'aggressors'' (1990:160). Yet she goes on to argue that 'innocence… stigmatizes the 'knowing' child in the fight against abuse' (Kitzinger,1990:160). Children who appear sexually aware or flirtatious fail to live up to an idealised image of a deserving victim, coupled as it is with notions of asexuality and passivity.

O'Connell Davidson reiterates these ideas noting how the construction of children as innocent and powerless, 'translates into a stereotypical image of the victimised child, such that a child who does not conform to the stereotype cannot be imagined as a victim'(2005:59). As outlined in chapter two, this represents a credible fear in the contemporary context where the needs of victims of child sexual exploitation have often been overlooked given their failure to conform to normative ideas about passive victims (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Beckett 2010; Brodie et al.,2011).

Kitzinger (1990) also demonstrates how constructions of children as innocent increase their vulnerability in other ways. She argues that attempts to link innocence with immaturity is part of 'an ideology used to deny children access to knowledge and power' (161). Championing childhood as a period of innocence is thus used to justify the exclusion of children from aspects of the adult world that might otherwise help to protect them.

Children as social actors

As noted, a central tenet of James and Prout's self declared 'emergent paradigm for a sociology of childhood' is the identification of children as social actors.

> 'children must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live... not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes'. (1990: 8-9).

They question simplistic ideas of socialisation as a one way transference of influence, suggesting that children themselves are actively involved in the construction of their own lives.

The idea of children as social actors has consequences for both considerations of social welfare and social research with children. It repositions children from muted objects of interest or concern, to active and vocal subjects. In Jenks words it is 'not merely an extension of a concern within children's needs and rights,... [but] constitutes a serious attempt to speak the inarticulate and produce the child's world view' (2005:47)

That said, an approach which acknowledges children's influence and evolving agency does not suggest that each child has the freedom, or sole right to define themselves (Mayall, 1994; Jenks, 2005). Nor is it to deny the role of structure on the choices available to children and their development. Rather, in keeping with Giddens' theory of structuration, outlined below, it recognises co-existent, mutually reinforcing influences of both structure and agency.

3.3. Social models of agency

Agency: an introduction

In the first section of this chapter I presented social constructivist approaches to childhood which endorsed recognition of children and adolescents as subjects and agents. The influence of these approaches is apparent in a growing body of literature seeking to demonstrate children's roles in a range of contexts: decision-making in relation to their healthcare needs and treatment (Alderson and Montgomery, 1996); negotiating public spaces (Valentine, 2004); dealing with parental divorce (Trinder, 1997); responding to adversity (Coleman, 2011) and managing personal information (Keijsers and Laird, 2010; Kerr and Stattin, 2000).

Coleman (2011) writing from a psychological perspective notes how young people are to a large extent 'constructing their own adolescence' (20). Though careful not to deny the presence of significant constraints in the lives of many young people, he proposes that recognising young people's management of their own transitions helps justify a need for more child-centred and strengths-based approaches. Similarly, research addressing how young people manage personal information, in relationships with carers, establishes the bi-directionality of influence between adults and young people (Keijsers and Laird, 2010; Kerr and Stattin, 2000; Stattin and Kerr, 2000). This evidence has subsequently been used to advocate for interventions which account for young people's reflexive decision-making processes about sharing information.

Relationships have also been noted between promoting children's agency and wellbeing. Drawing on the work of Rutter (1985) and Newman (2004), Coleman (2011) highlights the

mutually supportive relationships between agency and the promotion of children's resilience and positive identity formation.

This body of literature both builds on and promotes the idea of children as social actors proposed by the social constructionist approach. It is also integral to theories of children's participation as outlined in the final section of this chapter. By establishing children's capacities to affect change, calls are raised for their contributions to be incorporated more formally into practice. However, as I will discuss, childhood studies, (which incidentally tends to frame the discourse of children's participation) has rarely considered theoretical approaches to agency, often assuming a single shared meaning of the concept. Valentine (2011) argues that discussions of children's participation have tended towards overly simplistic and undifferentiated views of agency equated with competence, self-awareness and self-determinism.

Given the centrality of the concept of agency both to my research questions and my other theoretical underpinnings, it would seem useful to present my own approach to agency, rooted in sociological approaches and drawing in part on Giddens' structuration theory (1976; 1984; 1991)[30].

By considering social models of agency, and specifically Giddens' theory of structuration (1978, 1991), I aim to foster recognition of both children and service users' transformative capacities while simultaneously acknowledging how their choices are constrained by a variety of structural and systemic influences. I argue that the application of these ideas to sexually exploited young people can support an inclusive approach to participation which does not rely on tests of children's competence or capacity.

Agency: a revival of interest

Debates about the interplay between structure and agency are longstanding within discourses of social welfare and can crudely be categorised into polarised positions of those who blamed the subject, and those who blamed society (Hoggett, 2001). For those characterised as 'blaming the subject' (often associated with Freud or Weber) , the emphasis was on voluntarism and an undifferentiated view of individual agency which prioritised personal responsibility. Such approaches tended to adopt a moralising perspective which has proved influential in neo-liberal welfare policy, justifying the use of

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[30] Specifically a sociological rather than psychological approach to agency is adopted because of its concern with considering individual agency in the context of wider structural power. This is deemed appropriate for an understanding child sexual exploitation that recognises its relationship to social conditions and systemic inequality.

incentives and punishments to motivate change. This broad group of approaches has been termed the 'liberal model of agency' by Valentine (2011) and a 'moralist model' by Deacon and Ward (1999).

Opposing approaches emphasised structural inequality ('blaming the structure'). These perspectives (often associated with both Durkheim and Marx) have been extremely influential in post war social welfare policy and are often critiqued for constructing overly deterministic narratives about both poverty and oppression. Though motivated by an attempt to support the marginalised by adopting non-judgemental attitudes, such approaches have been accused of reinforcing a sense of powerlessness among recipients of welfare: positioning individuals as helpless in the face of systemic forces and pathologising those they sought to assist (Mann, 1986; Deacon and Mann, 1997). Deacon and Ward note that within these narratives 'the poor...have rarely featured as active agents of change' (1999:415).

Giddens and structuration theory

Giddens' work attempted to move beyond these dualisms and has been characterised as a watershed in sociological thinking about agency (Jeffery, 2011). His theory of structuration, first introduced in 1976 and developed in successive publications (1984, 1991) seeks to resolve some of the accepted exclusivity between structure and agency, asserting the mutuality and interplay of both concepts.

Specifically he notes that all structures are themselves constituted through individual action, and that individual action is constituted by structures. This proposition suggests that society itself is recursively created and recreated through the individual actions and social practices of its members, or, in Giddens' own words, 'structure only exists in and through the activities of human agents' (1984: 256).

Such a view is markedly less deterministic and objectivist than structuralist accounts of inequality. It critiques theories which position structures or systems as purely oppressive and immutable, acting on members of society regardless of their own actions. And yet, it does not deny the impact of structures and systems on individuals, proposing a more nuanced and sophisticated view of agency than that suggested by the liberal model. Rather, the relationship between society and individuals is presented as dialectical. In Giddens' words it explains 'how actors are the creators of social systems, yet created by them' (1991:213).

The possibility exists here for both structures and systems themselves to be enabling of individual agency or for individuals to actively resist and reshape those structures. It emphasises how individuals occupy a subjective status and 'are contributors to their life circumstances and not just products of them' (Bandura, 2006:3).

For Wheeler-Brooks (2009) the theory helps to resolve a dichotomy which has dogged discussions of participation and service user involvement. It does this by providing 'a way for empowerment theory and practice to move beyond the concept of an Other who oppresses from outside the sphere of the oppressed' (p.132).

For service users and children these narratives also enabled the possibility for them to return to a 'subjective status' (Jeffrey, 2011:25) and be seen as far more resourceful than objectivist accounts gave them credit for (Hoggett, 2001). Giddens' notion of self-reflexivity, is critical here. Aligned to the work of Beck (1992) it highlights the ability of individuals to reflect on and subsequently act upon their circumstances. Individuals became subjects in their own lives – rather than simply objects of policy and intervention. This breaks with the dominant pathological view of recipients of social welfare and emphasises resilience, resourcefulness, transformative capacity and strengths.

As Jeffrey explains, this approach may help to resolve the discord she describes between how service users perceive themselves and how they are viewed by professionals. She notes:

> there is considerable evidence that unlike many of those who work with them, social work clients do not usually cast themselves in the role of victim....they see themselves, in other words, as 'us' not 'them', as active agents in their own lives, rather than people simply affected passively by their external circumstance. (Jeffrey, 2011:29)

What is also significant about Giddens' approach to agency, particularly for this study, is that he allowed for a differentiated understanding, recognising that an ability to take purposive action was not uniformly or equally accessible to all but was informed by structural factors and inequalities. However while accepting contingencies Giddens still proposes the possibility of individuals, no matter what their circumstances, acting to effect change. Such a perspective presents important possibilities for those most marginalised or excluded, informing the narratives of 'constrained choice' (outlined in chapter two) and suggesting that no matter how constrained by circumstance, individuals are still able to engage in the transformation and reproduction of social life.

For some critics this perspective is overly optimistic and attributes excessive power and freedom to the part of agents irrespective of their circumstance, status, or biography (Thompson ,1989). For these writers, Giddens fails to acknowledge the variable scope in which power is exercised. Hoggett (2001) extends this argument specifically to welfare service users noting how Giddens' theory places too much emphasis on the ability of individuals to engage reflexively in identifying and acting on possibilities of change. He notes how it does not fully account for those behaviours which may appear non-rational and self-defeating, especially by those whose choices are most severely constrained. While finding value in structuration theory to explain the interplay of agency and structure, Hoggett suggests that Giddens' emphasis on self-reflexivity may prove to be exclusive, too often assuming 'conscious, rational and self-interested practice' (Valentine, 2011:351)

However others have drawn attention to Giddens' acknowledgement that some of our influence, power and exercise of agency may be unconscious and unintended. Both Ferguson (2003), who builds on Hoggett's argument about service users, and Valentine (2011) considering structuration in relation to children's participation, highlight how in this approach agency is not solely equated with freedom of choice, unfettered autonomy and the ability to act rationally. Valentine explains:

> Rather than a space in which children can act autonomously, agency is inflected with power, constituted by the social, and, as Giddens argues, also constitutes the social...unconstrained agency is less intelligible here, as are the possibilities for an agency uninflected by the social norms and hierarchies of the dominant culture in which children live'. (2011:353)

Ferguson explores these ideas in the context of service users and suggests that service users move fluidly on a continuum between subject positions that range from 'victim'; to 'own worst enemy' (i.e. someone exerting agency in ways which are self-destructive); to 'creative reflexive agent' (2003:213). He suggests that Giddens' concept of reflexivity needs to account for these variable positions and the experiences which inform them.

> The welfare subject shows that the concept of reflexivity needs to incorporate a complex understanding of the nature of agency which includes the impact of structural oppression and the biographical legacy of past and present trauma from abuse and other forms of perpetrated adversity' (Ferguson: 2003:213)

For victims of sexual exploitation the application of these ideas aligns to the concepts of constrained choice presented in chapter two. It supports recognition that some of the active choices and decisions which victims of sexual exploitation make will not necessarily further their needs for safety and wellbeing.

For Valentine this approach supports her argument to move away from a limited view of agency as 'authentic choice'. She notes that such an approach stands to reaffirm existing hierarchies by ascribing agency (and the opportunities that follow) to only the most mature, capable and autonomous of young people. In the context of participation such a view privileges those who 'appear to be more amenable... and to have more constructive agency than disadvantaged children' (p.355) justifying the exclusion of others.

Subsequently, Valentine calls for a perspective that renders agency more multifaceted or 'ambivalent' (2011). She argues that for vulnerable or marginalised children and young people such an understanding accommodates the diversity in children's lives and avoids excluding those who do not meet a mythical benchmark of agency interpreted as 'self directed action' or 'free choice'.

To summarise, Giddens' approach allows for a perspective that moves beyond deterministic accounts of victimhood and ideas about the passive client. It allows for the possibility of creative reflexive welfare subjects while acknowledging the constraints imposed by the intersection of structural disadvantage, personal biography and interventions. Although arguably Giddens does not fully account for the impact on reflexivity imposed by some of the more complex constraints which face some individuals, his perspective continues to provide a useful lens through which service users' experience can be viewed. Perhaps most importantly he emphasises how, even within contexts of constraint, opportunities to affect change are part of the ongoing recursive relationships between each individual and the wider systems and structures in which they find themselves. Such an acknowledgement provides significant support for participatory practice justifying the need to promote increasing dialogue between those using welfare services and those planning or delivering them (Jeffrey, 2011). I turn now to explore the theoretical underpinnings of that participatory practice.

3.4 Theories of children's participation

The third body of theory that underpins this research are discourses of children's participation. Despite framing this within a theoretical discussion it is important to acknowledge that children's participation is often perceived as an under-theorised field, primarily due to the dominance of pragmatic concerns (Hinton, 2008; Woodhead, 2010; Malone and Hartung, 2010) The attempt here is therefore not to articulate a mythical 'theory' of children's participation but rather to explicate shared theoretical principles that underpin this diverse body of work and which hold particular relevance for participation in the context of both children and service users.

To start it is useful to acknowledge the points of alignment between discourses of children's participation, and the preceding two bodies of theory. The influence of constructivist approaches to children's participation is identified by Hinton who notes that the 'shared conclusion [of such theories] was a widespread recognition of children's competence and value of their participation in decision-making'(2008, 286). Similarly I have argued that Giddens' theory of structuration promotes recognition of all individuals' transformative capacities, and helps to avoid an oversimplified view of children's agency which may be used to justify their exclusion from decision-making processes.

Influences on discourses of children's participation

Discourses of children's participation are themselves informed by a number of diverse influences. In particular they can be traced to traditions in international development practice (Chambers, 1983; 1997, Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Newman, 2005); radical social work and service user movements (Langan and Lee, 1989; Dominelli, 2002; Braye & Preston Shoot, 2003; Adams, 2008) and children's rights movements (Lansdown 2001; Archard, 2004). Although distinct, these represent a series of allied philosophical positions that share an interest in critiquing existing power relations within institutions of welfare and considering how this may be countered. Although the responses to, and motivations for, this concern are expressed slightly differently in each sector, they all ask questions about how individuals with different levels of personal, social and institutional power should relate to one-another. Equally they are all committed to promoting inclusive processes of knowledge generation, decision-making and the promotion of excluded voices.

Another key influence in the emergence of participatory practice with both children and adults is Paulo Freire who championed emancipatory approaches to education which radically reconsidered relationships between students and teachers. In '*Pedagogy of the oppressed*' (1970) Freire railed against the 'false generosity' and domesticating tendencies of existing welfare provision which he exposed as maintaining and protecting existing hierarchies between rich and poor (1970:54). Freire's work championed a focus on developing participants' critical consciousness ('conscientization'), enabling a shift from paternalistic and oppressive relationships between the powerful and powerless, to those of reciprocity and mutuality (1970;1973).

Freire's influence was widespread and can be seen within UK traditions of community development, youth work and radical social work (Jeffs and Smith, 1987; Carr, 2004; Ledwith, 2005; Adams, 2008). A number of writers in these fields share a concern with demonstrating the potential of institutions of care to oppress those they nominally seek to

help, colluding with service users own sense of powerlessness (Steiner, 1975 cited in Adams, 2008). Subsequently they suggest the need to rethink relationships between those delivering and receiving services (Hugman, 1991; Rees, 1991). Within these debates service users own capacities and skills are emphasised, proposing a role for social workers as facilitators of social change, rather than as rescuers of individuals (Adams, 2008). These concerns have developed in parallel to the growth of service users movements which have also championed the specific potential for service user participation in addressing wider group needs (Beresford and Croft, 1993; Beresford, 2000; Stein, 2012).

Within international development, accusations of neo-colonialism inspired critiques of needs-based, paternalistic approaches to welfare (Kothari, 2005). This in turn motivated the growth of new 'bottom up' approaches to research, evaluation and the planning of interventions within the global south (Chambers, 1983; 1997).

A distinct body of literature on children's participation sought to consider the relevance of these principles for children and young people, focusing on the rights of children to meaningfully contribute to decisions affecting their lives (Hart, 1992; Lansdown 2001; 2005; Archard, 2004; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010; Valentine, 2011; Johnson, 2011).

This work reflects the consolidation of participation within the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) where it is posited as one of three indivisible overarching principles alongside those of protection and provision (Archard, 2004). While the UN Convention proposes the principle of 'the indivisibility of rights' much has been written about the tension between protection and participation rights (Healy, 1998; Archard, 2004; Hinton, 2008; Healy and Darlington, 2009). In reality it would appear that a pragmatic approach is often adopted that has tended to prioritise children's protection rights above those of participation (Feinstein and O'Kane, 2008).

The inter-relationship between child protection and participation represents a key distinction between participatory work with children and adults. Similarly the unique power relationships pertinent to both the socio- legal position of children (Archard, 2004) and cultural expressions of childhood and youth (Hart, 1992; Boyden and Ennew, 1997) distinguish appraoches to working with children from adults.

Yet regardless of certain particularities, the aims of children's participation are largely the same as those of participatory work with adults and other marginalised groups. These are to: champion social and civic participation and promote democracy (Hart, 1997, 2008); challenge inequality; redress discrimination and imbalances in power (Davis and Hill,

2008), and encourage recognition and representation of marginalised groups (Fitzgerald et al., 2010).

Typologies of participation

Throughout the developing discourses on participation a central concern has been finding ways to measure, define and characterise participatory practice. These debates have focused on language, with arguments about the relative application and merits of terms such as partnership (Lansdown, 2001:v), empowerment (Gutierrez et al., 1998; Lee, 2001), collaboration (Carr, 2004) and participation (Hinton, 2008: 287); and also upon typologies as means of measuring or categorising practice. A range of typologies exist which predominantly seek to characterise participatory practices according to the degree to which young people are involved in decision-making. The most famous of these by Hart (1992), (adapted from Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969)), has gained widespread currency within community, youth work and children's rights. It is often used as a framework for gauging the degree to which young people's role in decision-making processes has been genuinely enabled.

Although useful, this model has been criticised for its hierarchical and linear structure (Reddy and Ratner, 2002). Hart himself acknowledges that its purpose has been served (2008). However it would appear that the drive to measure and characterise participation remains and Hart's 'ladder' has been superseded by a range of alternatives (Treseder, 1997, Lansdown 2001; Shier, 2001). Although most of these represent variants on Hart's work there are some examples such as Thomas's (2000) which seek to scrutinise different aspects of children's participation. The latter approach, developed out of work with looked after children moves beyond a simple consideration of whether children are present at and involved in decision-making to consider the degree to which different dimensions of participation are present or enabled. Thomas articulates these dimensions in terms of 'autonomy' 'choice' 'control' 'information', 'support' and 'voice' (2000:176).

Meanwhile Hinton (2008) notes that in all these typologies diversity among children and adults is submerged and questions about who is excluded and on what grounds remain unquestioned. In this way they fail to consider barriers to participation and the unequal distribution of power that the label 'participation' can itself obscure. This is particularly important given the well documented tendency of participatory initiatives to involve more compliant children (Morrow, 2001; Hart, 2009).

Boyden and De Berry (2004) specifically encourage an alignment of children and adults' participation rights, warning of the danger of approaching 'children' as an undifferentiated

category and assuming difference rather than shared experiences with adults. They note that children's particular status and age are only one of many intersecting factors that work to exacerbate exclusion or contribute to cumulative disadvantage. Morrow (2006) addresses these concerns and argues that children's participation needs to consider the intersection of different aspects of children's identity such as class, gender, ethnicity and biography. Similarly as Thomas (2000) and Hart (2009) point out, the tendency to focus solely on applying these principles to participation solely within 'formal contexts' provides a narrow view that overlooks 'connection with the everyday texture of children's lives' (Thomas, 2000: 191)

Power and participation

Questions of power remain central to any consideration of participation (Prout and Tisdall, 2006). While acknowledging that all attempts to define 'power' are problematic, it remains broadly true that a central concern of participatory practice and theory is the redistribution of power and redressing inequities in representation and influence. However several writers warn of the dangers of approaching both power and participation in overly simplistic, oppositional terms (Thomas, 2000; Shier, 2001; Gallagher, 2008; Hinton, 2008). Thomas demonstrates the tendency to operate 'as if participation is something that one can simply have more or less of' (2000: 174). Meanwhile Hinton notes an implication in participatory discourse 'that power rests either with children or with adults as though it is a zero sum game*'* (2008: 288). Gallagher (2008) responds to this debate by suggesting the application of Foucauldian notions of power to children's participation. This recognises power as something which is exercised rather than held; dynamic and relational rather than a commodity. Gallagher's argument is important for this thesis because it moves away from considering power as something concentrated in certain individuals or institutions towards recognition that power is 'distributed throughout society, exercised via a multitude of small-scale, local practices' (403).

Meanwhile Gaventa (2003; 2004) and others acknowledge a debt to Lukes' work on three dimensional power (1974) when conceptualising both adult and child participation. This model provides a useful framework to avoid the 'zero-sum' view of power that Thomas and Hinton warn against. Lukes' work suggests that although power has traditionally been considered in terms of its explicit expression ('overt power') this overlooks more subtle or manipulative forms such as 'covert power' or 'socially structured' power which professionals and organisations may exercise unconsciously (Hugman 1991, 32; Jeffery, 2011)**.** When exploring the relevance of participatory practices with children in social welfare, this perspective encourages a broader analysis of power that looks beyond a simple consideration of children's presence or involvement in decision-making forums.

Critiques of Participation: Co-option, corruption and control

A number of development writers provide more critical perspectives on the role of 'participatory practices'. (Cooke and Kothari; 2001; Cornwall;2004; Gaventa, 2004). They support the arguments above and emphasise a need for analyses of power that account for wider contextual influences and issues of inequity and exclusion. Several of these writers draw attention to the fact that the specific relationship between participation and empowerment remains ill defined. They indicate the limited evidence for genuine empowerment in many initiatives purporting to be participatory (Gaventa, 2004). This is not to discount work that falls short of our aspirations to be fully participatory, but rather to encourage practitioners to reflect on where meaningful influence is transferred or enabled among participants and to recognise the limitations of this.

Cornwall (2004) invokes the metaphor of space to explore the limits of participation. Through this she touches on the critical distinction between participation in which individuals are 'invited into' existing structures, and situations in which marginalised individuals claim, inhabit or forge decision-making spaces of their own choosing (78). She expresses this as a division between participation in 'invited spaces' (such as opportunities presented to children by school councils) and participation which itself frames new 'sites of radical possibility' (such as a student protest movement).

Cornwall (2004) notes that in reality the distinction between these two sets of spaces is less clear. The idea that any democratic space, no matter how radical, can exist outwith the influence of hegemonic socio-political power structures is dismissed. Conversely she also acknowledges the valuable potential for individuals to change and influence decision-making processes from within existing institutions. Yet despite the limitations of the metaphors, she notes how these distinctions provide important frameworks for exploring children's participation in decisions about their care and protection. Cornwall's work encourages an analysis which looks beyond evidence for children's presence in decision-making processes to question the wider context which structures those processes and influences the nature of participation that takes place therein.

Several writers draw attention to the potential of children's participation to be used as a domesticating or governing strategy (Hinton, 2008). This links to both Freirian critiques of welfare, and adult service user literature which notes the potential for service users involvement to be 'co-opted' to serve professional's or organisational ends (Carr, 2004; Adams, 2008). Furthermore Braye and Preston-Shoot (2003) note how activities labelled empowering can work to obscure and conceal existing inequities and structures of power.

These perspectives suggest the potential of work which labels itself participatory to represent corrupted or exploitative forms of participation.

In reality, as both Morrow (2001) and Cotmore (2004) have argued, participation processes may involve both empowerment and co-option at the same time. They adopt a more pragmatic perspective which recognises the complex and often hidden operation of socially structured power but equally notes the real contribution of participatory or empowerment practices within social welfare. Hugman (1991) for example acknowledges that while social work is a 'mediated' profession in which power is exercised on behalf of an organisation and the state, participatory approaches can still work to challenge inequality and social exclusion. He notes that by challenging the routine exercise of power in service delivery, and enabling service users to exercise choice, participatory approaches develop 'active subjects exercising control in relation to their own needs and the services which are provided' (Hugman 1991, 215).

So, while critiques of participation present important frameworks for an analysis of practice with children and young people it is important that they do not negate the influence and agency of individuals. Rather, they should provide a means of supporting effective reflection on the recursive interplay between structure and agency that takes place within practice and support an analysis of where meaningful shifts in power can and do occur.

3.5 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have presented the main bodies of theory that have informed the thesis as a whole. I began by outlining relevant aspects of a *constructivist approach to childhood* and contend that our societal responses to victims of child sexual exploitation are informed not only by individual needs but also broader ideas about children in general, and assumptions about their capacities. While not adopting a wholesale constructivist approach within this thesis it is used here as a tool to encourage questioning of normative ideas about children that inform the development of policies, institutions and procedures designed to support them. These approaches evidence dissonance between young people's experiences and the 'institutional form that childhood takes' (Jenks, 2005: 122). The associated recognition of children as *social actors* is also adopted within this thesis as a means of legitimising children's subjectivity, knowledge and expertise. Additionally this supports the adoption of my methodological approach which primarily addresses questions about services from the perspective of children themselves,

Secondly I described a theoretical approach to *agency* which draws in part on Giddens' theory of *structuration.* This is an approach which simultaneously acknowledges the transformative capacities of individuals and the constraints imposed by external influences and structures. It suggests that all individuals are involved in recursive, creative relationships with the systems and structures in which they are embedded. Specifically it enables recognition that all individuals exercise agency no matter what their circumstances. However I have also suggested there is a need to avoid oversimplified views of childrens' agency which simply equate it with competence or self determination. Such a view of agency potentially excludes children from a right to participate if they are not seen to be demonstrating agency in the 'correct' way. Rather children's meaningful participation requires an acceptance of the diverse nature and circumstances of children and recognition of their abilities to act upon social structures (consciously or otherwise). This perspective endorses children as legitimate stakeholders in their own safeguarding regardless of their rationality, reflexivity or constraints upon their ability to exert 'free choice'. It suggests that the multiple realities of children's lives and their particular vulnerabilities should not determine their inclusion or exclusion but rather determine conditions through which children's participation is achieved. By adopting this perspective it supports recognition of participatory processes as a means for promoting self-reflexivity that Giddens suggests as integral to agency. By enabling opportunities to reflect and voice ones experiences, inchoate feelings may themselves become clearer and an exercise of agency more self conscious and directed to ones needs.

Finally I turned to consider theoretical approaches to discussions of *children's' participation*. This section identified shared principles that underpin diverse work on children and adults' participation in a range of circumstances. I assert that foregrounding issues of power and equality within this work supports analysis of participatory practices. This contends the need to move beyond simple questions about young people's inclusion or exclusion in decision-making processes to consider the terms under which this takes place.

In the thesis that follows I draw and reflect on these theoretical frameworks and attempt to demonstrate their interrelation. First, however I turn to present the methodology for the research , including a consideration of how these aligned theoretical approaches may themselves inform the approach and analysis of young people's narratives about being a service user in child sexual exploitation services.

Chapter four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this study is to consider young people's opportunities to exercise choice and decision-making within and about their care. From the outset, a central concern was examining these experiences from the perspectives of service users, recognising their centrality to a thesis which regards authentic participation as key to well-being. The prioritisation of these voices represents a belief that this knowledge and group of experiences has to date largely remained overlooked or muted within existing literature. In addition I wished to contextualise these findings within the constraints of those delivering services, supporting a consideration of the implications of this thesis for developing practice. It is these research aims that ultimately determine the methodological approaches employed.

My interest in children's experiences of, and feelings about, receiving professional support resulted in the use of a qualitative approach that drew upon individual narrative as its main source of data. My desire to understand specialist sexual exploitation provision from the standpoint of young people required methodology that acknowledged and elicited young people's own expertise while simultaneously attempting to avoid romanticising or privileging these voices as wholly representative. My interview approach was also determined by a commitment to allowing ideas and priorities to surface in an emergent, open-ended manner. The aim was to conduct interviews that were theory building rather than hypothesis testing.

Furthermore my own professional role as coordinator of a practitioner's network, working in sexual exploitation services, presented both opportunities and tensions and encouraged me to consider the use of reflexive practices within my analysis. Practical considerations also impacted on my methodology. A desire to undertake more participatory research proved challenging within a part time study where my sample was geographically diverse and my opportunities for repeat visits were limited.

Underpinning all these considerations was also an acknowledgment of the particular vulnerability of research participants and recognition of the need to consider this within design, data collection and write up of the research.

Despite these strictures, it would be wrong to present this process as fully formed prior to undertaking the research, or one that was entirely linear. As noted above, I consciously chose to adopt an open-ended, iterative approach that was not overly prescriptive. Consequently my ideas constituted a loose research framework within which many other decisions were taken, some conscious and anticipated, others reactive or intuited, responding to the experiential and sometimes contradictory aspects of research. In this chapter I hope to bring to the surface both types of decision-making and present the evolution of my research logic.

The chapter is broadly split into two parts. The first is a consideration of my epistemological approach: presenting the methodological influences that informed data collection and analysis, and acknowledging tensions and contradictions inherent within this. It seeks to acknowledge the influence of my professional and personal relationship with the subject matter and share my understanding of what constitutes data and knowledge within this project. This section also demonstrates the alignment between my intended approach and the underlying theoretical perspectives outlined in chapter three.

The second part of the chapter details the process of undertaking the research. This starts with an outline of the collection and review of academic and grey literature exploring how my research is positioned within, the context of existing knowledge. It also includes an outline of the ethical framework which informed the design of the primary data collection. This is followed by a detailed description of my primary data collection phase including: explanations of sources of data and approaches to sampling; details of the data collection tools; and an outline of the interview process itself. Some reflections on the joys, idiosyncrasies and frustrations of this process are included here in an attempt to communicate some of the messy 'lived' experience of undertaking the research. The chapter concludes by detailing the synthesis and analysis of the data, exploring the process of interpretation and sense-making.

4.2 Epistemology

The research draws on principles and aspects of two, seemingly opposed approaches to data collection and analysis. The first is a grounded theory approach and is adopted here as 'a set of principles and practices' (Corbin, 2008; Charmaz, 2006; 2008) rather than a prescriptive methodology. My initial adoption of this approach stemmed from anxiety about undertaking research on this scale and it offered the security of an established framework to support my learning. I primarily drew upon this as a means of systematically organising and interpreting the qualitative data that emerged from my research. Despite the clear value of this approach, I was also aware that characterisations of grounded

theory as 'post positivist' (Silverman, 2001), suggested a possible source of tension with my theoretical perspectives and the second set of influences that informed my methodology.

This second group of influences are traditions of narrative analysis which bear a more obvious alignment to my own constructivist epistemological leanings. My engagement with these approaches stems from reflections during early stages of analysis. While listening back to audio interviews and undertaking initial coding I started to recognise my belief in the presence of two categories of messages emerging from the data: those that I had anticipated, with their basis in the descriptions of young people's experiences of services; and those that emerged unexpectedly from the form of the interviews themselves. It was recognition that this latter group of data (the laughter, humour, anger and silences) became 'lost in transcription' that suggested adopting methods from another style of analysis. The use of a narrative approach to analysis appeared to allow me to account for these aspects of data and to simultaneously recognise strengths in my own style of loosely directed, story-telling interviews.

My relationship with these approaches developed over the course of the project as I came to identify aspects of each approach that converged with my own concerns. This is therefore a retrospective understanding of the influence and use of both within my research.

Grounded theory: an overview

I turn first to examine the roots of the constructivist grounded theory which I adopt, informed by the work of Kathy Charmaz (2006; 2008); a proponent of the use of grounded theory to advance social justice studies.

In its original form, as devised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) 'grounded theory' was an attempt to introduce a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of qualitative data and develop a method of theory building that matched its quantitative counterpart for legitimacy and rigour (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). It has its roots in two contrasting traditions, reflective of its original authors. Glaser was informed by training in quantitative traditions and sought to apply these empirical approaches to qualitative analysis. He advocated developing middle-range theory that was both abstracted and derived from the data, via systematic systems of codifying (1978). Meanwhile Strauss's links to the Chicago school brought the influences of the pragmatism of John Dewey (1859-1952) and George Mead (1863-1931) alongside the symbolic interactionism which dominated the work of early Chicago Sociologists such as Merton, (1957) and Blumer (1969).

The influence of the specific grounded theory methodology which emerged from Glaser and Strauss's collaboration can in part be explained by the prescriptive and replicable methods that they suggested for the organisation and analysis of data. Described as a means of developing 'inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development' (Charmaz, 2008: 204) it enabled analytical processes that were previously implicit to be codified, using emerging concepts which categorised and compared data. In addition it advocated emergent theory rather than hypothesis testing; an inductive approach; and the integration of data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987).

Since the inception of 'grounded theory' differing strands have developed which broadly reflect the different influences of its original authors. It is the modernised grounded theory approach developed by Anselm Strauss in collaboration with Juliet Corbin from which Charmaz's approach is most obviously derived. This approach draws heavily on its routes in symbolic interactionism. To further explicate the value of this approach it is therefore useful to briefly explore the meaning of both pragmatism and symbolic interactionism within a research process.

Pragmatism as a philosophy of knowledge, and symbolic interactionism (the theoretical perspective which it informed), agree that society, behaviours and self are created through the action, response and interaction of self conscious beings (Blumer, 1969). Within this paradigm our actions are not perceived as mechanical responses to the actions of another but instead are based on the meaning we attach to such actions. Interaction is understood as dynamic and interpretive. As Corbin notes:

> human responses create conditions that impact upon, restrict, limit and contribute towards restructuring the variety of action/ interaction that can be noted in societies. (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:6)

This approach assumes the presence of self-reflective individuals, who can - and do - think about their actions. Significantly it advocates recognition of human beings as 'active agents in their lives and in their worlds rather than as passive recipients of larger social forces' (Charmaz, 2006: 7).

Implicit within this understanding of the world is a concept of '*emergence*' which underpins both pragmatism and symbolic interactionism. This 'recognises that the reality of the present differs from the past from which it develops' (Strauss, 1964: cited in Charmaz, 2008), acknowledging the context-specific nature of reality and rejecting a more positivist search for an objective and static version of truth.

Constructivist Grounded theory

Charmaz (2006) specifically seeks to reaffirm the links between grounded theory and its antecedents in the symbolic interactionism of the Chicago school. In order to do this she distinguishes between constructivist and objectivist approaches to grounded theory. In the latter approach she notes the influence of the more positivist epistemology of Glaser, where the researcher assumes the role of neutral, authoritative expert providing an objective view of research participants and data. This objectivist grounded theory assumes an ability to derive statements of truth from controlled data collection and analysis; the world is an external reality; observer and observed are separate; and theory is something 'out there', waiting to be discovered.

In contrast she suggests that the constructivist paradigm provides a more nuanced and reflexive practice in which theorising is in keeping with interpretive traditions (2008). This interpretative approach echoes that of Holstein and Gubrium (1995) who warn against viewing data and ideas as mere objects that we passively observe and compare. Conceptual categories emerge from our interpretation of the data rather than springing directly from it. The relationship between research data and reality is neither exact or direct, rather it acknowledges the circumstantial and experiential influences on the way that stories are mediated by participants to the researcher and then interpreted. Theory here is understood as interpretation, and a concern with identifying specific 'truths' about the world is replaced by aspirations of credibility, plausibility and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Charmaz's approach therefore provides an opportunity to resolve my desire to apply aspects of grounded theory with my constructivist theoretical leanings.

Another important aspect of Charmaz's approach is her application of grounded theory to political endeavours, using it to address questions of social justice, defined here as 'focusing on and furthering equitable distribution of resources; fairness and eradication of oppression' (2008: 203)[31]. She contests suggestions by Denzin and others that grounded theory necessarily overlooks questions of power (2008; 208). Instead she foregrounds Strauss's interest in process and demonstrates its relevance for an analysis of relationships between human agency and social structure, central to studies of inequity and inequality. In this respect Charmaz' own work, which focuses on health services, aligns itself to the concerns of both social work research and feminist theories (see for

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[31] A longer but informative definition of an interest in social justice is also provided which has undoubtedly influenced my approach and for this reason I reproduce it here in full. Charmaz explains that it incorporates: 'attentiveness to ideas and actions concerning fairness, equity, equality, democratic process, status, hierarchy and individual and collective rights and obligations. It signifies thinking about being human and creating good societies and a better world....It also means taking a critical stance towards actions, organisations and social institutions. Social justice studies require looking at both realities and ideals (Charmaz, 2008, 207).

example Harding, 1991; Dominelli, 2002). This work rejects the idea of adopting a politically neutral position in the practice of research. Similarly it shares the concerns of standpoint theories of providing accountability to research participants and the responsible use of power (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Narrative approaches to analysis

The term 'narrative research' covers a wide spectrum of approaches which in the main, though not invariably, may be aligned with the broader banner of 'discourse analysis'. Although the term narrative approaches covers a diverse number of research techniques, spanning all aspects of the research process, within this study their influence was restricted to data interpretation and analysis. In retrospect it is clear that a more distinctly narrative approach may also have benefitted the design and implementation of interviews themselves. However the initial qualitative research design did not draw on such approaches which were not considered until part way through the process.

As noted earlier, narrative approaches to analysis were first considered in response to the experience of listening back to the young people's interview recordings. During this process I became aware of the impact of the interview context on the stories that were shared with me and the ways that they were told. Returning to the recordings I sensed that young people responded to and used the space of the interview differently depending on their own needs and vulnerabilities. This raised questions about why young people chose to share certain things, at certain times, and in particular ways, within each interview. These questions began to highlight the limitations of a purely grounded theory analysis: its reliance on coding and categorisation; a related tendency to fragment the data; and a focus on content rather than form.

In contrast to grounded theory, what narrative approaches share with other strands of discourse analysis, such as linguistic or conversational analysis, is a primary consideration of form, as well as content of data, as a unit of analysis (Silverman, 2001). In keeping with the constructivist approach advocated by Charmaz, narrative approaches to analysis draw attention to the process of research itself and see data and analysis as emerging from interactions between researcher and participants (Plummer, 1995; 2001; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Chase, 2003). What then separates narrative approaches from other forms of discourse analysis is an interest in data as a whole: attending to the chronological nature of stories; how they produce meaning; and recognition that they are 'inherently *social...* produced for a specific audience'(Elliott, 2005: 4):

> Narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997: xvi)

Unlike traditional grounded theory methods which are accused of 'overlooking the form of their data' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 68), narrative approaches to analysis give precedence to narrative coherence, above a desire to fragment data into codes and categories. Some do consider narrative approaches compatible with coding, as long as analysis simultaneously considers the whole in relation to the parts of data (Charmaz, 2008; Saldaña, 2009). Considering data as a 'whole' may also extend beyond the boundaries of the interview narrative and take account of field notes and 'even memories of meetings with that person' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 69).

Relevance of narrator

A key characteristic of narrative analysis is the idea that stories are co-produced, through the presence of both teller and listener. For Plummer, stories are performative, and storytelling a process of symbolic interaction (1995: 20). Meaning simultaneously emerges from the act of listening and sense making - 'an awareness that the researcher..is also a narrator' (Elliot, 2005:6).

Recognition of the dual roles of both interviewee and researcher is sometimes described in terms of first and second order narratives (Elliot, 2005). First order narratives are the stories that individuals tell about themselves and their own experiences and second order narratives are the accounts we construct as researchers to make sense of the social world with which we engage.

For Plummer this dualism is rejected in favour of recognition of interaction between the two narratives and an understanding of 'stories... as joint actions' (Plummer, 1995: 20). Implicit within this is a recognition that findings or 'truths' derived from interviews are 'constructed' rather than simply 'collected' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

Feminism and influence of biography

Recognition of the narrator's role in the co-construction of meaning is also associated with influences from feminist research which foreground the significance of a researcher's own standpoint and biography on the process. This is a cross cutting concern, influencing researchers from a range of traditions including those identified primarily as grounded theorists (Corbin, 2008; Charmaz, 2008) alongside those who align themselves to narrative analysis (Elliot, 2005; Plummer, 2001; 1995; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) or ethnomethodology (Holstein and Gubrium, 2008; 1995; Sangster, 1998). Although

Harding (1991) points out, there is no 'one' feminist methodology, she asserts the tendency of feminist studies to engage with embodied and embedded knowledge and explorations of the subjective. This position asserts that we cannot separate ourselves from the acts of undertaking research and analysis (Trinh, 1989; Lincoln, 1993; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; O'Neill, 2001; Olesen, 2008) and necessitates self-reflexivity within both data collection and analysis.

The adoption of this approach demands me to consider how my own biography, politics and position mediate the research questions that I ask; the approach taken; and my interpretations of what emerges. I therefore acknowledge the role of both tangible aspects of my biography: (for example my status as a white, educated, middle class female); alongside those less substantive aspects of my being (such as my own experience and memories of adolescence). All these and more form the interpretive lens through which I seek to understand the experiences of young people and professionals. It explains why, within this study, I have incorporated elements of self-reflexivity, acknowledging the influence of myself as a research instrument.

Defended subjects

> When people talk about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a little, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was', aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truth of our experiences.
> *(Personal Narratives Group (1989) cited in Sangster, 1998:87)*

These observations hold relevance for all qualitative research but potentially hold particular significance for young service users who may have a range of reasons for withholding information or communicating in more abstruse ways (Punch, 2002; McLeod, 2007; Kohli, 2009). In order to explicate potential 'truths' expressed this way there is a need to consider the range of processes that influence how stories are told. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) provide one such approach through their concept of 'the defended subject'. This strategy, derived from their research on individuals' experiences of crime, recognises a number of factors that influence the manner in which narrators respond to questions. For example, it assumes that respondents do not necessarily hear or understand questions through the same frame of reference as the interviewer and may not know why they experience or feel things the way they do. It also recognises that interviewees are invested in protecting their vulnerability through a variety of devices which may include a need to disguise at least some of their 'true' feelings and actions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 26).

In the context of this research, where respondents were identified as receiving support for risks or experiences of sexual exploitation, an awareness that my research might provoke particular anxieties and related defences was critical. I also recognised vulnerabilities associated with identification of oneself as a service user in need of support (Dominelli,2002; Banks 2006; Adams, 2008) and considered how this may influence individuals' responses to professional intervention.

Recognising the effects of people's defences against anxiety on the stories they tell about themselves requires researchers to engage with tacit, liminal and implied meanings, and consider possible explanations of accounts or contradictions within data. Principles of validity for Hollway and Jefferson rest on the idea of uncovering the most credible explanations for data which (though interpretative) require systematic analyses of evidence to support whatever claims are made.

In my own study this relates to the conscious and unconscious decisions young people make about how to depict themselves to me, given their understanding of my role. I recognised, for example, that within their interviews young people's decision about whether or not to identify themselves as a victim of abuse told me little about their experiences of sexual exploitation (which I did not know) and more about the identity they wished to present to me. Similarly, when a young person provided a bold and humorous account of her dealings with social workers, these were hard to verify on points of fact, but provided insight into that respondent's wish to publically humiliate or disempower professionals responsible for their care.

I recognised that what young people understood as the purpose of my interview also undoubtedly influenced their responses to my questions. Increasingly I identified the possibility that some young people used the interview strategically, as a means of sharing views with a wider professional audience or adopting the role of advocate for other absent service users.

Narrative approaches to analysis and social constructionism
Throughout this discussion of narrative approaches to analysis there is an emphasis on contingencies that risks overstating scepticism about the reliability of data. Indeed when acknowledging the plurality of influences on the production of narratives there is a danger of abandoning a search for truth or causality. In response to these concerns narrative researchers explicitly reject the extremes of social constructivism which risk denying the lived realities of the individuals and communities being studied (Plummer, 2001).

While narrative approaches draw on reflexive approaches and acknowledge that subjects are only knowable in relation to the researcher, the primary focus remains on people's lived experiences (Plummer, 2001:12; Gubrium and Holstein, 1997).

This reflects what Elliot terms the 'humanist tradition' within narrative approaches: the need to place an individual, embodied, feeling human being at the centre of social research (2005). Like Hollway and Jefferson, Elliot recognises that though people cannot be totally known through the process of research there is a 'relationship between people's ambiguous representation and their experiences' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 3).

Within my own study the implications of this approach are the simultaneous acknowledgment that young people's testimonies do not necessarily depict experiences and events exactly as they have occurred, while accepting that narratives have a relationship to an experiential truth albeit one that is neither linear nor simple.

Conclusion

What I hope to have demonstrated within the preceding section are core aspects of my epistemological approach and their influence on my choice of methodology. My adoption of influences from both narrative analysis and Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory stem from their interpretive approach to data; interest in emergent themes and recognition of the presence and influence of the researcher on and within the process.

From grounded theory I have derived approaches to the coding and organisation of data and its roots in symbolic interactionism. My adoption of an approach, informed by the work of Charmaz is influenced by her application of grounded theory to social justice research and her recognition of the influence of the researcher's biography upon the process.

Meanwhile the suggestion, embedded within narrative analysis , that concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories devised by research participants trying to explain and make sense of their experiences, resonates with my intuitive response to my data. Narrative research's concern with viewing interviews as a whole has also aided analysis.

The next section presents the influence of these epistemological perspectives on both the design and process of interviewing and my approach to analysis.

4.3 Data collection and ethics

I now move from theory to practice, outlining how narrative approaches and constructivist grounded theory are applied to the process of data collection. This section begins with an overview of the literature and policy review that was undertaken both before primary data collection and reviewed prior to analysis and write up. Secondly it presents the ethical framework that underpins the research. It then outlines the practical data collection activities (interviews with young people and practitioners), before outlining the process of coding and analysis. Throughout I attempt to demonstrate how my epistemological approach has informed practice.

Literature and policy review

There are three sets of literature which have informed my thesis, including two strands of academic research and a strand of 'grey literature'. The first is research and policy relating to the sexual exploitation of children and young people – and in particular its influence on the provision of support. This work is outlined at length in chapter two and provides the backdrop to the dynamics of service provision under investigation. The second group of texts focuses specifically on the application of participatory principles and practice within professional systems of welfare. My main interest within this literature is the consideration of these principles within child protection services. However the limited number of sources available has necessitated an examination of these concerns in relation to adult social care and wider children's services. Some aspects of this literature are incorporated into chapter three on theoretical perspectives and others are referred to throughout the findings. It is the almost complete absence of an overlap of these first two bodies of literature that provides a primary justification for this study[32].

Thirdly I have consulted a small number of resources that include the direct testimony of children and young people using sexual exploitation services. These texts, which I will refer to as 'children's voices texts' differ significantly in form from the previous two and present both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand these texts are few in number and are often the result of diverse production processes that are unsystematic or opaque and hence difficult to compare. On the other hand within a sector well documented by researchers, campaigners and journalists very few examples of the direct voices of young people exist. So while these texts are treated with caution and as

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[32] There are a few notable exceptions to this. They include the aforementioned work of Taylor-Browne (2002) who undertook an extensive consultation with girls and young women who had been sexually exploited for the Home Office and Brown (2006) who managed and wrote about the N*ational Youth Campaign on Sexual Exploitation*, a participatory initiative with sexual exploitation service users that fed into a Home Office consultation on prostitution. Pearce (2009) also dedicates a section of her book to exploring the relevance of these principles to sexual exploitation practice.

supplementary rather than primary data, they provide an invaluable source of information which I have considered as both contextual and comparative to my main sources of data.

It is important to acknowledge that this was not a systematic literature review. This is due to both the breadth of academic writing available within the relevant strands of literature and the iterative nature of my engagement with the literature.

The main body of the literature review was undertaken in the first year of study (September 2008 –2009). The overall aim of this endeavour was to review existing knowledge on both young people's participation and the care of young people at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation. Searches were undertaken on a range of databases and search engines. These included both academic literature databases (ASSIA; SocioIndex; International Bibliography of the Social Sciences; Childdata) and web-based searches on a range of policy and practice based sites (including Hansard , SCIE; NSPCC Inform; Barnardos). A variety of search terms and phrases were employed in various combinations. Key terms included in searches were: sexual exploitation; child prostitut*; youth prostitut*; sexual abuse; participat*; empower*; child participat*; service user involvement; decision-making. Children's voices texts were identified largely through contact with individual service practitioners undertaken in my former role as NWG coordinator[33].

Literature was restricted to English texts from the UK from 1990 onwards, although priority was given to texts from 2000 onwards. The inclusion of the earlier texts enabled current policy and practice to be considered within a wider historical framework. This decision was supported by recognition of key shifts in policy from 1989 onwards with regard to children's rights and participation (The Children Act, 1989; UNCRC, 1989) and significant shifts in UK policy research from 1995 in regard to child sexual exploitation[34].

Due to the changing nature of the sector and significant growing policy and public interest in child sexual exploitation from January 2011, there was a need to update my literature review. For this reason initial searches were repeated in mid 2012 in anticipation of presenting this thesis and as a means of identifying more up to date literature.

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[33] This formed part of a professional task developing the resource library on the NWG website. See www.nwg.org.uk/resources for more details.

[34] My initial literature review resulted in the publication of an earlier article '*From less harm, to more good*' (2010) suggesting the meaning and value of participation to children and young people affected by sexual exploitation. The article argued for a need to avoid polarised distinctions between children's participation and protection and suggested that upholding such a division may further marginalise victims of child sexual exploitation. However this argument was not based on empirical evidence and itself suggested a need for further research.

Ethical procedures

Any research engaging with human subjects requires a consideration of ethical procedures to mitigate against the possibility of harm to participants, researchers or the wider communities represented (Boddy and Oliver, 2010). Where respondents include children and victims of abuse a number of additional steps are required to prevent harm.

In order to design a research process which addressed these concerns I began by consulting a number of existing ethical guidelines on research with vulnerable children (NCB, 2003; Scott and Hayden, 2005). In addition I reviewed a small number of studies specifically considering ethical issues involved with research with victims of sexual exploitation and sexual violence (Melrose et al., 1999; Pearce et al., 2002; Coy 2008; Barter et al., 2009). These texts expound the underlying principle, to which I subscribe, that the responsibility to safeguard all children and vulnerable young adults transcends an individual's objectives as a researcher (Morrow, 2005). In addition, I acknowledge the impossibility of predicting all possible ethical dilemmas that emerge throughout the process. Guidelines therefore provide a framework but do not foreclose the need for ongoing reflection (Morrow, 2005).

At a procedural level my own framework was overseen by the University of Bedfordshire research ethics committee who gave approval for me to conduct this study. A copy of my statement of ethical practice is included in Appendix 7. Key aspects of this approach are outlined below alongside reflections from practice to illustrate some of the challenges and limitations of working within any ethical framework.

Ethics and the participation of young people
When dealing with young victims of abuse there is clear evidence of the importance of working in close partnership with care-giving agencies (Pearce et al, 2002; Scott and Skidmore,2006). All young people approached to take part in this research project were therefore initially contacted via gatekeepers within the specialist service provision that they attended. This approach was adopted firstly to enable a process of risk assessment and referral to take place through those who knew the young people and secondly to ensure professional support was in place for any necessary follow up or child protection referral.

Informed consent was obtained from both professionals and young people interviewed. In the case of young people under 16 years, parental consent was also obtained. Informed consent required ensuring all participants had a thorough understanding of the purpose and nature of the research. Explanations of the project were provided in advance in both

written and verbal forms. The form and language of information sheets was adapted for both adults and young people to maximise accessibility (Gallagher, 2009). In addition considerable time was dedicated to reiterating this information at the start of each interview, recognising that prior understanding was variable and sometimes piecemeal. Opportunities to ask questions were provided to all respondents prior to requesting their written consent. Copies of information sheets and consent forms were left with all respondents (See Appendices 1-6).

Despite this provision of written consent, I understood consent as part of an ongoing process (Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Alderson, 2005; Mudaly and Goddard, 2009). In particular I anticipated potential for young people to reveal more than they may feel comfortable with during an interview (Alderson, 2005). This predicated a need for opportunities at the end of each interview to reflect on what had been shared, reiterate the purpose of the project and check with participants if they were still happy for all the interview data to be used.

Further efforts to ensure young people were able to dissent were introduced by handing them control of the recorder at the beginning of the interview and repeatedly reminding them of their right not to answer questions. In one case, with a young woman with a mild learning disability, I started the interview by role playing her asking to stop the interview or say 'no I don't want to talk about that', as suggested by both Mudaly and Goddard (2009) and Morrow (2005).

A key part of the aforementioned process of obtaining consent included addressing questions of anonymity and confidentiality. These are central to any social research, but have particular significance with victims of abuse. Assurances were provided to all participants (young people and professionals) that interviews would be anonymised and any details that risked identifying them would be removed from the data. The limits of confidentiality were also outlined at the start of interviews, explaining my own safeguarding responsibilities. I explained my commitment to keeping young people informed, where possible, in the unlikely event that information had to be shared with a third party. In the event there were no breaches of confidentiality required throughout the course of this project.

In group interview settings, confidentiality was more complex and there were further limits to the level of privacy that I could control. For this reasons group interviews commenced with a process of developing a group agreement that asked for those present to respect each other's right to confidentiality while reminding them of the limits to what I could control. In addition, I clarified that I would not support the use of group interviews to

collude in gossip or share stories about absent individuals. One group interview was temporarily stopped upon recognising that two young women were starting to use the space to speculate on another (absent) young person's pregnancy. The interview resumed upon their agreement to adhere to our ground rules and focus their own responses on the research questions.

The above considerations of gatekeepers, consent and confidentiality all refer to procedural aspects of ethical research. They are aspects of ethical practice that we plan for and apply prior to undertaking research. In addition there are aspects of ethics that cannot be predicted and apply to the application of principles of practice. This includes less tangible aspects of ethics such as the demonstration of sensitivity, honesty and respect, and relational dynamics that emerge between researcher and researched. It reflects the observation by McLeod (2007:285) that 'a prerequisite for adults working with disaffected youth is sensitivity towards issues of power'. In essence this meant recognising the power imbalance implicit not only within the research relationship but also stemming from my status as an adult and professional and considering ways to minimise any detrimental effects of this privilege. I attempted to address this through a commitment to reflective practice and the incorporation of techniques which included: rapport and trust building at the beginning of each interview; repeated checking 'is this okay?'; ensuring copies of any young people's work were returned to participants; enabling young people to listen back to audio recordings or read transcripts if requested; and committing to feeding back research findings to all participants in a way that is meaningful (O'Kane, 2000; Barter et al., 2004; Curtis et al. 2004; Morrow, 2005; Daly, 2009; Gallagher, 2009; Hill et al., 2009)[35].

Another important consideration which is particularly salient to work with victims of abuse is consideration of the potential for interviews or involvement in research to cause distress. This touches on the need to balance possible risks of re-traumatisation with potential benefits (and rights) of young people's participation (Mudaly and Goddard, 2009). In part, the focus of my research on experiences of professional care, rather than experiences of abuse tried to address these issues, supporting young people to avoid sharing details of their victimisation, unless they actively chose to. I was also conscious of avoiding unnecessary replication of existing research which directly addresses these experiences (Melrose et al., 1999; Pearce et al., 2002; Taylor-Browne, 2002; Coy, 2008). Both before and during interviews I reminded young people that what I was really

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[35] I am currently in the process of developing a young person friendly account of the main findings from my thesis to share with service users and local projects.

interested in was their experiences of getting support. I then emphasised that I didn't need to know why they got involved with a service, unless they chose to explain this to me. What I hoped was that in instances where young people choose to share details of their abuse or risk taking, it was on their own terms - as part of an active choice in how they wished to represent themselves to me. Though their status as service user was explicit, their identification as a victim was neither assumed or elicited. In keeping with the notion of the 'defended subject' I was prepared for young people's own representations of self to be partial and subjective, coloured by the normal anxieties attached to self image and representation. What mattered most to me was that as much as possible, these representations were led by young people themselves.

Despite this approach two young people became visibly upset during interviews. In both cases this occurred when young people began recounting particularly difficult experiences of working with professionals. In both cases the interview was stopped to provide space for me to check they were okay and remind them of the offer to terminate the interview or invite their project worker to join them. In each instance the young people chose to continue their interviews and we agreed that I would ask their worker to arrange a time for them to reflect on the interview afterwards.

The adoption of the approaches noted above and the development of the ethical framework laid out in appendix 7, sought to both safeguard interviewees against harm and promote the research as a positive experience. However at times applying this framework within fieldwork presented challenges. In the next section I present two examples which reflect the dynamic and complex nature of ethics in practice within this context.

Examples of ethics in practice

The first example relates to a situation where a young person's autonomy and choice about how to represent herself were undermined by a failure of gatekeepers to respect her right to confidentiality. During my interview, the young woman in question had chosen to present herself to me as having been identified as 'at risk' of sexual exploitation, rather than as a victim of abuse. Upon finishing the interview, we met with the young woman's project worker who openly stated how valuable this particular young person's perspective was given she were someone who had 'been sexually exploited' and 'knew what it was like'[36].

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[36] Quotes taken from fieldnotes.

Although well intended, these comments undermined the young women's right to withhold details of her history and choose how to represent herself to me (a stranger). Simultaneously a suggestion, although unspoken and unknown to the worker, was made that she had lied to me. At this point the imbalance of power between myself and the interviewee came into sharp focus. My own ability to manage and maintain personal privacy stood in stark contrast to this young woman's within the space of the support service. Unsurprisingly within this moment I sensed her humiliation and shame.

The incident demonstrated some of the unforeseen impacts that participation within research may have on participants, and the ways in which processes seeking to promote self-representation may inadvertently compromise individuals' abilities to control how others see them.

This interaction, seen as part of the research process, breached this young woman's right to confidentiality, though it did not occur as a result of my professional actions or in a way I could anticipate and therefore guard against[37]. In this case the project worker had wrongly assumed that this young woman's experience of abuse was the focus of our interview. Presumably she considered that this was the only potential line of questioning for interviews with service users within a sexual exploitation project. At this moment I observed a demonstration of the significance and impact of power relationships between professionals and service users. The breaches of privacy, described by so many of my interviewees, was brought into sharp focus. Distinctions between the more formal spaces of data collection and the informal encounters that surrounded them collapsed.

The second example emerged within a group interview setting. It illustrated the impact of group interviews on confidentiality and also raised questions about balancing the desire to promote inclusive practice with ethical guidelines. On this occasion three young women, with previous experience of working together, were invited to participate in a group interview. One of the three, who I had been told was unlikely to engage due to 'a chaotic lifestyle and indifference to services', arrived with her friend (a non-service user) and her friend's baby. She also announced on arrival that she had very little time and could 'only stay for a bit'.

My initial reaction was to thank her for coming but explain that her friend could not participate in the interview and would have to wait for her outside. Unfazed she promptly

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[37] Quote taken from fieldnotes.

responded by asking the other two participants in somewhat loaded terms: 'you don't care if my friend stays here do you?' to which they unsurprisingly replied 'no'[38].

I recognised quite quickly that insisting upon my original stance was likely to result in this young woman leaving with her friend. I was an unfamiliar visitor, on her territory, asking for her support but setting out new parameters about the terms on which she was welcome within her own project. In addition the young woman's very presence demonstrated her commitment to participate in my research with no obvious benefits for herself. While on the one hand asking her to leave would adhere to my ethical procedure I felt that such a stance represented a rejection of the young woman's offer to help with my research. It communicated the suggestion that my 'professional procedures' were more important than my interest in hearing her views. I also suspected that given the project workers surprise at her attendance she represented an important perspective that might otherwise be difficult to access and which I risked silencing by asking her friend to leave. I therefore, decided to allow her and her friend to stay, based in part by my awareness she would shortly leave and my knowledge that all three invited participants were over 18 and had a long history of group work together. Though nervous about my decision, I took steps to ensure that everyone was aware of my limitations in controlling confidentiality and began by focusing on broad, impersonal questions which I hoped avoided personal revelation. In the end the young woman and her friend stayed for twenty minutes during which time she spoke candidly of her attitude and experiences towards services. During this time I openly discouraged the other interviewees from sharing their views, suggesting we focus on the young woman who could only stay for a short time. Following her departure I had an opportunity to check that the other two participants were okay with what had happened and continued the interview as planned.

Ethics and representation

Both of the aforementioned examples relate to a particular tension between protecting children and vulnerable young adults and respecting their right to represent themselves. As Plummer notes 'the power to tell a story, or indeed to not tell a story, under the conditions of one's own choosing, is part of the political process' (1995: 26). In the first case the young women's right to tell her story, and avoid presenting herself as a victim of abuse, was undermined by a narrative provided for her by a project worker. Her power to represent herself was limited by the context in which we met, her identity as a service user and the authority of the project worker's narrative within that space.

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[38] Quote taken from fieldnotes

In the second example questions are raised about whether research ethics should engage with questions of inclusion or exclusion, that extend beyond the boundaries of normal procedures and possibly come into conflict with them (Melrose, 2011). It echoes comments from practitioners that 'avoiding research with sexually exploited young people [in the name of safeguarding] can make researchers complicit in marginalising their voices'. (Brodie et al. 2011: 34).

This project is in part borne of a commitment to listen to children's stories and voices about a set of practices and policies that concern and affect them. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, my intention is not to privilege or romanticise these voices, nor to make claims for their ability to represent all children or all service users. However given their absence to date from relevant literature, their presence and subjectivity is as much a part of my ethical framework as other aspects explored here. Recognising these added ethical dimensions acknowledges how few approaches to research with vulnerable young people are entirely unproblematic and require a commitment to flexible, transparent and reflective practice.

Primary data collection

Recruiting my sample

As outlined in the section 4.3 young people and practitioners were engaged within the research through the development of close working partnership between myself and a number of specialist voluntary sector projects. At the time of recruiting my sample (which included both young people and practitioners) I was employed as network coordinator for the NWG. Within this role I had established a range of contacts nationally with project workers and managers through whom I distributed information. In order to promote a culture of transparency and accountability, and ensure divisions between my roles as practitioner and researcher I sought written endorsement from the chair of the NWG to approach these contacts using my professional identity (see appendix 10).

I was conscious of wishing to maintain a clear separation between the work I undertook as a network coordinator, which served wider organisational and members needs, and that which I undertook to serve my own personal professional development. Mindful of literature exploring the advantages and pitfalls of 'insider research' and following full consultation with line managers and research supervisors, it was agreed that a full separation of roles was not feasible and undoubtedly my existing relationships with project workers supported their agreement to engage in the research and identify young people to take part. However I remained careful not to recruit young people through the participation initiatives I led either from my work within the NWG and latterly within the

University of Bedfordshire. This decision was led from a desire to both avoid confusion about my role and to avoid participants feeling pressured to participate based on relationships they had formed with me in different contexts.

In order to recruit my sample of service users an initial group of 14 projects were approached via named project workers. They were sent information about the project and received follow up calls. I recognised that it would not be possible for my research sample to be representative, at either a project level or individual level. This was due to both a lack of national data and the small number of service users referred to the research. The sample (n=20) was primarily determined by who project workers were working with at a given time, who they assessed as appropriate and which of these young people were interested in engaging in the research. Where possible I adopted an approach of purposive sampling which sought to ensure some elements of diversity were apparent within my sample. This included an attempt to reflect young people from a range of projects, spanning both rural, and urban settings; young people of different ethnicities, and perhaps most importantly both young men and women. Given the significance of gender to sexual exploitation literature and the acknowledged under-representation of boys, I specifically approached at least four projects who I knew to be working with boys and young men. In the end I conducted research in all of these sites and my final sample included four young men drawn from three of these projects.

My sample of practitioner interviewees was smaller (n = 10) and these were recruited via professional contacts. Again the intention was not to develop a representative sample but to undertake purposive sampling, seeking to ensure representation from both voluntary and statutory sector and including individuals practicing at both project worker and management levels. I also sought to include some practitioners whom I knew to have experience of undertaking participatory initiatives and those in projects where I understood this was not the case. Full details of both samples are included below:

	Gender	Ethnicity: White British	Age range	Involvement with social care	Looked After
Young people	16/20 female 4/20 male	18/20 White British 2/20 BME*	14-19yrs	17/20	8/20

TABLE 1: Details of service user diversity

Sample includes one young person who self identified as English Gypsy and one as British Pakistani

	Gender	Organisation Type	Role
Practitioner	8/10 female 2/10 male	6/10 National Children's Charity: Voluntary 3/10 Independent Voluntary 1/10 Multi-agency team	6/10 Project Worker* 4/10 Management only

TABLE 2: Details of practitioners interviewed

Defined as 'project worker' if delivering frontline practice and holding case load. Some project workers also held some management responsibility.

Participating Project	Organisation Type	Rural/ Urban	Work with young women	Work with young men	No. of interview-ees
Project i	Independent Voluntary	Rural	Yes	No	1
Project ii	Independent Voluntary	Urban	Yes	No	3
Project iii	Multi-agency team	Urban	Yes	No	2
Project iv	National Children's Charity: Voluntary	Rural	Yes	No	4
Project v	National Children's Charity; Voluntary	Urban	Yes	Yes	5
Project vi	National Children's Charity: Voluntary	Rural	Yes	Yes	3
Project vii	Independent Voluntary	Urban	No	Yes	2
TOTAL	-	3 R/ 4 U	6/7	4/7	20

TABLE 3: Details of participating projects through which service users were identified

Sample bias

It is important to point out that the sample of young people interviewed for this doctorate could not be considered representative of a wider body of sexual exploitation service users. The sample was largely determined by the choices of project workers, presumably based on ideas about who would who would turn up, be interested in the project and willing to speak about their experiences. Such criteria, though not specified by me, undoubtedly informed the diversity of the sample and are likely to have skewed results towards perspectives of young service users deemed to be the most reliable and articulate, and potentially less likely to represent the highest risk cases[39].

Perhaps the most important bias to acknowledge is the fact that all the young people I interviewed were willingly engaged with a specialist voluntary sector project[40]. This suggests that in all cases those interviewed accepted a degree of need and recognised the potential of services to help and support them. More specifically, all participants share some acknowledgement (made explicit by their involvement in the study) that they had been at risk of, or affected by sexually exploitation. While such a bias may be inevitable in a research project like this, it is important to consider the voices that remain absent. These include young people whose risk has not been identified or recognised; young people whose needs have been identified but have refused to engage with sexual exploitation services; and those service users who may be deemed uninterested or too chaotic to take part in the research. While the absence of these voices must be acknowledged, it is not to undermine the value of the perspectives that are present. The fact that those interviewed have willingly engaged with services makes their critiques and analysis of those services both valid and considered. Without ignoring the very pressing questions about participation raised by absent voices, it is important to recognise that the perspectives within the sample still provide a seldom heard perspective on sexual exploitation support. What is more, the fact that young people agreed to take part in the research suggests some level of interest in the development of services. In many ways this makes them an ideal group with which to explore issues around participation, considering the degree to which pursuing these interests has been enabled or hindered.

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[39] It is apparent that a number of those interviewed may have represented high risk cases at some point in their involvement with sexual exploitation services.

[40] In all but two cases the specialist support services that young people received was delivered by a voluntary sector project. In the remaining two cases their support was delivered by a voluntary sector worker based within local authority multi-agency partnership.

Engaging young people in the research process

All young people interested in taking part were invited to meet me for an informal chat to check they understood the project and what it may mean for them to be involved. Despite this offer, all those who voiced interest in the project opted to undertake an interview on the first occasion we met. While this was counter to what I predicted to be the most ethical approach, it appeared to respond to young people's desire to 'get on with it' and their apparent satisfaction with information they received prior to, or on my arrival. Where possible, on meeting young people, I provided a further opportunity for them to reconsider their involvement.

Interviewing young people and practitioners

Young people were offered the option of undertaking the interviews individually, in pairs or in a small group. Given that interviews focused on experiences of using services as opposed to experiences of abuse, it was deemed appropriate for young people to be interviewed in groups should they prefer this style of participation. The decision to provide this option was in keeping with broad recognition of the advantages of offering children and young people choices about how they are interviewed (Hill et al., 2009; Tisdall et al. 2009). This offered a means of promoting inclusion, recognising that for some individuals one to one interviews could prove intimidating or reminiscent of more difficult scenarios (such as police interviews, therapeutic interventions or case conferences).

Just under half of the young people I interviewed chose to take part in individual interviews (n= 9). I suspected that in some cases this stemmed (as intended) from the active choice of participants and in other cases from how project workers chose to organise interviews. Group interviews resulted from a similar combination of individual choice and two cases where project workers determined that I should meet young people in a group[41]. In one case a young person chose to have their project worker present throughout the interview. All interviews with practitioners took place on an individual basis.

All except one of the young people's interviews took place inside the project through which they had been contacted. In the remaining case I met with a young person aged 18 in an alternative quiet public space (a local ASDA cafe with discrete 'booths'). This was arranged through the project worker, to support the young person's accessibility to the research. The project worker confirmed this arrangement posed no additional risk to me

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[41] This occurred accidentally when a project worker invited young people at the same time and the group decided they wished to stay together, or when I was invited to undertake an interview with a pre-existing group.

or the young person. Individual interviews took between 40 minutes and 80 minutes and group interviews lasted up to 130 minutes.

Group interviews with young people

Eleven young people participated in four group interviews. Group interviews ranged in size between two and four participants. When undertaking group interviews I was mindful of the influence of group relations upon the data. I recognised the ability of groups to 'subtly pressurise people towards a current issue which everyone feels is 'safe' to share and which may be in some sense idealised' (Slim et al., 1998: 118) and conversely how group settings promote spontaneous, lively and open discussion. Both dynamics were visible within my research.

For example I noted particular individuals who remained reticent or reserved in the presence of other bolder voices, recognising that the group may have made it difficult for them to speak out or contradict what was said. At other times group dynamics shifted part way through an interview, when members left early and those remaining adopted more vocal roles. In at least one case I was informed that a particularly shy young man would not be willing to take part in an individual interview but was a willing participant in the group. Here the choice of how to be interviewed enabled his inclusion in the research and his limited but insightful input.

The idea of respondents' narratives as 'performative' had particular resonance within group settings. On several occasions I noted the ability (and seeming intent) of young people's stories to elicit laughter, shock or sympathy from their peers and attempted to reflect upon this within my analysis.

In each of the group interviews there was evidence of differing, at times contradictory, perspectives which offered assurance that group influences had not masked all complexity or difference. In the main, there was a sense that groups provided participants with confidence and authority, demonstrated through the animated discussions that evolved and respondents' ability to shift the focus and mood. My experience suggested that the group setting enabled some redress of power imbalances inherent in the process of interviewing young people by handing a greater degree of control to respondents and positioning myself as a minority perspective.

Recording interviews with young people

Given the importance I have come to place on the nature of language, expression and 'voice' within my analysis, taped interviews have enormous value and are widely considered best practice in social research (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Elliot, 2005).

My hope therefore was to tape-record and verbatim transcribe all interviews, including those with professionals. Not only would this approach allow me to put pen and paper aside, heightening opportunities for me to actively engage with respondents, but it also preserved the precise language and expression of those interviewed.

Despite these wishes I was conscious of the need to avoid excluding those with particularly worries or sensitivities about being recorded. As I anticipated a number of service user participants (n=3) felt strongly that they did not wish to be recorded for both practical and emotional reasons. On a practical level this came down to concerns about confidentiality while for others the prospect of being recorded evoked a more emotional response, in particular holding negative associations with experiences of being interviewed by the police. In these cases I undertook extensive note-taking throughout the interview, often stopping to check where I had noted down verbatim quotes. Interviews were then typed up immediately after to try to preserve as much data integrity as possible.

Topic guides and interviewing styles: young people's interviews
When designing my topic guide for young people I aimed to maintain an open and exploratory atmosphere within the interviews while maintaining focus on my overarching research questions. In keeping with the 'active interview' approach advocated by Holstein and Gurbrium, (1995) my primary objective was creating an environment conducive to sharing of knowledge and the co-production of meaning. My style of questioning reflects Lofland and Lofland (1995)'s description of a directed conversation which departs from formally structured, standardised question lists, and allows some element of control to be shared with participants whom I actively encouraged to steer the interview.

In designing my questions I attempted to pay heed to Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) suggestion that there may be different levels of 'openness' within questions. They provide examples of questions, which (though open) unduly indicate the interests of the researcher. They suggest that imposing the interests of the researcher into the questions, albeit subtly, is likely to close down rather than elicit conversation. This resonates with what Morrissey (1998) describes as the 'loaded word' (109) - examples of language which impose the interviewers' conclusions or stance within a question.

I therefore attempted to avoid initial questions that focused too tightly on issues of formal 'participation' in relation to sexual exploitation services, which might have closed down opportunities for young people to explain their broader relationships with professional support. It also meant that specific questions employing language of 'children's

participation' or 'empowerment' were not included unless indicated in the course of an interview that these terms held meaning and relevance for the interviewee.

Instead I started by asking young people about their experience of professional support in broad terms, enabling them to identify priorities and key experiences. Follow up, or probing questions then sought to focus more closely on my interest in participation, but these experiences were framed in the slightly more familiar and value neutral terms of 'choice' and 'decision-making'. (see appendix 7 for topic guide)

This open approach to interviewing brought both opportunities and anxiety. The opportunities emerged from the aspects of young people's experiences that were unanticipated. Through this process, concepts that have become critical to my analysis such as 'trust', 'privacy' and 'information management' emerged and gave rise to new unanticipated directions for my research. It allowed me to notice the particular significance young people attributed to certain aspects of services and subsequently challenged some of the personal priorities that I brought to the project. Yet my own longstanding interest in participation, although still relevant to the research, at times appeared subsumed beneath the priorities of those I interviewed.

Given my commitment and instinct for an open style of interviewing there were times when I feared a loss of focus and control within the wider process of research. I often walked away from interviews concerned that I had wasted opportunities to address my primary research questions, allowing myself to be too led by young people's own agenda. Of course, in a project focused on questions of participation, the irony of this response is not lost. My worry was heightened by the fact that I was interviewing particular small numbers of young people. The travel and planning involved in each interview evoked anxiety about the importance of 'producing data' and finding answers to my research question.

In the end, analysis provided the means of resolving these anxieties and created a space to reflect on and make sense of the priorities of young people interviewed, reconsidering their relevance to my original research question. At times this provided me with new perspectives on participation and at other times raised entirely separate unanticipated priorities which I came to recognise as the potential of this research project to listen attentively to young people's own agendas.

Interviews with professionals
Interviews with professionals all took place within their places of work (all specialist sexual exploitation provision). These took between 60 and 120 minutes and utilised a

similar semi-structured format to my interviews with young people (see appendix 9 for topic guide). All of these interviews were recorded and transcribed. The purpose of these interviews was to provide a means of contextualising and further reflecting on emergent findings from service users and to consider the concept of participation within the constraints of service delivery.

In the main my interviews with professionals took place after my interviews with young people had been completed. The idea was that these would provide an opportunity to ask professionals to consider and reflect on the emerging findings from interviews with service users. Unfortunately timing meant that only very initial analysis of young people's interviews had taken place before I met with practitioners. This was due to a series of delays in setting up interviews with service users and cancellations. I then decided against further delaying my interviews with practitioners as a means of ensuring these opportunities were not missed. This resulted in me re-focusing my line of questioning with practitioners to broadly consider implementation of service user involvement and participatory practice within their services.

Towards the end of each interview I asked a small number of additional questions that attended to early emergent themes from service user interviews around questions of information sharing and involvement in meetings. The same ethical guidelines and processes for obtaining informed consent used with young people were applied to my interviews with professionals.

4.4 Analysis and write up

As outlined in section 4.2, my approach to analysis draws on both the framework suggested by Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory and the priorities of narrative research. In particular grounded theory informed my process of coding and categorising the data, enabling potential findings to emerge, bottom up, from patterns and concepts within groups of data. Meanwhile principles of narrative analysis influenced my commitment to consider both form and content of interviews, looking at particular aspects of interviewees' expressions as part of the broader whole and in relation to myself as researcher.

In its broadest sense analysis is a process of creating meaning and explanatory schemes from data. Both sets of influences were therefore approached as a set of tools which provided lenses through which to explore and view the data. As Corbin notes:

> There are many different stories that can be constructed from data. How an analyst puts together the concepts often requires many tries before the story or findings feel 'right'.... It means that after being immersed in the data the researcher believes that the findings reflect the 'essence' of what participants are trying to convey'. (Corbin in Corbin and Strauss, 2008, 47)

In keeping with Corbin's observations I viewed the process of analysis as a set of activities for helping to make sense of the data in a way that feels right and congruent with my experience of reading about the subject, spending time in projects and interviewing young people and project workers.

In the remainder of this chapter I detail stages of the analysis. This begins with an outline of managing and processing data followed by details of my approach to coding, memo-writing and categorisation. I conclude this section by sharing details of the process of 'sense making'.

Data management and initial analysis

Miles and Huberman suggest the process of data analysis and coding 'occurs continuously throughout the life of any qualitatively orientated project' (1994: 10). Within my own research I saw analysis as commencing with the process of making field-notes and through the process of transcription. These processes represented the first steps of reflecting on my data and provided initial opportunities to notice recurring themes or striking aspects about both the content, form and context of my data. Field notes consisted of my handwritten notes made after interviews. They were unstructured in form and upon reflection they may have proved more useful and comparable had I adopted a single template to structure them. Despite this, they provided an important place to record ethical dilemmas such as those previously described, observations of group dynamics and stand out themes or findings.

As outlined above, in the majority of cases audio recordings were taken of interviews which were then transcribed. In cases where notes were taken during interviews these were typed up in detail afterwards. During the process of transcribing and listening back to interviews new observations and questions emerged and ideas for particular codes started to suggest themselves.

As noted above interviews with professionals, though clearly an aspect of data collection, were also intended to form part of the analysis. This took place through using these interviews to consider early emerging themes from interviews with young people. This was a means of further reflecting on the priorities of young people. I sought to both verify the emerging messages from young people's interviews ('does the message I'm hearing

correspond to your own experience of working with young people?') and to compare professional's perspectives on the same issue. In keeping with grounded theory this represented the potential for the integration of data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However it is important to reiterate that, in reality, only very initial analysis of some young people's interviews had occurred prior to me undertaking interviews with practitioners.

It is also worth noting that the findings from interviews with professionals are positioned as secondary within this thesis. Although this approach was not explicitly planned at the outset of this study, or even during the data collection, it is an emphasis that emerged organically from the process of analysis and write up. It stemmed primarily from the volume of data derived from interviews with service users and my increasing sense of the need to grant priority, space and legitimacy to these often overlooked or discredited voices. Professionals' perspectives were used to help me contextualise service user narratives, consider some of the reasons for these findings and develop implications for future practice.

Managing data

Once transcribed or typed up, all data (transcriptions, interview notes and field notes) were saved into N*Vivo, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS). This programme was used to assist with the organisation, coding and retrieval of data. In keeping with grounded theory, codes and categories became data labelling devices and N*Vivo helped to link chunks of data which shared codes or fell under the same conceptual category. N*Vivo thus primarily provided a means to promote the manageability of data analysis rather than providing an actual tool of analysis (Lofland et al., 2006).

Coding, memo-writing and categorisation

Coding and categorisation

Coding represented the first stage of formal analysis. A code is defined as 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing or evocative attribute for a portion of language based data' (Saldaña, 2009:3).

Coding of young people's interviews was undertaken first and occurred as a two stage process: initial or 'open' coding followed by focused coding (Charmaz, 2006; Lofland et al., 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). As a 'novice researcher' I followed the advice of Saldana and adopted initial line by line coding for young people's interviews. In the main my coding of young people's interviews was dominated by three types of codes – these

included 'descriptive codes', 'process coding' and 'in-Vivo codes' (Saldaña, 2009).
Descriptive codes provided a basic inventory of topics or themes. It included examples
such as 'police interviews' 'strategy meetings' 'referral to the service' 'initial impressions
of service' or formal participation processes'. Process coding followed the advice of
Charmaz that initial coding should aim to be action orientated. It seeks to describe what is
said in terms of an action or gerund.

In keeping with Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory this sought to identify activity
described by respondents but also what was going on in the process of narration, or in
Holstein and Gubrium's terms the 'what and how' of data (1995; 2008). In this way it
encouraged me to observe both the processes that young people described (e.g. 'making
choices', 'anticipating intrusion', 'assessing workers reliability' or ' avoiding disclosure')
and in keeping with narrative approaches, salient dynamics taking place within the
interview such as 'mocking', or 'emphasising severity' or 'getting upset'.

In addition a small number of In-vivo codes were employed where young people's
specific language was adopted as a code. Examples of this include the concept of '*being
serviced*' explained in more detail in chapter six, and '*twist my words*' explained in
chapter seven. Where In-vivo codes are used they acknowledge the potential for
concepts and categories to emerge directly from respondent's use of language and then
be applied to other young people's narratives.

All these processes of coding were also informed to some degree by Blumer's notion of
'sensitising concepts' (1969). Sensitising concepts are described as ' nothing formal,
fixed or grand, but a concept which 'gives the user a general sense of reference and
guidance in approaching empirical instances' (1969:148).These are ideas that are
brought to analysis to provide an initial framework and set of questions through which to
explore the data. In this study concepts such as 'having choices'; 'decision-making';
'participation' 'feelings of power/ status' all served as sensitising concepts reflecting the
interests of my research question.

In addition sensitising concepts also emerged from the theoretical literature and existing
research. So for example on reading Cornwall's spatial analysis of participation initiatives
I started to consider its relevance to my own data. This meant applying Cornwall's

concept of 'invited spaces'[42] to code respondents descriptions of their own experiences of formal participation.

The coding of professionals' interviews took place at a later stage. Here I employed a single stage of coding focusing on 'salient' points and relevant chunks of texts. This more limited approach to coding stemmed from recognition that these interviews were supplementary to my main body of data and were in themselves undertaken as a part of the analysis. The coding of professionals' interviews was derived principally from the topic guide and salient themes emerging from young people's interviews.

Second stage coding and categories

For young people's interviews I employed a second level of more 'focused coding' (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña,2009). Rather than employ a line by line approach to coding this looked specifically at broader meaning within the text. This was more selective and conceptual and often utilised a particularly salient code taken from my initial coding to label a larger chunk of data.

From this activity a number of categories and themes emerged, resulting in a process resembling what Lofland et al. (2006) describe as 'analytic filing'. Categories formed a conceptual framework that allowed groups of codes to be clustered together. These were codes that either looked or felt alike or pertained to a similar phenomena – so for example codes such as '*saying more than you mean to', 'broken confidentiality', 'behind my back*' and '*being written about'* all fell under a category titled 'Information sharing'. Categories were both descriptive as in the case of 'information sharing' and conceptual as in the case of 'trust'. Categorisation allowed a consideration of the relative importance of various concerns; relationships between different codes and patterns; and contradictions within the body of data as a whole.

During the process of categorisation I was able to evaluate the fit between my initial research interests and the emerging data. A commitment to 'stay close' and responsive to the data (Charmaz, 2008) meant being alert to unanticipated wider concerns that young people shared. In my case this meant recognising that my interest in young people's involvement in participatory processes, understood in terms of processes that addressed social change, did not reflect the types of participation that young sexual exploitation

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[42] Invited spaces refers to spaces of participation that are controlled and maintained by existing holders of power. They are contrasted with what Cornwall terms 'sites of radical possibility' – or spaces in which marginalised individuals claim, inhabit or forge decision-making spaces of their own choosing. A full consideration of these terms is provided in Chapter 3 invited into' existing structures and those opportunities through

service users described. Instead they referred to involvement in, or exclusion from, personal decision-making processes which forced me to reconsider the meaning of 'participation' in this context. In addition I came to recognise a set of unanticipated priorities that dominated young people's narratives of receiving professional support (e.g. confidentiality, trust, informality). These emergent themes caused me to shift my frame of reference. The anxieties I experienced during interviews about my loss of focus were resolved as I let go of some of my initial priorities and adopted new ones which accorded with respondents' own experiences.

Memo-writing, synthesis and sense-making

Alongside my coding I developed a process of memo-writing. I use this term to refer to any form in which I recorded aspects of reflections and critical thinking that occurred during the course of the research. This included presentations I developed about my data, supervision notes and short reflections made at all stages of the research. These reflections touched on all aspects of the process including ethics, methodology, emerging categories and possible associations.

Although my field-notes addressed similar questions they referred to single interviews and were made immediately following data collection. Memos cut across multiple data sources and benefitted from distance from data collection. Further analysis took place through processes of writing, presenting and summarising my data.

I attempted to take time to consider each interview as a complete whole, attending to suggestions from Hollway and Jefferson (2000) to ask questions such as 'what did I feel went on in that interview '? 'why did that interview make me laugh?' 'how can I make sense of those contradictions?'. These were processes where I could reflect upon my interpretations of data asking, 'not just what does this tell me about what happened – but what does this tell me about what young people want me to know; [and] how they wish to be perceived and represented?' (Elliot, 2005:26).

Elliot's questions align to the approach to analysis advocated by Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) and their concept of the 'defended subject'. According to these frameworks the task is to explore the implied as well as explicit meanings of conversations with young people. Data is not just read in terms of the linear stories and facts but also meanings expressed through emotive responses, styles of expression and what remains unsaid. Analysis therefore might be seen to include a process of reading between the lines, attending to silences and considering both why and how a story is shared.

Throughout these processes, and during the final synthesis of my findings I was engaged with a two part process of considering evidence to support or challenge a particular reading of the data both in terms of internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to a process of considering respondents' statements within the context of the rest of their responses. It considers 'how can I make sense of young people's statements within the context of this interview'? 'Where contradictions exist within an interview how can they best be explained'? 'Do they depict ambivalence, confusion, partial truths or the use of a story to convey a broader point'? Meanwhile external validity considers 'how can I make sense of this narrative within the wider body of data with which it may contrast or concur?' (Elliot, 2005). This meant triangulating findings from a single interview with findings from other young people's interviews, professionals' interviews and wider bodies of literature addressing similar research questions.

Throughout the synthesis of my findings I was mindful of the need to both generalise and create findings that went beyond description while consciously avoiding suggestions that this group of young people spoke with one voice (Davis, 1998). The task is thus to identify patterns while acknowledging that the voices of sexually exploited children using services are like any other group diverse, contradictory and defined by a range of positionalities; affiliations and experiences.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to present an honest account of both my methodological intentions and some of the realities of how this played out in practice. Through the lens of hindsight, it is tempting to reflect on ways this research could have been improved: how my approach could have been more innovative and participatory; and how the knowledge I developed through analysis of data could have been applied to further an additional process of data collection. There are many questions that I wish I had asked and many more young people and practitioners that I would have liked to have spoken to.

Yet this in itself is a lesson in the limitations and frustrations of any research project, constructed and delivered within a finite time period and limited resources. Undoubtedly the part time nature of this study provided a major influence on how it was conducted, as did the geographically dispersed nature of the projects and young people I spoke to. Yet I hope that within these constraints there has still been the possibility of developing a new body of empirical knowledge, albeit modest, which might have relevance to those developing and delivering sexual exploitation services in the future. It is to this body of knowledge that I now turn, presenting the findings that emerged from the approaches and processes of data collection and analysis detailed above.

Part two: research findings

What afflicts the adult is not so much the illusion of hope as, no doubt among other things, the grotesque illusion of looking down from some supposedly higher vantage-point, free from illusion, upon the illusions of the young.

Søren Kierkegaard, (1849:89)

Chapter 5: Becoming a 'service user'

5.1 Introduction

My consideration of young people's participation in services begins with an exploration of their initial experiences of receiving support and the development of their identity as 'service users'. Consequently this first findings chapter presents respondents' stories about experiences of referral; their first contact with projects; and how they choose to articulate personal risk and need. It presents findings about young people's experiences of becoming 'participants' or 'users' of sexual exploitation services and provides a foundation for considering broader questions about their rights and participation within this sector. It demonstrates the significance of concepts of agency and self determinism to young people's engagement with services and their ambivalence towards them.

The chapter is split into four main parts. Part one examines the diversity of young people interviewed: considering the broader service user 'expertise' represented. This challenges ideas about 'typical' service users and considers how interviewees' contact with multiple welfare services may constrain young people's autonomy and identity while simultaneously creating a particular form of expertise. Part two examines the processes of referral and identifies the significance of choice, control and information sharing within this process. This section also considers the relevance of the concept of young people as 'consumers' within this context.

The third part explores young people's initial impressions of services and the experience of taking up offers of support. This examines reasons for young people's simultaneous resistance and desire to accept support.

The chapter concludes by presenting whether and how young people identified themselves as 'in need' of professional support, based on their stories about why they were using services. This presents potential discontinuities between professional and young people's discourses around risk and raise questions about the role of young people's voices in narratives about sexual exploitation.

5.2 Service user diversity

Sample diversity: sexual exploitation and vulnerabilities

Beyond interviewee's shared service user identity, the sample represented a heterogeneous group with few identifiable similarities. Perhaps most significantly for this research, the twenty young people had evidently experienced a range of different types of sexual exploitation and risk. The sample supports findings from the literature that there is no one profile of a sexually exploited young person and that young people may be engaged in a range of exploitative relationships simultaneously (Creegan, Scott and Smith, 2005; Brodie et al., 2011).

Although the nature of young people's exploitation or risk was not directly asked about in interviews, in cases where aspects of it were revealed, variables included: both online and offline abuse; internal trafficking; abuse by peers or by older men; abuse through a 'boyfriend'; abuse through groups or individuals; exploitation occurring in party houses; and exploitation via images sent through mobile phones or the internet. These types of exploitation and risk are largely in keeping with findings from recent research as outlined in chapter two (CEOP, 2010; Beckett, 2011; Jago et al. 2011). However there was no mention of experiences of exchanging sex for money in any of the interviews. This does not mean that no young people interviewed had been involved in commercial sexual exploitation, but rather that there was no evidence of this from the data collected[43].

Those who presented themselves as 'at risk', rather than acknowledging themselves as victims of abuse, associated this with a range of behaviours including: going missing; casual sexual activity; recreational activities (including clubbing and partying); hanging out in 'hot spots'[44]; alcohol use and recreational drug taking; contacts developed through both on and offline environments; and relationships with risky individuals. Several young people described or alluded to experiencing multiple forms of risk and exploitation.

The diversity of risk and exploitation represented within this small sample, raised questions about the usefulness of grouping such different experiences together and responding to them through a similar model of intervention. Arguably it supports the

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[43] A decision was made not to quantify these experiences, or risks of exploitation, given that they were not asked for directly within the interview. Under the circumstances it was felt that any statistical information would prove misleading and could be misread. This was felt to be particularly the case where the focus is on narratives and individual perceptions rather than verifiable aspects of interviewees biography.

[44] 'Hot spots' refers to well known sites where young people were thought to be at increased risk of sexual exploitation. In this case an example was given where a young women's risk was associated with her hanging out in a park which was in her words noted to be 'well known for sexual exploitation'.

positions of Phoenix (2012) and Melrose (2012) who propose that conflating diverse types of risk and abuse under the banner of 'child sexual exploitation' risks obscuring the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of those affected. A consideration of this issue from young people's own perspectives is included in section 5.5 of this chapter.

In addition to the diversity of experiences relating to sexual exploitation, the sample also included a significant degree of diversity both in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and care history as noted in section 4.3. Interviewees included individuals who lived with both parents and recounted the presence of supportive families; others who described less stable family support or noted long-term child protection involvement and those who explained they had 'been in care [their] whole life'[45]. Additional aspects of diversity were suggested through young people's self-description and testimony. These included differences in class, historical abuse, mental health, and support networks. Examples of many commonly cited 'push' and 'pull' factors (Chase and Statham, 2004) and known vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation were present within the sample. The sample supports the picture provided by existing research suggesting that young people affected by sexual exploitation have a significantly increased likelihood of experiencing multiple disadvantages which may exist as either cause or consequence of their exploitation (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Pearce, 2009; Beckett, 2011).

Service user expertise

All those interviewed for the research shared a broad range of service user experience outwith the sexual exploitation provision through which they were contacted. Without exception, all respondents acknowledged engagement with at least two other statutory or voluntary sector welfare services. The highest number of additional support services mentioned by a young person was nine and the lowest two[46]. Seventeen of the sample acknowledged involvement from social workers at some point, although the nature and reasons for that involvement was not explored where it was not volunteered freely[47].

In total, 34 distinct additional support services were mentioned as having been accessed by the young people I interviewed. These included housing support; drug and alcohol

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[45] Again a decision has been taken not to quantify these aspects of young people's circumstances. This data is drawn from subjective accounts and again was provided voluntarily. It was considered that simple numerical data relating to how many times each circumstance was mentioned would be of limited use. In particular the fact that several individuals had experienced multiple different circumstances at different times meant that in the absence of detailed monitoring data any possible statistics could prove misleading.

[46] By 'additional' I mean other than the specialist sexual exploitation service through which they were contacted for this research.

[47] In the remaining three cases, the presence of an allocated social worker was unknown.

projects; educational support including Education Welfare Officers, and Pupil Referral Unit's; mental health services; independent and school counselling; sexual health services; statutory social work, leaving care services; residential children's homes; youth offending services; support due parental addictions; NSPCC projects (other than sexual exploitation services); specialist family support (provided by PACE[48]); police; LGBT youth groups; 'missing' or young runaways projects; young carers groups and a children's rights service. It is likely that many other professional support services had been used by the sample, but given that these details were not requested categorically within interviews the exact details remain unknown.

As demonstrated by the list and figures above, young people interviewed indicated a significant level of service user 'expertise' which extended far beyond the bounds of the sexual exploitation service through which we met. The number of services that some young people cited provided a stark illustration of the degree to which some of their lives were negotiated through relationships of professional care, all of which identified them as 'in need' in some form. Acknowledging this body of experience explained interviewee's proficiency in navigating professional systems of welfare and equally provided context for the widespread cynicism and mistrust about welfare services revealed within interviews.

This service user 'expertise' evidently also informed young people's responses to my questions and respondents often volunteered their experiences with other provision as a point of comparison, choosing to communicate ideas through descriptions of two contrasting experiences.

5.3 Initial engagement with services

Interviews with young people commenced with questions about how they first came to engage with specialist sexual exploitation provision and how this was experienced. I also asked young people to explain their service to me, as someone unfamiliar with their provision. The next section presents findings from these questions elucidating young people's perceptions about the degree of choice they had to engage with support.

Referral routes

In all but one case (n=19) young people described engaging with services through referral made by a third party. There was one exception to this where a young person

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[48] PACE (formerly known as CROP) is a national charity and campaigning organisation working to support parents and families or victims of sexual exploitation. See www.paceuk.org for more details.

described a self referral, developed via attending the project with a friend. In all other cases young people attributed their referral to their links with other services including schools, sexual health workers, social services, and the police:

> Police referred me and they give me a social worker and then they give me this project – so it's like I've been passed down. No actually the police was another time. It was a health worker. It was her passed me on to a social worker and then they gave me this project – so it's still the same, like I've been passed down. (Rebecca, 16)[49]

Rather than undermining her story, the uncertain memory of Rebecca's particular referral route, emphasises her experience of blurred, complex service engagement. Her mention of convoluted referral pathways where she appears to have little autonomy suggest a sense of alienation and dislocation inherent within such processes. Rebecca's reference to herself as 'being passed down', through multiple layers of services, emphasises her identification as a disembodied 'case' passing through the hands of unfamiliar professionals. This reflects a wider recurring theme within the interviews where young people described themselves as 'just a case'[50] or as somebody's 'piece of work'[51].

Scarlett and Mike also described referral to their different projects via the police. In comparison to Rebecca they provide more positive accounts that emphasise the face to face encounters leading to their referral and an element of choice within the process:

> It started when the police rang me about what had happened and they come round and they spoke to me and I was introduced to Lisa... she talked about the Spiral project and said, 'would would you like to get help from us?' and I was like –'alright' and she'd come to my school and she'd explain an' like she'd have different cards which would explain what [sexual exploitation] were, how it started, and how grooming grew and then we'd watch like videos - and that's how I got started with Spiral project. (Scarlett, 17)

> The police referred me, but it was my choice – basically I got a visit by two project workers and I got a choice if I wanted to come or not. (Mike, 16)

In contrast to Rebecca's description, Mike and Scarlett present themselves as active in the process of referral, responding to an offer of support. In addition, Scarlett describes the detailed information that supported her in making that choice. Throughout young

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[49] All young people's quotes are attributed to pseudonyms chosen by the young people to whom these quotes correspond. Pseudonyms were requested in private on a one to one basis. Young people were advised not to share them with others. This approach sought to protect anonymity but enable young people to identify their own contributions in any public report of this work.

[50] Rebecca, 16

[51] Sean, 16

people's stories of starting to access support, the provision of clear information, and options about when, if and how to engage appear as significant determinants of young people's willingness to accept help from services. These narratives support Thomas's argument about the need to recognise multiple aspects of children's participation in decision-making, including 'choice' (to participate) and 'information..about the situation and her or his rights ' (2000:175).

In several cases young people depict themselves undertaking a process of actively assessing and trialling sexual exploitation services, to see whether they would suit their needs. Rapunzel (14) explains, 'I was asked if I wanted to come and so I tried it', whereas Mike notes 'at first I came to see what it was like – and it was fun and helpful so I carried on coming'.

The importance of exercising some element of autonomy in processes of referral becomes apparent when young people differentiate between experiences of engaging with different services, some of which they were obliged to attend.

> With all my agencies that I've worked with I've never had a choice if I work with them or not, but I have here. Like if I don't want to come here I don't have to. Youth group - I have to, because I were on an order [from the courts]. I have to go there. I never had a choice with that one. Social services - I don't get a choice in the matter – if I didn't have to have them I wouldn't have them. It's just like loads of agencies I've never had a choice of going...If I don't ask for counselling even then they just go and make me anyway....but here, I like it so I come here all the time me. (Phoebe, 17)

Phoebe identifies herself as an experienced user of services, yet within this narrative her sexual exploitation project stands alone on the basis of its voluntary engagement. Phoebe is one of many respondents who were able to list multiple types of professional 'help' they had been obliged to accept. The option for her to eschew help from her sexual exploitation project clearly distinguishes it from other types of intervention and ironically appears to encourage her engagement.

One perspective on the notion of service user 'choice' is the idea that welfare service users should be viewed as 'consumers' (Hugman, 1998). For some, understanding service users this way foregrounds notions of empowerment and emphasises the freedom of service users to go elsewhere or 'the power of 'exit' (Banks,2006: 113). This terminology identifies the different roles of professionals and participants, presenting agencies as providers of services, needing to attend to and serve the wishes and rights of their clients or service users. Yet suggesting that these young people's engagement with services neatly parallels the process of market consumption, such as the purchase of a

pair of trainers, is deeply misleading, neglecting some crucial aspects of the relationship in question. In particular it overlooks the limited power of the consumer, in this case determined by age, vulnerability, and likely surveillance by other services. It also wrongly suggests that these young people have a variety of choices about which type of sexual exploitation support to access, masking the role that welfare may play in controlling young people's behaviour.

A more helpful outlook may be to highlight parallels between voluntary sector sexual exploitation services and models of youth work, with their alignment to key principles of participation. The attention drawn by young people to the element of choice within their referral to voluntary sector sexual exploitation projects does not describe a sense of consumer choice but rather illustrates the significance of voluntary engagement in the service that is offered. As a principle, voluntary engagement has traditionally distinguished youth work from a range of other statutory provision such as social work, education or youth offending services which share similar concerns and objectives (Jeffs, 2001:156; Davies, 2005; Jeffs and Smith, 2008).

Voluntarism foregrounds ideas about young service users' autonomy, and ensures young people can freely establish, and (crucially) sever, relationships. It is noted by Jeffs and Smith (2008) to provide a standard which allows professionals in the sector to 'acquire discernibly different persona from institutional provision and individualised casework' (43) and supports practitioners to work in a dialogical as opposed to didactic way. Phoebe's case supports this argument and suggests both the potential and value of promoting young people's choice and influence at the point of accepting help. The significance of voluntary engagement within safeguarding work should not be underestimated, as it marks a distinct approach from statutory models which dominate child protection provision. As Phoebe suggests it is the voluntary nature of engagement which has enabled her to develop a relationship with a service that is significantly distinct to other types of professional care she has experienced. Her description of her engagement in the sexual exploitation project as something she actively 'likes' or enjoys, also suggests it successfully serves needs as she herself defines them.

5.4 Initial experiences

Alongside accounts of the referral pathways that led to young people receiving support for sexual exploitation, young people also described the more emotional aspects of their initial engagement. While opportunities for support were undoubtedly welcomed at one level, more often than not they were defined by worries about privacy, fears about a loss

of control and feelings of embarrassment or shame. Difficulties involved in meeting with a stranger to discuss personal matters are described below by Justin:

> I went to speak to someone at school about something [referring to experience of sexual exploitation by another student] and I felt like school just want to get rid of it. I really didn't want to go to speak to anyone else about it. At first I thought I were getting told off and I just felt quite embarrassed, but then they said that I had to meet Tony [the CSE project worker]. At first I didn't want to have talk to anyone else about it because it was embarrassing... I was just right scared. It was really difficult. I just didn't know what I would say to a total stranger. At least at school I knew who the teachers were. (Justin, 18)

Here Justin explains the experience of being referred on to another service and unknown professional, seemingly against his will. The impersonal and dislocating experience of accessing help he describes, resonates with Rebecca's earlier comments about being 'passed on'.

Justin alludes to an understandable, but unmet expectation of help from the organisation to which he chooses to disclose. Meanwhile his onward referral leaves him feeling like his experience of exploitation is something the school 'want to get rid of'. While recognising that services to which young people share details of their abuse may not be able to provide support, legitimising this desire among those who summon the courage to disclose is important. Interestingly Justin's comments also mirror one of five priorities identified by the *What Works for Us* when considering support for young people affected by sexual exploitation. They ask to ensure that:

> ...young people who ask for help receive support from a single professional taking responsibility for their care and do not keep getting referred on to multiple different services. (WWFU, 2012 :8)

These particular comments stem from discussions about young people's experiences of convoluted and impersonal referral processes from which they inevitably disengaged.

Many of the feelings Justin describes associating with his onward referral to another service - reluctance, fear and sense of shame –are also evident within other young people's interviews about their initial engagement with sexual exploitation services.

> **Rapunzel:** At first I didn't like it – but as I got to know it I come to like it more and more.
>
> **Lorraine:** Yeah I didn't want to come at first.
>
> **Rebecca:** Same here – when you first come you're scared in case they tell someone stuff. (Focus Group C)

Rebecca's association between attending the service and fears about a loss of personal privacy and control represented a central concern among service users interviewed. Given the picture of onward referral and multiple service engagement described, such fears are both understandable and credible. They also introduce a theme about management of personal information that I will return to in detail in Chapter seven.

Yet despite these fears, in many accounts young people describe how initial trepidation gives way to reassurance and confidence as they learn that services do not fulfil negative expectations coloured by previous experiences or stereotypes of services.

> At first I wasn't sure exactly what was going to happen, but somebody said there's someone who can help you get through this...and I thought – 'oh this isn't as bad as I thought it was going to be'. Because I thought it was going to be more like therapy... I don't like the idea of people going inside my head and sort of like trying to put things in my head – that's not what it's like, which I was happy about – sort of like friendly chats – so I was like, 'that's good'. (Jay, 15)

Like several of those interviewed (n=4), Jay explicitly espouses the value of formal therapeutic support in favour of less formalised relationship based work. In keeping with others, his fears about therapeutic services are framed in terms of the power he links with professionals ('to go inside my head') and the associated risk of losing control[52]. Yet despite initial concerns about his sexual exploitation project replicating these dynamics, he describes welcoming the alternative model of support he encounters.

When discussing barriers to engagement a number of young people raised the issue of shame, not only in relation to their experiences but also associated with identifying yourself as a service user:

> The only problem I had with the purple project - was going to the project all the time. I kind of felt that people had seen me going in, and most of the people that go there are scratty and shabby people – there's always chavy people there looking at me. (Justin, 18)

Justin went on to reiterate his desire to disassociate himself from others using the service and his embarrassment at being seen with them. Throughout his interview Justin associated himself with signifiers of respectability that worked to distance himself from other service users who he clearly perceived as lower class from himself. Elsewhere

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[52] It may be worth noting that Jay is a young person who cites regular meetings with a psychiatrist and so is basing his comments on direct experience of formal therapy as opposed to stereotypes or hearsay.

another young person explained how peer group perceptions about her sexual exploitation project colluded with similar stereotypes:

> Some of my friends at school say 'Barnardos - what's that? Isn't that chavy?'
> And I say 'nah it's good. If you go missing then they help you'. (Lorraine, 15)

Such comments indicate the stigma associated with receiving support from services and the association in many young people's minds between vulnerability and material deprivation. It suggests another way in which accepting a service or identifying oneself as a service user involves a degree of risk and loss of control – here specifically regarding how you are perceived by others.

5.5 Understanding referral and risk

The remainder of this chapter moves away from descriptions about how young people came to engage with services and focuses instead on issues about why they were using services: detailing events, behaviours or circumstances that had led to their referral. Although these explanations were not directly requested within the interview, when offered they provided valuable insights into how young people identified their own needs and where these aligned or diverged with professional perceptions. They illustrated not only the nature of young people's risk or experience of abuse but also how they wished to frame this. This in turn raises important questions about the role of young people's 'voice' in relation to services and different conceptions of agency.

Associating with a 'sexually exploited' identity

In the main young people's narratives of engagement with services were dominated by the concept of risk, rather than specific acknowledgement of experiences of sexual exploitation and abuse. Young people talked in terms of both risks to themselves that they identified (often drawing on the benefit of hindsight) and risk defined by adults around them. Furthermore young people related their needs for support to both risks associated with sex and relationships and those linked to broader aspects of their vulnerability.

> **Camille:** How did you first find out about the project?
>
> **Beth:** we went to school and when I got moved to the 'Orange Hill Centre' to do [a special educational package].
>
> **Camille:** And they told you about it?
>
> **Beth:** Yeah [speaking very quietly] because I were like going to different cities with older men.. and they got me into here – to try and talk about it …

> **Camille:** [turning to Sally] I was just asking Beth about how she first heard about the project – can you remember how you first heard about the project?
>
> **Sally:** Yeah, because I were 14 year old and homeless. (Focus Group B)

Both Beth and Sally provide very different explanations for initially accessing the same project. On the one hand Beth directly links her engagement with the project to familiar indicators of child sexual exploitation and internal trafficking. However the palpably diffident manner in which she responds, lowering her voice until it is almost inaudible, suggests the discomfort and possible embarrassment connected to these facts. While the behaviours she describes are necessarily abusive, her indication that she was brought in to 'talk about them' offers an indication that in this instance they were seen as problematic. In light of Beth's seeming 'boldness' throughout the remainder of her interview, and her tendency at other times for unabashed straight talking, such diffidence provides insight into the level of difficulty involved in positioning oneself as a victim or directly articulating experiences of sexual exploitation, particularly outwith the bounds of trusted relationships.

Meanwhile Sally identifies a need other than sexual exploitation as leading to her referral. Her association between wider vulnerabilities and her engagement with the project reflects observations made by several young people about the broader needs projects supported them with[53]. Like others, she positions her primary needs as a service user outside the specificity of sexual relationships or abuse. In different ways both Sally and Beth highlight the discomfort inherent in an admission of victimhood. This was also reflected in choices young people made about how to explain their project to me in terms which pointedly avoided any mention of child sexual exploitation:

> **Camille:** -I'd just like to get your views on what this service is? How you would describe it to another young person?
>
> **Ursula:** I think the service helps us young people to, achieve what we can and, it's more, more support and that's the key word support. Supporting you through anything and everything – and that is mainly what it's about.

Such responses may reflect young people's resistance to acknowledging a risk or experience of sexual exploitation, or their wish (like Sally) to frame their needs in broader terms. However Ursula's response also suggests the value of being able to recognise the

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[53] This in turn strongly supports observations from young participants in the 'In a new light' photography project which highlighted how 'sexual exploitation, or the risk of it, rarely stood by itself as an issue in young people's lives'. Interestingly in the photography project issues relating to housing and having somewhere stable and secure to live were noted to be one of the shared concerns across this diverse group (NWG, 2011:2).

role of professional support in more positive terms that focuses on strengths and opportunities rather than risks and deficit.

Recognising risk

In several cases, young people's ability to acknowledge risk was talked about as a process, taking time and building on the support of their workers. Lorraine, who was 14 when interviewed, admits to the failure of her younger self to identify the risks she faced:

> When I was young I went missing and I didn't see what the problem with it was. I didn't see no fear. I didn't see no dangers. But like Julie [my worker] saw it and now looking back I know it was dangerous. (Lorraine, 14)

This idea of 'looking back' and re-evaluating risk is reiterated by Jay who notes:

> I do think they [the police] made the right choice – because looking back –I'm sort of thinking – well maybe he was going to sell me. Maybe he was just getting me up to the bedroom so guys could go straight up there? So I'm kind of pleased the police came because it was a bit dodgy that he drove four hours up to get me and four hours back down and he never talked about having sex with me. (Jay, 15)

In both these cases there is an admittance of a shift in perspective and tacit acknowledgement that their own initial assessment of these situations was previously flawed. This retrospective recognition of risk is common throughout the narratives. For example, Phoebe explains her ambivalent feelings towards her original referral to her sexual exploitation project:

> I were annoyed like [when I was referred] because I didn't see it that I'd been sexually exploited stuff like that. But I saw it as a relief because everything had got on top of me. I think that were best bit to be honest... and on my first visit we talked about sexual exploitation and I thought 'oh yeah that sounds a bit like me' – but I didn't understand it at first, not before my first visit? (Phoebe, 17)

The combination Phoebe describes of annoyance at feeling she's been wrongly labelled, alongside relief at knowing she's being offered some help, suggest a number of contradictions for young people inherent within the offer of professional support. Phoebe here suggests an overwhelming sense of her desire for support – to no longer have to navigate 'everything' that had got on top of her alone - alongside an equally strong desire not to be assessed and labelled by the adults around her. Like Lorraine and Jay, Phoebe describes gradually coming to recognise herself in accordance with professional's view of her as a victim of sexual exploitation and becoming willing to accept help on these terms.

A similar point is noted by Sophie who describes her initial indignant responses to professionals' judgements:

> I thought it was right. I thought it was normal. I thought 'why they not letting me have a boyfriend?' 'Why they saying it's wrong?' Everybody has a boyfriend. But I didn't realise then how it should be equal and stuff. (Sophie, 17)

Sophie describes how her normalisation of unequal power and control in relationships has been challenged by the support of her project. Like Phoebe, she suggests it is the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of sexual exploitation that enables her to reassess the support that is offered. Both young women describe the effectiveness of models of support which help them develop new and critical understandings of relationships and safety and to enable them to engage more self-reflexively with their circumstances.

These comments signify three things. Firstly the need to take account of how young people's own perceptions of self, and the wider normalisation of relationships of domination contribute to the maintenance of young people in abusive relationships. They reflect Pearce's comments that supporting victims of sexual exploitation , 'might mean reversing the expectation of abuse within relationships' (2009: 71). This also supports links made by both O'Neill (2001) and Coy (2008) between young people's vulnerability to sexual exploitation and their lack of personal power and agency in other aspects of their lives. It demonstrates that a consideration of economic drivers or 'grooming' are insufficient by themselves to explain young people's involvement in risk and exploitative relationships.

Secondly, and associated to this, it underscores the complexity of questions about young people's agency and self-reflexivity within this context. Young people's ambivalence towards their identification as 'at risk' supports Hoggett (2001) and Ferguson (2003)'s assertions that there are real limits at certain points in time, to service users' ability to identify and act upon possibilities of change. I have outlined how such constraints and overly simple ideas of agency (as 'authentic choice') are often used to justify young people's exclusion from participation in decision-making (Valentine, 2011:348). Yet the accounts here testify to the need, where possible, to avoid overly paternalistic responses.

This relates to a third point about the need to work in partnership with service users to develop their own critical insights about both risk and healthy relationships as a route to enhanced safety. Arguably these processes of reflection align to Giddens' 'reflexive project of the self', proposed as an ability for individuals to develop agency through self-conscious reflection on their available choices and personal narratives (Jeffery, 2011).

They also support Kitzinger's assertion (1990) that access to knowledge and power reduces children's vulnerability. Such work may be time consuming and non-linear, responding as it is to an ongoing relationships of abuse, rather than discrete events in young people's lives, but is nonetheless essential for reducing repetitive patterns of risk.

Understanding the language of 'child sexual exploitation'

In the cases of Sophie and Phoebe, their acceptance of themselves as victims of sexual exploitation clearly rests on developing their own understanding of the dynamics and nature of abuse. Without this, the term 'sexual exploitation' may be experienced as alienating, critical and unjustified, as documented by the young people below.

> I don't know, you forget what it means sometimes. Well like I know what it means, but I kind of don't. It's quite a hard word – 'sexual exp..'. I can't even say it – I don't know, like – you wouldn't use – like child exploitation – you'd use like rape - you'd use like, being used or something, being forced to do something. (Alice, 15)

> Exploitation – at first it sounded like a proper technical word – but I know what it means now. I thought it was like, I dunno – I didn't think it was 'owt to do with that. I thought it were something proper. Like a high up word. 'Cause like some people - you'll say those words and you'll have to ask for explanations about them – d'you get me? As soon as they say what it is straight away you know what it is but. (Scarlett, 17)

For Alice, the term appears to hold little use other than to obfuscate the reality of what is involved, meanwhile Scarlett notes the initial difficulty of associating herself with the term 'exploitation'. Her identification of it as a 'high up word' or 'something proper' adds to the challenge she describes in relating it with her own experiences. Yet for other young people the term may serve a different role helping to differentiate sexual exploitation from other forms of sexual abuse.

> 'I was sexually abused between when I was like 6 and 8 and the police got involved and then they got off with it and then I was seeing an NSPCC worker for about 3 years. I hadn't seen *it* [my sexual exploitation] as *that* [sexual abuse]...because I hadn't been forced to do anything.' (Georgi, 17)

Georgi here draws attention to aspects of her own agency within her exploitative relationships, and suggests how this prevents her recognising herself as a victim of abuse. Her belief that she willingly engaged in an exploitative relationships means she struggles to relate this to memories of early childhood familial sexual abuse. She goes on to explain how the term 'sexual exploitation' and its definition has supported her to reframe her recent experiences through a new lens and understand it as form or abuse, albeit different from her previous experiences. Her comments would seem to support

arguments for differentiating between broader forms of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation. A similar point was raised by Jay:

> I think because sexual abuse is just too much stuff, and I think it's a lot easier when people narrow it down to sexual exploitation – so I do like it being like that. Because sexual abuse could be like one person having sex with them whereas like sexual exploitation shows that they've been sort of spread around. (Jay, 15)

Jay's reasons for distinguishing between child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation provide an alternative insight into the value of the terminology. Here they help him to validate and identify particular characteristics of his abuse, which in this case includes the presence of multiple perpetrators.

Clearly questions about the usefulness of the term 'child sexual exploitation' remain – not only among practitioners and academics but also among young people themselves. The above quotes suggest how the use of technical language may both empower and unintentionally exclude individuals from involvement in discussions about their care. Both Georgi and Jay suggest that the use of 'child sexual exploitation' has helped to validate experiences that didn't seem adequately portrayed by their own understandings of 'child sexual abuse'[54]. Whereas Alice, Phoebe and Scarlett suggest that use of term has at times caused confusion and alienation and may be difficult to relate to their own experiences.

Language aside, overall it would appear that developing a critical understanding of the basic dynamics of exploitative relationships are central to young people's acceptance of help. It reiterates the aforementioned need for those providing support not only to respond to immediate physical risk in young people's lives but to address risks associated with young people's self-worth, sense of self-efficacy and wider societal (including gendered) power relations. However this must be recognised as a long-term process involving the re-evaluation of existing norms within young people's lives. Participatory styles of support, committed to developing Freirian 'critical consciousness' may prove invaluable here. Though not providing a 'magic bullet' they may represent an important means of working alongside young people to promote their experiences of choice, influence and self worth.

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[54] Interestingly despite both Jay and Georgi recognising value in the terminology of child sexual exploitation – they both appear to use and understand the term differently.

Resisting victim identities

> I got to know about it more and I know that I could spot it if it was in front of me...[the project worker] showed me videos , DVD's and some of them made me upset because I could see myself in them... but there was still part of me that didn't want to believe it. (Georgi, 17)

Georgi's comments, like many young people's, demonstrates the valuable role of stories in supporting young people's recognition of risk. Testimonies repeatedly illustrate the importance of DVD's and television story-lines in supporting young people's re-evaluation of relationships. Yet Georgi's comments raise another equally important point suggesting the sense of ambivalence she feels about believing herself as a victim of abuse. At the same time as acknowledging her growing understanding of sexual exploitation she admits to an ongoing reluctance to fully accept this explanation of events. One interpretation of Georgi's final comment is that her ongoing desire to deny her abuse, though clearly problematic, serves a protective role, preventing her having to face the full weight of loss associated with her identification as a victim. It alludes to a need to avoid the pain that comes with reinterpreting past relationships as exploitative rather than loving, and recognising oneself as a victim rather than the focus of affection.

Elsewhere young people described not just wishing to avoid an acceptance of vulnerability but also disagreeing with professional's assessment of their needs.

> I'm at low risk of it now whereas when I started I was at high risk. I knew what it [sexual exploitation] meant because we all done it in school and stuff –but I didn't feel like I did get used or anything like that. I've learnt quite a lot – I knew what it meant but I didn't know the ins and outs of it...Even though I've learnt a lot I still don't think like I was ever at high risk. (Alice, 15)

Several interviewees simultaneously acknowledged risky behaviours or circumstances while seeking to minimise or underplay the extent of the dangers they faced. In addition several young people presented their own (possibly overstated) sense of control and ability to manage danger within their narratives. These fluid and shifting acknowledgements of risk often provided points of disjuncture between a professional and service user's assessments of a situation or circumstance.

> The worker at [the CSE project] she kind of got worried a lot so I felt that if I were going to tell her the truth about what I did she were going to get scared. Like when I were going out – I would get absolutely off my face and end up back at someone's house. Maybe you should be careful, like always have someone else there that you know, and don't get too off my face. I definitely was taking too many risks. I'd take too many drugs and go with anyone. I used to say if I got like near the end of a night [clubbing] I'd say to friends, I'm fine, you go home. But I won't do that now – I still do get off my face. (Justin, 18)

Justin suggests that he has modified some of his behaviours although admits to ongoing risk taking associated with recreational drug use. Like Alice, Justin describes behaviours that aren't necessarily exploitative by themselves, but when scrutinised by professionals in the context of a sexual exploitation project they raise understandable alarm. He also suggests an inability to be honest with his worker, due to his anticipation of her reaction. His narrative works to both acknowledge and underplay risks that he takes. In other cases young people describe actively embracing some of the risks that they take:

> You might go back to people's houses and have a party and you might not want to miss that... like have a laugh - you want to get involved when people are doing stuff – like your friends. You don't want to be left out all the time...you're thinking 'Oh, you've only got one life – why don't I just live it?' - Like do what I want - take as many risks as possible. (Lorraine, 15)

Lorraine's testimony, illustrates a central, though rarely acknowledged aspect of risk management. This is the element of loss involved in 'playing safe'. In different ways many of those interviewed depicted their abusive relationships or risk taking behaviours as serving a variety of roles and needs within their lives, be that a sense of love, companionship, camaraderie, excitement or fun. Recognising the significance of the loss for young people associated with giving up risk may also provide an important resource in supporting them. It supports O'Neill's contention that there is a need to consider not only why young people enter exploitative relationships but also what sustains them within these relationships (1995; 2001).

Stephanie and Beth illustrate similar points when they explain a pattern of behaviour which involves them travelling to different cities with groups of men for parties. While both young women accept their referral to the sexual exploitation project for this reason, they do not concur with the professionals' assessments of their risk.

> **Stephanie:** If I go to Birmingham for a weekend and enjoy myself...If I came back and told [my project worker], I think it's safe, but they don't see it like that. Say if we were going out of Greentown for a day or weekend or whatever. We wouldn't say 'owt, but if they found out they'd be worried for our safety, because 'owt [anything] could happen.
>
> **Camille:** Do you think you are safe in that situation?
>
> **Stephanie:** Yeah I think I'm safe – or I wouldn't go.

Like Lorraine, Stephanie's admits that such trips were an opportunity to enjoy herself and suggests that risks are balanced in her mind against the enjoyment inherent in these experiences.

However contrary to her initial assessment of these experiences as safe Stephanie goes on to admit to serious risks involved in the behaviour she engages in and explains situations in which the 'overly cautious' professional fears appear to be validated.

> When I've gone away... I have been in that situation once where they said we'll not take you back unless you do summit [referring to a sexual act] - but because I'm not scared – I've never been in that situation where I'm afraid to stand my ground – I would phone my sister if I had to, you know, because I'm open and that. They left us there for a day and they wouldn't bring us back. It is scary but they ended up bringing us back. (Stephanie, 18)

The failure of young people to recognise their own abuse or recognise themselves as victims is well documented within literature on sexual exploitation (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Pearce, 2009). Current guidance also draws attention to the discrepancies between professionals' and young people's assessments of abuse noting that professionals need to 'be aware that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative and abusive situation' (DCSF,2009, p.13). Yet as Stephanie's comments suggest, the discontinuity between professionals' and young people's recognition of risk is not straightforward. On the one hand both Stephanie and her project worker recognise the risks inherent in the trips to Birmingham that she describes. Stephanie openly cites being threatened with sexual assault and the possibility of being made to trade sex for a journey home. On the other hand Stephanie's earlier description of the trip positions her workers' assessment as overly cautious. Though she is aware that such incidents can be described as 'internal trafficking' she challenges the use of this term, suggesting that it fails to represent her own experiences. Her telling of the story attempts to play down the seriousness of the threats to which she is exposed and describes herself as active in her own protection, using her own skills and confidence to avert danger. She actively avoids an account in which her own agency is totally negated by the men seen to be exploiting her. Yet even here she provides mixed messages juxtaposing 'I'm not scared' with a later acknowledgement that such situations are 'scary', voicing fears associated with the incident in question.

The divergence between the project workers and Stephanie's perspectives appears to centre on their willingness to acknowledge risk, and the degree to which they position Stephanie as a victim or potential victim. Stephanie's resistance to the label supports Pearce (2009) and Raby's assertions (2007:10) that an 'assignation of victimhood... [may] undermine agency, self-knowledge and self-efficacy' by positioning young people 'as unable to know themselves and in need of control'. Stephanie's narrative (like previous examples) enables her to maintain a sense of her self-efficacy despite other aspects of her narrative suggesting that she has been subjected to a serious threat of sexual violence. While she clearly recognises the risk, she presents herself as the opposite of a

victim - someone who is managing and defending herself and others and not afraid to stand her ground. There is clear evidence here that the binary constructs we create for adolescents and more specifically victims of exploitation simply don't fit (Lesko, 2001; Raby, 2006). In demonstrating both dependency and independence, vulnerability and responsibility, Stephanie resists (or 'breaches') the fixed identities we maintain for young people (Lesko, 2001: 135). An ability to respond to her circumstances, and engage her in honest dialogue, would seem to require a response that can hold all these contradictions in mind.

Viewed this way the lack of coherence in Stephanie's narrative starts to make more sense and could be seen to serve as a defence against the anxiety and pity of others, including me as an interviewer. It suggests a potentially protective rather than deliberately resistant or obstructive motivation behind her challenge to professional's assessments. She contests the sense of powerlessness implicit in professional discourses about the choices she has made. Whether or not her narrative reflects a fair assessment of the risks she has been exposed to cannot be ascertained. What her testimony tells us is of her need to be able to voice and maintain a sense of herself as in control and empowered.

This narrative links to a central tension at the heart of sexual exploitation provision – the need to respect and recognise service users' voices while ensuring that professionals do not collude with young people's own failure to acknowledge a risk of abuse. These testimonies also support an idea at the heart of this thesis about the need to move away from dualistic conceptions of young people as either victim or agent; vulnerable or responsible. Interviewees here provide a more complex picture than simply failing to recognise abuse or risk. In most cases they are not fully denying the presence of risks they face but rather choosing to minimise their severity, or, as in Stephanie's case, asserting their own role in managing and responding to them.

The interviews also demonstrate the very different ways in which young people, compared to professionals, talk about risk. They raise questions about whether professionals can avoid constantly undermining young people's own agency and voice while continuing to fulfil their duties (Dodsworth, 2000). How do we reconcile the contrasting messages communicated by young people: that on the one hand they wish to engage with risk or manage it on their own terms and on the other hand welcome support to recognise and re-evaluate abuse within their lives? These contradictions 'validate the subjective and agentic role of service users' (Jeffrey, 2011) encouraging the use of dialogue and respect for young people's narratives, even where these diverge from professionals' understandings. They reaffirm the importance of considering young

people's own 'voice' and their need to maintain control over how they are perceived and represented within processes of care. Perhaps most importantly they emphasise the need to deliver support *with* young people rather than conceiving it as something done *to* them.

5.6 Conclusion: inhabiting service user identities – challenge and choices

Overall this chapter set out to demonstrate interviewees' experiences of initial engagement with services, examining their understanding of both sexual exploitation and the provision designed to support them. This is presented as a foundation upon which broader questions of participation in relation to their care can be considered.

It began by presenting the diversity of experiences contained within the sample and evidenced the extent of institutional welfare received by young people interviewed. It then outlined some of the discomfort, fear and strangeness integral to the experience of becoming a service user. It argues that becoming and being a service user is far from easy, sometimes involving risks of its own. For all the welcomed opportunities for help and support that it brings, it is also coupled with genuine fear, trepidation, embarrassment and the ever recurring loss of control. It was apparent from many young people that engagement with sexual exploitation projects means overcoming cynicism or fears founded on prior experiences with professional support services.

I have also proposed that processes of referral appear to be eased by opportunities for choice, face to face engagement with workers and honest explanations about the risks to young people that workers perceive. Without this, and in instances of convoluted referral pathways, initial engagement can prove an alienating and dislocating experience with the idea of being 'passed on' between services, as a familiar motif. Where engagement with sexual exploitation services was on a voluntary basis this distinguished it in many young people's minds from other types of professional support. I argue that evidence of the importance of youth work principles is particularly significant within a sector that is focused on fulfilling a child protection remit.

Meanwhile young people's explanations and understanding of the reasons for their referral provides a complex picture. For many young people recognising risk appears to be a long-term process and, in keeping with existing research, young people sometimes revealed evidence of failing to acknowledge the potential of certain situations to be abusive or exploitative.

A simple response to this would be to reinforce the need for limits on the influence or autonomy of children and young people's narratives within this context. Yet considered closely these narratives provide evidence of the need to respect young people's accounts: if not in terms of their assessment of risk, then at least in terms of their request for recognition and support for their own agency, self efficacy and skills. While recognising that for many young people (including some in this study) recognition of themselves as a victim can be helpful, it is also important to acknowledge that for others it is may be less welcomed. Finding legitimacy within young people's stories, even where they diverge with professional narratives may prove important to longer term safety.

What they also suggest, is that a focus on either grooming and coercion (Swann and Balding, 2002) or economic drivers (Melrose, 2010; Phoenix, 2012) represent an oversimplification of young people's routes into and maintenance within sexually exploitative situations. Rather these narratives support O'Neill (2001) and Coy's assertion (2008) about the need to take account of young people's senses of self and the psycho-social preconditions that allow young people to choose or accept the terms of abusive relationships and engagement with risk.

All these points provide an important insight into the experience of 'becoming a service user' and start to suggest the relevance of questions about central aspects of participation (namely choice, information sharing and self representation) to the experience of being a service user and which I further examine in the remaining chapters.

Chapter 6: 'Participating' in services

6.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this thesis is sexually exploited children and young people's participation in decision-making about their care. However, as outlined in chapter one, a key aspect of this endeavour aims to examine the meaning and concepts of participation and involvement from service users' own perspectives. This meant that when explaining the research to participants, I made clear my particular interest in decision-making about their care, but this was framed within a broader interest about their experiences of services. Where possible, the adoption of an exploratory research approach and open styles of questioning tried to support this, encouraging young people to present their own priorities in relation to their care. There are some obvious limitations to such an approach and I am mindful of the inevitable bias that my interests, stated or otherwise, had on both the direction and content of the interview and research as a whole. I am also conscious that my choice to adopt a traditional rather than participatory or peer led approach to the research, limited participants' control – particularly in the analysis of findings. Yet despite my misgivings about my own power within the process, I hope that the emergence of several unanticipated issues demonstrates young people's real influence on aspects of the focus and direction of the research.

The above discussion attempts to explain my commitment to identifying service users' own values in relation to sexual exploitation support, which frames the content of this chapter. Although the analysis and reflection of these findings considers their relevance to issues of choice, decision-making and child sexual exploitation, they are structured and presented according to priorities that young people themselves identified. The findings do not always align neatly to questions of power and participation but still, I hope, offer new and valuable insights for this thesis and offer learning about new ways of framing participation in this context. In addition they provide a service user perspective on the idea of values within services. Much has been written elsewhere about the significance of values, particularly in relation to social work as a whole (Parton 1994, Banks 2006). There are a range of critical perspectives on which specific values are relevant and appropriate for structuring social work at both national and international levels. The same is true to a lesser degree for youth work (Jeffs and Smith, 2008). However on the whole these frameworks of values are created, structured and imposed from above, building on relevant but professionalised expertise. While not questioning the validity or importance of these groups of values, the chapter which follows attempts to identify a set of

supplementary values derived, from the 'other side of services' – those receiving as opposed to providing care. In addition they identify priorities derived solely from specialist child sexual exploitation support and are thus likely to reflect aspects specific to this context.

The chapter is divided into three main parts. The first and central part of the chapter seeks to identify principles of practice that young people highlighted as positive and constructive. Within their analysis attention is drawn to how these principles support learning about the meaning and relevance of participation in this context.

Part two compares these principles or values to existing models of best practice for sexual exploitation services and asks whether there is anything distinct about young people's views when compared to the existing knowledge base. The chapter concludes by considering the emerging themes in relation to the research question. This considers the degree to which young people's own values support the importance of key aspects of children's participation.

6.2 What young people valued about services

What makes a good project?

Within each interview young people were asked to describe, 'what they valued about their services' and what made 'a good and effective project worker'[55]. Responses to these questions were initially themed under four simple related headings:

- favoured project worker qualities;
- favoured service styles and activities;
- unfavourable project worker qualities;
- unfavourable service styles.

At the first stage of analysis, under each heading, a long and diverse list of responses emerged (accounting for around 117 codes in total[56]). Each code linked to a small group

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[55] At times young people's responses are applicable to broader welfare services though they predominantly relate to the specific needs of victims of sexual exploitation.

of responses, expressing a similar sentiment. Some responses were neatly and succinctly phrased (e.g. 'respect'; 'someone to talk to') and in other instances were conveyed through long anecdotes, service comparisons or analogies. I then began to group similar codes into categories and plotted relationships between different statements or terminology. So for example the codes *feeling like they genuinely care* was grouped with *sincerity*; *feeling wanted*; and also linked to seemingly opposing, though related in-Vivo codes such as *feeling like a case* or *I'm just somebody's piece of work*.

From this process, I identified a set of eight values. These were designed to be broad enough to incorporate all responses, while retaining the specific and distinct priorities of respondents. There is considerable overlap and interdependency between these values. It could be argued that these divisions are arbitrary to some degree, and could have been organised differently, however in keeping with Corbin's approach (2008), this was the story that felt most 'right' to me following my submersion in the data. I have also attempted to ensure that all young people's responses to these questions are reflected in at least one of the eight values, and that all 117 of my initial codes are encompassed here. Each value is outlined alongside explanations of its meaning and examples of how it was expressed by those interviewed. Following a description of each group of values, I present some cross cutting ideas that emerge across the eight themes and consider how these relate to existing child sexual exploitation and child participation literature. Because of the sample size, interview approach and absence of quantitative analysis it has not been possible to prioritise the list of values. Where I perceived a particular strength of support for a group of values this is stated within the text, alongside my evidence for this[57], however the order in which they are presented here should not be regarded as significant.

Principles of best practice for sexual exploitation support: service users' perspectives

1) The experience of feeling genuine care ('sincerity')

All the young people I spoke with described the importance of feeling a sense of genuine care from professionals they worked with. When young people were asked to detail behaviour that signified the presence of this genuine care and concern, they talked about instances where workers remembered personal things about them; were visibly attentive

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[56] Of these 117 responses, 74 related to service styles and activities and 43 related to project worker qualities.

[57] A potential follow-up activity to this study would be to involve groups of service users in ranking and considering the relative importance of each of these values.

('[they] didn't fiddle with their phone[58]'); made them feel important ('she took the time to take me to my Dad's grave'[59]) and conveyed a sense that they sincerely mattered. Young people described staff from a range of services (sexual health clinics; schools; youth clubs; police; social care) who demonstrated care through small but memorable acts of kindness and took personal responsibility for maintaining consistent contact. Below, Alice describes how care was communicated to her by her sexual exploitation project:

> As soon as I came here I felt like I fitted in. They make you feel wanted - at home. If you ask for more help, they'll give you it and they'll not make you feel awkward for asking for it... They make you feel like you're not putting anyone - what's the word? - you're not putting anyone out. So you're not wasting anyone's time or anything. They're always there for you. They make that clear for you. They don't make you in an awkward position. (Alice, 15)

Here Alice describes how staff within her sexual exploitation project communicated both her sense of worth and modelled positive and caring relationships. She identifies their ability to make her 'feel wanted' without asking anything in return ('they'll not make you feel awkward for asking for it'). The message that care and attention could be received without an expectation of anything in return is particularly critical for victims of child sexual exploitation. Importantly it offers an alternative model to young people's existing patterns of relationships, characterised by the commodification and exploitation of affection.

The importance of both individual workers and project's dependability suggested by Alice's comments was also highlighted by Sophie who described the importance of knowing that workers 'were there for you'. She specifically identified the relationship between care from professional support and the absence of care from other aspects of sexually exploited children's lives.

> Because [young people] haven't got the love and attention that they should get when they're at home... if they get the love and attention at home they wouldn't need this project because they wouldn't be going out and getting it [from men]. That's what I think personally... A lot of young people think no-one's there for them, that they're all alone. It's nice just having one person – 'I'm here for you – I'll listen to you. (Sophie, 17)

Sophie's comments identify recognised links between child sexual exploitation and other aspects of disadvantage, noting the need for specialist services to respond to a wider absence of affection in sexually exploited young people's lives.

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[58] Georgina, 17

[59] Rebecca, 16

Conversely, just as young people were able to describe instances when they had felt that the support and care from professionals was genuine, they also identified occasions when the opposite had been true. Several interviewees highlighted instances when a particular professional's actions or behaviour reminded them that they were in essence a piece of someone's workload: workers who treat you 'as if you're just another case'[60] or remind you that 'you're someone that they're working with[61]'.

In a particularly telling choice of words Phoebe described her experience with a counselling service as making her feel like she 'was being serviced'. In part these words appear to describe the passivity she felt ascribed to her by the counsellor. Here and in the broader narrative around it she suggests her resistance to a form of support that reinforces a sense of powerlessness, highlights hierarchy within the 'caring relationship' and relies on 'monological' (as opposed to dialogical) communication (Fitzgerald et al., 2010: 293).

She also alludes to the experience of feeling commodified and the cold, transactional nature of certain relationships with professionals. Phoebe's comments suggest a partial parallel might be drawn between young people's experiences of being a service user and some aspects of their abusive relationships. While not implying that Phoebe's experience of counselling was itself abusive, her description undoubtedly recalls a strong sense of alienation and objectification, which we might equally associate with young people's exploitative relationships. The potential of 'caring relationships' to reproduce existing relations of power – and powerlessness is clear here (Freire, 1970).

Sally's account of working with statutory social care highlight her different perception of the care she received from social workers versus that of her voluntary sector provision, both of whom she had engaged with around her risk of sexual exploitation. She remarked:

> Yeah you're like a 'case' to them [social workers] but you're not a case to these here [at the sexual exploitation project]. Like Jane [the project worker] will come to my house, she will take the piss out of me till cats come home. None of them [social workers] are like that. Here they're alright with you. They talk to you like you're a person, not a piece of shit and they won't tell you what to do with your life. They'll obviously give you advice and if you don't listen – well at least they're there for you. (Sally, 19)

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[60] Illy, 16

[61] Beth, 19

In Sally's comments, as in many of these accounts, unfavoured workers appear to be caricatured by young people, described in extreme or emotive terms, presumably designed to surprise or appal both me and future readers. Yet rather than dismiss these descriptions based on an assessment of their literal credibility I interpreted them as indicative of young people's concerns and aspirations. By this I mean that images of 'bad' professionals, though caricatured, still transmitted young people's valid anxieties and wishes about practice. Here Sally's request not to be talked to like 'a piece of shit' may not singularly confirm anything about her past experiences but it does communicate important messages about the threat to her sense of status and worth that dealing with certain professionals evoked.

Sally's quote contains the suggestion that an important aspect of communicating meaningful care is the consistency and persistence of workers. She notes the presence of an unconditional aspect to her support which she clearly values –the idea that certain workers are 'there for you' even if you ignore or reject their advice or support. The importance she places on 'piss taking' and being talked to 'like a person', suggests the role of humour in offsetting dehumanising aspects of some services. 'Piss-taking' here indicates a relationship which is reciprocal and genuine and exceeds the boundaries of a strictly formal relationship. The reference to Jane visiting her home also alludes to the sense of a relationship that takes place on her own territory both literally and figuratively.

These comments suggest that opportunities to avoid or minimise hierarchical power dynamics associated with welfare are afforded through small but significant shifts in behaviour and service delivery. Recognising young people's own analysis of these encounters provides real insight into the subtle ways in which existing relations of power can be both symbolised and reproduced within the language, spaces and delivery of welfare provision. This demonstrates the value of scrutinising young people's involvement in services through a 'multi-dimensional' view of power (Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 2003; 2004). This supports us to consider the exercise of power explicitly, covertly and unconsciously by workers within services and to recognise 'non-decision-making' as a means of exercising power. It also highlights the distinct perspective brought to considerations of care by young people themselves. While their testimonies are not expressed using the language of power they demonstrate real sensitivity to its exercise in their recognition of the subtle signifiers of power and hierarchy. This begins to suggest what meaningful involvement might mean within this context to service users themselves.

2) Empathetic and non-judgmental support
As highlighted in Sally's previous quote, the presence of non-judgmental workers who allowed young people 'to be themselves', was another important and familiar value. This

was often set against interviewees' fears about their disclosures eliciting blame or shock, given the taboo and illicit nature of their experiences. Such fears have particular relevance to the field of child sexual exploitation where there has been a well documented tendency to ascribe blame and responsibility to victims (Beckett, 2011; Phoenix, 2012).

Integrated with service users' desire 'not to be judged' was a request for workers to empathise and understand the world from their perspectives. Lorraine requested workers who could: 'try and put themselves in your shoes instead of just judging you…try and realise how you're at[62]. While Illy (16) explained that she valued staff who 'sit down and talk to you calmly and they don't judge you' adding 'you want someone to understand why you did what you did'. Young people's quest for understanding was linked closely to their need to tell their own story and be listened to.

Where interviewees anticipated being judged by workers, they described limiting the information they shared. Even when professional's judgments were well meaning, tendencies to convey disapproval, worry or shock were noted to discourage young people from wanting to engage:

> I didn't talk to them as much , mostly because she'd [my project worker] tell me that she were worried and tell me that she were scared for me and you don't want to say that much when someone says that stuff.... I felt that if I were going to tell her the truth about what I did, she were going to get scared. (Justin, 18)

> You're not going to want to tell them [project workers] things – you're not going to feel comfortable telling them things the way they react to you telling them things. If they say 'oh my god, oh my god' you don't want them to react like that. You're like 'Oh my god. What you're going to be like if I tell you something else – something real'. (Fiona, 15)

Creating spaces where young people's stories could emerge required workers who reacted calmly to disclosures and didn't respond with shock or criticism. As Jay (15) explained workers need to: 'try to be nice and not harsh - don't ever lose your cool with them; try to relate to them; don't blame them... that really helps.'

In contrast to services or professionals that offered empathetic and non-judgmental support, there were examples where young people described feeling blamed, misunderstood and patronised. Many young people described perceiving some workers

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[62] Lorraine, 15

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as 'stuck up'[63] ; 'looking down their nose at you' or 'thinking they're better than you'. These were workers who:

> don't talk to you as a human being – don't talk to you as an adult. They talk you like a 5 yr old or summat. Whereas here they'll talk to you like a grown-up. Treat you with respect. (Phoebe, 17)

Phoebe here draws attention to the liminal and 'schizophrenic' state alluded to by Raby (2007) in which all sexually exploited young people found themselves: caught between the status of child and adult; dependence and autonomy. She vocalises the sense of discord that exists for many service users (and indeed adolescents) between how they feel and how they are treated (Beresford and Croft, 2001; Coleman, 2011; Jeffery, 2011). For sexually exploited young people these tensions are likely to have a heightened meaning – contrasting aspects of their lives and exploitation which involved them in extremely 'adult' worlds with treatment according to a particularly narrow and restrictive concept childhood. The disjuncture between the levels of autonomy and responsibility that young people have negotiated previously and how they're treated within care-giving relationships has been highlighted elsewhere relating to 'looked-after children' (Barry, 2002). In keeping with Barry's argument, an important lesson here appears to be that when services support young people moving from circumstances of no protection, but possibly high levels of autonomy and responsibility, to circumstances of greater protection, this does not automatically negate an ongoing need to recognise and respect their agency and capacity.

Many young people also noted particular sensitivities about believing themselves to lack status in the eyes of those they worked with. At times, as in Phoebe's comment this perceived lack of status was aligned to age and maturity. Elsewhere young people described being labelled, stigmatised or pathologised by workers who identified and interpreted them through a myopic lens linked to their past behaviours.

Rebecca (16) expressed her belief that professionals working with young people who shared her experiences and victimhood often 'just think that you're a failure to life'. Sally (19) expressed similar sentiments when she noted how social workers she had dealt with dismissed her as 'just a little shit bag. I'm still a little shit [to them]'. The sense here was of the potential for workers to compound and reiterate young people's existing self images through disapproval or dismissal. This in turn reiterates findings from the literature which

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[63] Sophie, 17

warn of the danger of translating such assumptions about young people, to justifications to exclude them from decision-making (Taylor-Browne, 2002; Twum-Danso; 2005)

For individuals with multiple service experiences such approaches seemed most acute and young people's sensitivities and anticipation to being labelled or misunderstood appeared to be associated with the number of welfare services that they had engaged with[64]. The presence of non-judgemental support appeared to provide a critical means of challenging young people's existing sense of status and self blame. It also provided an alternative experience of services for many young people whose image, in the eyes of many professionals, is likely to have been characterised as deviant or challenging.

3) Friendly and familiar

One recurring image that was used by young people to describe the workers they favoured, or the style of worker they wished for, was that of a 'professional friend or big sister'[65]. The use of the metaphor of friends or family to describe workers, though common, is clearly at odds with some of the central tenets of modern professional practice within the caring professions (Parton, 1994; Banks, 2006). It evokes a sense of unclear boundaries, the blurring of personal and professional roles and the potential for service users or clients to hold unrealistic expectations about their relationships with workers. Yet when attending more closely to how this language was used I sensed that it alluded to several important, and less contentious aspects of relationships that had widespread currency among respondents. These were qualities such as informality and flexibility, or the chance to have 'time with your workers when they're not in advice mode'[66] to help build relationships and strengthen their motivation to engage. Sally's earlier comments about how she valued a worker who 'will take the piss out of me till cats come home' also supported this. When Sophie (17) was asked to describe her reasons for marking a single social worker out for praise (amidst a barrage of criticism) she remarked: 'She was more casual, when she came around [our house] she played daft with the babies and stuff'.

Young people's requests for workers who were 'like friends' and services that were 'friendly' linked to the earlier point about a need for service users to recognise care as genuine. In these discussions, young people communicated their desire for relationships

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[64] Sally (19), Beth (19), Rebecca (16), Phoebe (17), Alice (15), Jay (15) all spoke at length about this issue. These are six of the eight service users who detailed the most extensive contacts with other services.

[65] Ursula, 17

[66] Beth, 19

of both congruence[67] and reciprocity. Equally, opportunities to learn something about worker's own personal lives or preferences appeared to be a means through which such relationships developed. The particular significance of this last point for victims of child sexual exploitation was highlighted by Illy (16). She explained a sense of unease when workers 'expect you to tell them everything about your lives but then they tell you nothing about theirs' and then compared this directly to the dynamics through which perpetrators operated, stating 'that's how the men work too – they find out everything about you then don't even tell you their real name'. Such comments highlight the difficulty for young people engaging with professional when relationships are perceived to be overwhelmingly one-sided. Young people's desire for 'give and take' within professional relationships, or *bi-directional influence* represents not only a means of humanising these encounters but also resisting a sense of being controlled that Illy alludes to here. It again supports further consideration of Freire's notion of reciprocity within relationships of care, albeit undoubtedly challenging and with few precedents (Carr, 2004).

The importance of humour was mentioned by all respondents and its presence was often used as evidence of sincerity within relationships. 'Having a laugh' provided respondents with an important indication of the two way nature of relationships and opportunities for young people to connect with caring professionals on a level which was instinctual, personal and human. When asked to explain why she favoured coming to the project over other interventions Georgina (16) explained:

> 'because it's fun and we get to do stuff by ourselves [her and the project worker]...she's [the project worker] always laughing, She's talking to me about safety sex but we're always laughing'.

Here Georgina also notes the particular role of humour in dealing with difficult or delicate matters, suggesting the value of lighter, less formal approaches when tackling some of the more sensitive issues broached within sexual exploitation work. While it is all too easy to dismiss humour as insignificant there is evidence here that it presents an important signifier to young people of more dialogical relationships with workers.

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[67] Congruence is used here in terms of its meaning within person centred counselling where it is used to signify genuineness. It derives from Carl Rogers call for therapeutic approaches that could be simpler, warmer and more optimistic than psycho-dynamic therapies and is noted to be: "the most important attribute in counselling" it means that "unlike the psychodynamic therapist who generally maintains a 'blank screen' and reveals little of their own personality in therapy, the Rogerian is keen to allow the client to experience them as they really are. The therapist does not have a façade (like psychoanalysis), that is, the therapist's internal and external experiences are one in the same. In short, the therapist is authentic." McLeod, S. A. (2008). Person Centred Therapy. Retrieved from http://www.simplypsychology.org/client-centred-therapy.html

Another particularly clear account of the value of 'friendly and familiar' professionals was described within a group interview with Fiona, Sean and Ursula who had recently taken part in recruiting new staff for their sexual exploitation project.

> **Fiona:** When we were interviewing these people, if they said that they wouldn't create relationships with the young person - that they'd keep it strictly professional – then we don't really like that, because you can't get close to that person. You can't really open up to them. You can't trust them as much.... [cont'd] We came up with a question like – 'would you be okay with getting closer to the young person or would you keep it professional?'...I think, [laughing] two of them said [more laughing], that they would keep it strictly professional - that they wouldn't get close to a young person [Sean and Ursula are now laughing hard in the background] and we were like '<u>no</u>' we don't like you!

While this may seem like a particularly harsh response to a presumably well intentioned job applicant, it conveys the importance to these young people of relationships that avoided the coldness, formality and distance that the term 'professional' evoked. When I asked Ursula and Sean if they could explain why they were laughing so hard at Fiona's story they explained a sense of incredulity that a professional would not recognise the importance of such approaches to young people and a sense of pleasure derived from being able to challenge an applicant who did not adhere to their young person-centred values.

Interestingly in the quote above the term 'professional' is used pejoratively[68]. This was a common motif, used regularly to convey the opposite of the more familiar 'friend-like' relationships which young people valued. The term 'too professional' was used by six young people in separate interviews and in each case was associated with workers that were formal, inflexible and distanced.

> At Project M [sexual exploitation project] everyone is a really bubbly, jolly person – sort of like – you could almost say like 'childish' so it's someone you can easily relate to – and you don't *just* talk about [sexual exploitation]. You talk about your interests and everything so it's almost a lot easier to talk to them in that way. But with my psychiatrist – it's like cold and hard. Sort of more professional. But here it's more casual here. (Jay, 15)

Just as the presence of humour signified reciprocity and a sense of equality with workers to young people, so more formal approaches highlighted differences and a sense of explicit and marked power imbalances between professionals and service users. Here, as

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[68] As in descriptions of workers as '*too professional*'.

elsewhere, styles of provision which facilitated less polarised divisions between the status of professionals and service users were favoured and described enabling more meaningful and involved engagement.

4) Honest, trustworthy, transparent services

Of critical importance to every young person I interviewed was a sense that the welfare services they used were reliable and trustworthy. This was explained to mean that workers' intentions were transparent and that they communicated honestly with young people about the processes in which they were involved[69].

The central importance of this value appeared to be that it allowed young people to maintain a sense of control amidst the multiplicity of services and stakeholders that they dealt with. This in turn was noted to support young people's abilities to trust services and workers –a process outlined in more detail in chapter seven. Workers were noted to demonstrate these qualities by remaining true to their word, offering clarity about the boundaries of confidentiality and communicating effectively with young people about the processes that they were involved in. Meanwhile the opposite of transparent services and honest provision were accounts of project workers who went 'behind your back'[70] or failed to keep young people informed.

In one group interview, two young people expressed a desire for levels of privacy that went beyond these requests for honesty and transparency. These comments alluded to a need for levels of confidentiality that were unfeasible within the child protection frameworks that governed provision. Illy (16) explained that what she really 'needed' was 'someone who won't tell anyone - so that they can help you on your own terms' while Leia (18) supported this view explaining that the absence of wholly confidential services represented 'a real problem for young people like [her]'.

Interestingly this sentiment was only raised in one interview and elsewhere young people described an acceptance of information sharing but were concerned about the terms under which this took place. A related emphasis was also placed on methods of communication. This meant project workers' trustworthiness related to more than just being kept informed about the management of personal information and included a commitment to openness with young people. This related particularly to ensuring young

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[69] Given the link between this value and issues of confidentiality and information sharing it is expanded upon in Chapter 7 which explores these issues in depth. To avoid duplicating this information I deal only briefly with the meaning of these terms here.

[70] Phoebe, 17

people knew how they, and their circumstances, were assessed by their workers. Interestingly this meant accepting that at times project workers felt very differently to young people about their circumstances or behaviour and could provide challenging perspectives. This 'honest' approach was noted to be distinct from the more judgmental or critical responses outlined above. Fiona explained how this distinction operated by way of the fact that workers' opinions, even though challenging, were positioned as part of a wider dialogue with young people, in which both young people and professionals' perspectives were legitimised.

> If they do think something is wrong they will tell you – they won't like just sort of like be a bit funny with you –they'll actually tell you if they don't agree with something – they're really honest about stuff. (Fiona, 15)

Georgi similarly describes the desire of young people to hear workers honest perspectives while not wanting them to be framed in ways which communicated a sense of superiority drawing attention to the issue of professional status.

> [Young people] want to hear your opinion and they want to hear what you say - and they'll [the worker] just kind of explain it and just kind of say like this is wrong and this shouldn't have gone on.. Don't say it with - you know – I might use the word arrogance, is that a word?... as in 'I know this and you don't'. (Georgi, 17)

Calls for transparency, honesty and openness were linked in young people's narratives to the importance and desire for trusting relationships. Given the particular importance of this set of values to those interviewed the nature of this association is described in more detail in the proceeding chapter. However, key here is a recognition of the significance of trust to young people who have previously experienced exploitative relationships which have undermined trust in appalling ways. Young people themselves recognised and articulated this, connecting their difficulties trusting adult professionals to previous treatment by adults. While trust is an important quality in all supportive professional relationships it undoubtedly takes on added significance in this context. For young people with experience of sexual exploitation creating a context for honest and ongoing dialogue appears central to facilitating their own 'buy-in' to engagement with protective behaviours.

5) Specialist sexual exploitation advice and support
When discussing what they valued in sexual exploitation provision, many young people highlighted the specialist knowledge and subject-specific support that they received from services - whether this involved guiding them on their own processes of learning, to identify and recognise abuse, or supporting them with the processes of police interviews

or court appearances. Young people acknowledged that despite the multiple issues many of them faced, there was value in interventions focusing specifically on their intimate relationships and related risk taking.

For Georgina (16) this meant having someone with whom to discuss issues relating to intimacy and safe relationships. She noted the need for support to: 'teach young people how to say 'no' [to boys] and let them ask questions' going on to explain that this meant having a space to speak plainly and ask potentially taboo questions like 'what do boys want out of girls?' and 'why do girls always have to be so horny over boys?'

Engaging with specialist provision was also noted to help young people accept and recognise that their experiences of abuse were not unique. Jay talked about the strength he gained from his workers expertise derived from supporting other young people in comparable situations.

> Because Tom [my worker] has had experiences with almost exactly the same situations as mine, he's taught me about what's happened – where they [the young people] are now and that's almost made me think, this isn't going to be forever. I can be a normal teenager... definitely Tom's making me think that I can get past this. (Jay, 15)

The opportunity to hear other sexually exploited young people's stories and 'know that you weren't the only one'[71] were described helping young people avoid self-blame and a sense of hopelessness. Young people also described wanting to be able to use their own stories in the same way to help others in similar situations and at least two young people explained this as their reason for wanting to take part in the research. These comments suggest the potential role of peer support in sexual exploitation service provision. Although touched upon anecdotally in previous participatory projects (NWG, 2010; AYPH, forthcoming, 2013) this is an under-explored concept in relation to child sexual exploitation services. There is clearly a real role for young people in supporting not only their own needs for protection but also those of other young people. It suggests the value of 'voice' and self-representation as a means of providing peer support and additional complicating dominant narratives on sexual exploitation with other, more marginalised voices (Jeffery, 2011).

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[71] Lorraine, 14yrs

Similarly young people's testimonies and case studies were also cited by five interviewees as a means of facilitating difficult conversations about sensitive issues[72]. The ability to talk more freely about experiences in the third person or through a fictional character was explained by Phoebe (17) who discusses how films shown by her project provided a distancing device to help her talk. She notes: 'I wouldn't be able to sit down and say this is it – this is what happened [to me]. I had to watch a DVD first and then be able to say this is it'.

There were also more practical ways in which specialist knowledge supported young people. Georgi explains the support of her project worker, with experience of investigative processes[73], in the lead up to a court case in which she testified against her abuser. She noted:

> Leading up to the court case I don't feel like I could have done it without [my project worker]. She took me to see the courts before so I could have a look round - and when I went on the day she explained what would happen'. (Georgi, 17)

Georgi like Jay and Georgina faced a range of issues for which she accessed support from different providers. At times during their interviews all three questioned the efficacy or value of some of these interventions and suggested the difficulty of dealing with multiple professionals. Yet, they (and others), reveal how they benefitted from an intervention specifically focusing on sexual exploitation, noting the importance of workers who could assist them through the aspects of their lives that stood outside the remit of mainstream welfare services.

6) Someone to talk to: (space, time and a relationship in which to express oneself)
The importance for young people of being listened to and having a chance to express themselves was raised in each interview. While 'having someone to talk to'[74] was undoubtedly fundamental to the experience of feeling cared for by others, and supported the elicitation of disclosures, it was also described as a means through which young people could start to manage and process their own experiences. Leia noted how:

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[72] Georgi (17); Georgina (16); Phoebe (17); Alice (15); Sophie (17)

[73] Georgi worked with a project that was part of a multi-agency team that included police. Her voluntary sector case worker was trained in 'Achieving Best Evidence' interviews and had significant experience of supporting young people through investigative processes.

[74] Sophie (17), Ursula (17), Justin (18), Illy (16), Leia (18)

'the more you talk, the easier it is to talk. I've had a lot of trouble in my relationships in my past... I've been in a lot of rough relationships and it's helped to talk. I talk about my past because I want a better future. (Leia, 18)

Being supported to talk was also described as a means by which young people helped control their behaviours and avoid conflict. Again this evidenced how small micro-level opportunities for young people to manage their own lives were significant. When asked what kept Beth coming back to her project she simply noted: 'I just come to have a gas off... yeah it keeps me out of trouble... coming and letting my steam off here'. Phoebe shared a similar sentiment when she explained:

It can be good to talk about things – that's what I've learned. Otherwise you take it out on other people and stuff –but if you find someone right to talk to it helps. (Phoebe, 17)

When Phoebe goes on to explain the qualities she valued in project workers she returns to the same theme noting that they should:

help you communicate, socialise, get stuff off your chest...chill out and just talk. Just down to earth, have a laugh but be on the serious side as well.. just being kind and understanding is a big one – and being a good listener –that is a real big one.

When young people described the different styles of dialogue that they engaged in with different services, they contrasted confrontational experiences with more harmonious encounters. Despite the importance given to having someone to talk to there was little evidence that young people valued more formally therapeutic approaches such as counselling or therapy[75]. A professional's style and approach to dialogue could enable or inhibit a young person's willingness to talk. Staff who created the space for dialogue and 'show you that they're listening'[76] were contrasted with those who unduly led or directed conversations or used interrogatory styles. Fiona recounted one such upsetting encounter tearfully stating:

I don't think [the police woman] really listened to what I had to say and she was only asking for the answers that she was asking for – not what I wanted to say. (Fiona, 15)

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[75] Access to counselling services was mentioned in three interviews all of which were critical of their experiences. Similarly Jay's accounts of meeting with a psychiatrist considered this unfavourably in relation to his CSE support. Despite this there is evidence from other work (WWFU,) of young people calling for access to therapeutic support, particularly in their transitions to early adulthood.

[76] Stephanie, 18

Meanwhile Beth explained how space to talk meant being able to express yourself without being interrupted or cut off.

> When you're talking to somebody here, they'll stop and listen. They won't interrupt you. They won't like try and put words in your mouth and stuff like that. (Beth, 19)

In both these quotes, attention is drawn to the failure of some professionals to listen *properly* and tendencies to impose their own agenda on interactions.

There was also recognition that despite young people's desire to express themselves it was often difficult to do so in relation to such a sensitive topic as sexual exploitation. Three young people talked about the value of being offered other ways to express themselves – writing, drawing or working creatively as a means of processing experiences and communicating feelings.

> Like the photography project - that helped me because when it comes to captions – I like writing and I.. I didn't really speak about [sexual exploitation]. I didn't really do that. I just bottled it up and I needed to get it out in another way and I think if I hadn't have done [the photography project] I think I would have just been bubbling it up. (Scarlett, 16)

> My book [from my writing project] were stress relief. It stopped me smashing my mum's house up – because I've been stressed and I just went to write in my book. (Sally, 19)

In addition to having someone who listened effectively, or a creative activity through which to 'download' feelings, having an appropriate 'space' both in physical and temporal terms was noted to be important to facilitate self expression[77]. Formal meetings with strictly restricted time slots were described as inhibiting young people's willingness to share information, whereas flexibility, and accessibility of workers appeared helpful. When Beth and Sally were asked what made a good listener, Beth replied: 'Have time for you - like If I've got something to say and its going to take me an hour and half then they've got to sit there'. Georgi similarly expressed how the concept of workers 'availability' was critical to her engaging with and opening up to a police officer.

> Alan was one of my police officers. He give people his work number – he could talk if I needed to. That's really helpful. Just knowing that basically someone's there for you and you can speak to them if you need to – that gave you a lot of relief. (Georgi, 17)

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[77] A differentiation between 'space' and 'place' is used here which understands place as an objective and location based entity, while space may be used to signify experiential or subjective space as in the phrase 'space to talk' alluding to the creation of time and circumstances conducive to talking.

Scarlett suggests that a 'space to talk' required the opportunity to develop longer term relationships which deferred the pressure on her to disclose or deal with issues before she felt ready. She explained:

> we did talk about it [my sexual exploitation] but it were up to me if I wanted to talk about it. She [my project worker] didn't ever make me say what I didn't want to say.

The importance of long-term consistent support in providing young people with the ability to set the pace at which they worked was evident here.

7) A focus on young people's strengths, opportunities and future

In all the interviews young people were asked directly about which aspects of the support stood out and which they felt had made a significant difference to them. In response to these questions, or in other cases unprompted, several interviewees drew attention to interventions that provided them with new opportunities or experiences, and were 'about helping you and your goals'[78]. These were activities that targeted the development of their skills and aspirations rather than focusing on the minimisation of risk or promotion of safety within their lives. For several respondents (n=5), a tendency of services to 'focus on what's happened in the past'[79] was felt to unfairly dominate their interactions with welfare services.

> I think quite a lot of the others services – social workers – CAMHS – you know they kind of talk about – core group meetings especially – always dragging up the past – you've done this – you've done that -.. and it's so much more focused on what's happened in the past – not the present or changing things for the future and that is a big difference. (Ursula, 17)

Ursula's comments highlight the potential for work with victims of sexual exploitation to focus on risk and deficit. There is clearly a need for services to address and support young people to deal with aspects of their past, but there was a sense that at times this could become onerous and de-motivating. An undue focus on the past appeared to convey to young people that their identity may be limited by, or bound to, previous experiences and victimisation.

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[78] Georgina, 17

[79] Fiona, 15

Several young people voiced a specific desire to be offered opportunities to take on new and more positive identities and roles. A desire to be challenged to 'move on' by workers was also expressed although difficulties with this were acknowledged.

> you can't do nothing straight away can you? It takes time, but you need encouraging don't you? You need to be pushed a little bit, a little bit more each time. But not too hard though because then people fuck off – just fucking carry on with what they're doing. (Beth, 19)

Here Beth describes the delicate balance workers needed to strike between setting goals and challenges for young people while recognising their ongoing vulnerabilities and the limits this might place regarding the pace or size of change. Her comments suggest both a need for and fragility of moving forward.

Activities that provided opportunities for young people to shift roles from being a recipient to participant in interventions and that focused on young people's contributions rather than needs were also welcomed. In several instances (n= 10) young people talked about the confidence they gained from leadership opportunities and involvement in aspects of service delivery.

> **Camille:** is there anything particular you've done in a project like this or in another project that you feel has really made a big difference to you?
>
> **Phoebe:** It's just being allowed in decisions – if you've done well - to show you can be trusted. A couple of weeks back I did interviews for a person here, for a new [member of staff] here and that just put me on cloud nine that because I thought -no-one's ever really trusted me that much before. I just felt that bit more responsibility and stuff...so it were scary – you know growing up a bit – but fantastic...I were just on cloud nine - it were absolutely fantastic.

Phoebe describes how the communication of trust and respect invested in her by staff provided her with a clear basis for a growing sense of self-confidence. As her narrative suggests, such opportunities represent a transfer of authority to young people, which though small, may be significant. In this case it enables Phoebe to adopt new roles and responsibility while having her existing skills and expertise acknowledged. It also represents a shift towards 'engaging with children in more horizontal ways than is typically the case in adult-child exchanges' (Hart, 2009:24), and certainly professional-service user exchanges.

Elsewhere Stephanie attributes her ability to be able to exit a life in which she faced sexual exploitation to being offered new opportunities by her project worker. She explains:

> I think because when I were coming here [the sexual exploitation project] and I were doing some night courses and stuff. And when I were doing some night courses, that were getting us out from that [sexually exploitative] situation a bit. Like coming here – they used to push you and make sure you're doing stuff. And then they found me that course. I think if I didn't do that course I would just be a lowlife. I think that course - you know made me do something. I think I wouldn't have a job now. (Stephanie, 18)

Stephanie goes on to describe the challenges she faced on the course (e.g. going on a residential alone) and her surprise that she managed to do it. Yet it is this sense of challenge and the associated achievement to which she attributes her ability now to leave her previous lifestyle and hold down a job. She ends this particular narrative saying:

> Soon as I finished my course I went to the job that I'm doing now and then money were coming in and I was just getting drawn into it...To look back now, like drinking in the morning – how is it I survived you know, not working or 'owt? But I loved it then. Just not doing 'owt and just having a laugh all the time... Looking back I think some things are bad but I did enjoy it.

Within this account the 'pull' of Stephanie's old lifestyle appears to be significant. Despite her move away from it, she clearly still identifies with some of the 'benefits' that it offered. Yet the benefits and diversion of her course and subsequent income appear to provide its own alternative pull that has allowed her to distance herself from this peer group and the associated difficulties. Stephanie's story suggests how 'pushes' and 'pulls' that increase vulnerability towards sexual exploitation may be countered with alternative 'pushes' and 'pulls' towards new experiences and opportunities. She asserts the need for these new opportunities to represent equivalent fun, excitement and/or benefits in order to resist the draw of less healthy alternatives. Although Stephanie's remarkable account represents a very individual journey it supports the message from other young people of the value of future facing initiatives: the need for opportunities that focus on young people's strengths and ambitions alongside the risk minimisation and crisis intervention support that young people rightly receive. In Stephanie's case there is a clear association between reducing risk, and opportunities which recognise and promote her capacity and sense of control - in this case through employment. While clearly serving the same purpose, it is not achieved through child protection provision in any traditional sense.

8) Working in genuine partnership with young people (choice and negotiation)
The importance of choice and involvement figured heavily in discussions about young people's referral and initial engagement with projects, as outlined in the previous chapter. These discussions suggest the importance of young people's desire to have their role as a legitimate stakeholder recognised and responded to.

These themes were raised by Scarlett who talked in detail about ways in which she worked alongside staff from her project. While she acknowledges the vital support offered to her by project staff, it was their ability to support her own sense of resilience and internal resources that she suggests were equally critical.

> They explain what sexual exploitation is and help you get through it, but they help you kind of find your own way of dealing with it and– I don't know, it kind of calms you down in yourself and you have a chance to talk about it without you feeling crappy – because you've got a chance to make some input. (Scarlett, 16)

Scarlett went on to provide examples of times she had worked closely with her project worker to make joint decisions around the support and care she needed. A particularly powerful example of this partnership work was the process she detailed through which she and her support worker devised a way to tell her Dad about her sexual exploitation. She described how the process of sharing information with her Dad was carefully planned and informed by her, carefully considering when and how it was undertaken. She explains how, despite her fears about informing him, ultimately it was her choice and though it was 'horrible', she notes 'to be honest, I think it was done as well as it could have been.' Scarlett's sense of control throughout this particularly difficult experience means that unlike many others I spoke to, sharing information with her parents was not associated with a lack of trust or feelings of anger towards professionals.

The ability for young people's voices to inform not only decisions that were taken but also the story told about them was also highlighted by several interviewees. Lorraine, Mike and Rapunzel explained how they managed to work collaboratively with professionals who held different perceptions about the risks they faced. They suggested an acceptance of professionals with different views about their sexual exploitation and risk, provided this did not present their personal accounts as unequivocally wrong or misjudged. The key appeared to be how workers approached these differences and whether they could present their own perspectives as subjective assessments of risk. Where differences in standpoint were made explicit to young people, and they had the right to reply, there was evidence that they became negotiated perspectives that left space for young people to influence the interpretation of events while remaining open to developing new understandings of their circumstances. When describing how workers supported them to develop new perspectives on the risks they faced the group explained:

> **Rapunzel:** Instead of shouting at me and saying why did you do it -
>
> **Mike:** [interjecting] Letting you get your point across first, then putting their point across and about how they see it differently.
>
> **Lorraine:** Instead of just saying that was wrong

Whether it was working alongside staff in formal partnership roles, or being able to influence the direction and pace of support, the ability to deliver support with young people rather than simply to them appeared to be critical. It was in Phoebe's words 'making sure that [young people] were involved at every step of the way – putting their views across'.

Some evidence for the importance of young people being able to work in partnership is noted in the seven preceding sections. For instance, it draws on examples where young people such as Phoebe, Fiona, Ursula and Sean highlighted the value of being involved in formal service level decision-making processes such as staff recruitment.

Other formal 'participation' opportunities to work alongside project workers, through the co-delivery of training and awareness workshops were highlighted by Stephanie, and Sophie. When Sophie was asked to talk about the aspects of care that she felt she had most benefited from she described her involvement in peer support work delivering 'missing from home' workshops with young people in Pupil Referral Units, Residential Care Homes and CAMHS provision.

> The [missing] workshop that they give to us – afterwards they give us like interviews about it. So when we said 'this should be changed', 'that should be changed' – they said 'well why don't you deliver it?'... So we just like, talked about how should the workshop be delivered. Should it be one to one or should it be group sessions? Should we tell people about risks?...It was an amazing experience. It felt good because – us having the workshop done to us by adults... the young people [that we delivered it to] thought it was better being delivered by us. (Sophie, 17)

As in Phoebe's account of interviewing staff, Sophie describes a sense of pride and enjoyment derived from successfully delivering and taking ownership of an intervention. She alludes to the sense power and authority gained from having the chance to adopt new roles and become a contributor as well as recipient of care.

Although these accounts do not include examples of 'self-advocacy' (Lansdown, 2001) or 'young people initiated and directed decision-making' (Treseder, 1997) there does appear to be some evidence for projects facilitating young people's participation at a range of consultative and participative 'levels', according to the typologies of Hart (1992), Treseder (1997), Lansdown (2001) and Shier (2001).

Yet these findings also echo sentiments within Hart's recent work on child participation (2009) where he calls for a need for discussions of participation to look beyond 'children's voices in governance'(pp.7) and laments a lack of progress 'in bringing more participatory engagements between groups of children and adults in institutional settings and programmes' (pp.9). He stresses a need to consider the importance of opportunities for children's choice and decision-making in all aspects of their lives. Although Hart's work focuses on more mainstream contexts (after-school clubs, part-time work opportunities), the principles and values are equally valid as evidenced from the importance attached to these approaches by young people themselves.

6.3 Comparing young people's models of services

This next section considers how these values stand in relation to the existing models of services that are already documented and which draw upon primary research with practitioners, service providers and policy makers.

Shared service user and professional values

In many ways young people's ideas about 'ideal' project workers or services are unsurprising and support the existing knowledge base about models of effective service provision outlined section 2.5 of this thesis. Crucially there was nothing within these values that contradicted or stood in opposition to existing literature and overall they endorsed models of best practice articulated within policy, practice guidance and models of services (See Sheffield SES, 2010; DCSF, 2009; Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Melrose and Barrett, 2004; Pearce, 2002).

For example, an emphasis on the need for 'space, time and a relationship in which to express oneself' bore some resemblance to evidence from Melrose and Barrett (2004), Foley et al.(2004) and Scott and Skidmore (2006) about the centrality of relationships in effective support for victims of child sexual exploitation. The model of therapeutic outreach proposed by Pearce et al. (2002) is also relevant here. Meanwhile Scott and Skidmore's (2006) identification of the significance of 'attention', correlated to interviewees' call for a need to experience genuine care. This was further supported by Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (SES):

> Young people often believe that they are better off looking after themselves due
> to poor experiences of parental or adult support, and therefore need to see that
> their support worker is genuine and will walk that extra mile for them before they
> are willing to engage. (2009: 15)

Comments from young people, emphasising the value of flexible and accessible provision, supported both Scott and Skidmore's (2006) recognition of using a range of creative approaches to promote inclusion ('access') and Sheffield SES model of flexible support to work around the potentially chaotic lives of service users (Sheffield SES, 2009). Young people's calls for non-judgmental support are also explicitly reflected within the literature (Darch; 2004; Scott and Skidmore; 2006; Pearce, 2009). Finally young people's identification of the importance of 'specialist advice, support and wisdom' is taken for granted within existing literature, although interestingly rarely remarked upon or details given about how this may differ from other holistic welfare support.

In addition and cutting across these values, young people strongly supported the value of specialist support provided by the voluntary sector (DCSF 2009:35). Respondents talked about how, according to their perceptions, voluntary services mostly, though not invariably, represented a distinct type of service to statutory services. Though several young people remarked positively on support received from social workers, teachers and even police, overall statutory welfare provision was characterised less favourably by young people and invested with less trust (whether justified or otherwise).

Differing perspectives

As noted above, in many ways this group of perspectives present a familiar commentary on existing values proposed by child sexual exploitation literature, yet a number of important differences are apparent. Immediate and obvious distinctions emerged from interviewees' emphasis on informality, fun and friendliness. This went beyond the need for flexibility and creative approaches highlighted by Scott and Skidmore (2006), emphasising the importance of opportunities for closeness and humour within professional caring relationships. Moments which signified that a professional facade or barrier had broken; that structured roles (of service user and helper) became more fluid; and reciprocal exchange took place between young people and workers, appeared to provide important indications of the authenticity of the professionals. This was contrasted with the concept of workers being 'too professional' highlighting questions raised by young people about the efficacy of formal relationships with tight boundaries. This linked to a cross cutting concern with eschewing practices that signified distance and differences in power and status between young people and workers.

The centrality of honesty and transparency, although implicit within some existing research is given a new level of significance within young people's testimonies. A much fuller consideration of these issues is provided in the next chapter.

It also remains interesting to note that although the representation of young people's needs is considered within Scott and Skidmore's endorsement of advocacy (2006) and in the DCSF guidance (2009), it does not fully reflect interviewees calls for 'genuine partnership' and their corresponding wish for more direct involvement in their care. These calls go beyond a need for 'representation' and suggest a need for status, rights and 'recognition' as legitimate stakeholders (Fitzgerald et al.,2010). This supports the importance of ensuring that young people's voices are not only heard but also have the potential to exert influence within decision-making processes.

Young people's views also support the need for participation in its dialogical sense (Fitzgerald et al.,2010; Jeffs and Smith, 2008). This was evidenced through their wish to actively engage in dialogue about their risk and care, in ways which provided space for disagreement but were ultimately built on respect for alternative perspectives.

Finally the focus on young people's strengths, opportunities and future provide an additional aspect to the values suggested by existing literature. Although it aligns to what some literature refers to as diversionary opportunities, young people's emphasis particularly focuses on the need to have their skills and abilities recognised in an effort to step beyond the role of victim and invest in their futures.

6.4 Conclusion: care, reciprocity, respect, and involvement

At some level, splitting young people's responses up in this way masks the interdependence of these values that is critical to their realisation. What appears particularly striking in the production of this list is the presence of styles of support that attend to young people's dependency, vulnerability and risk alongside those which speak to their sense of agency and desire for autonomy. While on the one hand attention is drawn to the importance of services which support young people's needs through qualities such as sincerity, care, and being listened to; they also highlight the value of services that attend to young people's potential, promoting their own sense of control and empowerment and respecting their expertise about their own lives.

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter these two sets of values are often set in opposition, the former associated with traditional models of child protection, while the latter are linked with ideas about children's rights and participation and models of youth work. Many of the values highlighted here endorse existing models of service delivery for victims of child sexual exploitation: young people's need for attention, care and specialist support. Yet there also appears to be some crucial distinctions in young people's prioritization and value base. Ideal relationships are here described in ways that promote

choice, demonstrate bi-directionality of influence and promote a sense of status and recognition. By this I mean young people's requests for choices about engagement in services; to both receive and to contribute; to listen and to talk; to be persuaded and to be influential; their ability to set the pace at which they made disclosures; and their need for workers who 'laughed at [their] jokes'. These all in their own way represent desires to reduce the asymmetrical power between professionals and service users. Although there is an inevitability to paternalism and differences of power and influence in any relationships of care (Chambers, 1983) a concern with its reduction remains valid, especially where it supports young people's engagement. In addition the distinct nature of these voices and their contribution itself supports the idea that the authenticity of meaningful service-user involvement 'should derive from being rooted in the experience of those using services' (Rees, 1991:4).

What is striking is how, in the combination of values that young people proposed, they simultaneously want aspects of paternalism and participation, supporting more theoretical literature that questions the value of placing these paradigms in opposition (Healy, 1998; Barry, 2002; Lansdown, 2012). While young people clearly express a need for their vulnerabilities to be recognised and responded to, they also assert a need for status and to be respected as young adults rather than young children. Indeed it is the rejection of this set of dualisms that appears to distinguish respondent's voices and values from the professional sexual exploitation policy which has until now framed their needs for them.

While there has been some recognition of agency among victims of child sexual exploitation within existing literature (Pearce, 2006; 2009; Phoenix 2010; Melrose, 2010) this tends to focus on the role of agency in their negotiation of risk rather than consider its role in their participation in support services[80].

What I hope is that examining the value base of a small sample of service users, supports the merits of considering interventions from young people's own perspectives. These voices help justify a requirement to involve young people in identifying service priorities and their potential role in informing service and professional development. Service users' voices provide a specific emphasis on the value of choice, partnership, transparency and future-orientated initiatives within service delivery. I argue that these values, while echoing some aspects of best practice found within professional discourses,

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[80] Notable exceptions to this include Brown (2006) and Pearce (2006;2009). While Brown argues for the need to employ young people's agency at the level of service and policy development, Pearce acknowledges the need to support young people's resilience and recognise them as '*active agents of their own destiny*'. (p44)

provide a distinct set of priorities that augment and further nuance our understanding of effective practice within sexual exploitation services.

Chapter 7: Information management and disclosure

7.1 Introduction

In a research project focusing on the importance of participation and decision-making, the issues that most consumed young people appeared to mark a shift away from the main focus of this inquiry: *trust* and *information sharing*. On the face of it, these issues reflect a simple and obvious truth, that young people, like most of us, are concerned with issues of privacy regarding aspects of their lives which are intimate, sexual or contentious. Though marking a move away from my original focus, the degree to which these issues dominated young people's narratives demanded attention. My focus on these issues reflects a commitment to remaining open to the priorities of those I interviewed, and my attempt to avoid unduly imposing my own concerns onto the process of data collection.

However, closer reading and analysis of these comments reveals a more complex picture. It demonstrates that young people's preoccupations are not just about the information they share, but also about information (or a lack of it) that is shared with them. Analysis also reveals a range of ways that these concerns are closely linked to questions about young people's involvement in decision-making, both informally and through multi-agency meetings. It reinforces the particular significance of 'voice' and self-representation to young people affected by child sexual exploitation and demonstrates how processes designed to care and protect may themselves be experienced as harmful.

The aim of this chapter is therefore to examine these ideas from the perspectives of sexual exploitation service users and consider the relationship between trust and information sharing and questions about service users' power and participation.

The chapter is split into four parts. It begins by defining the concept of trust within this context, attempting to make concrete the meaning and significance given to the term by those interviewed.

Part two explores the experiences on which young people's fears about information sharing are based, presenting the breaches to confidentiality that young people described and considering implications of these experiences. This section considers the particular relevance of these issues for victims of child sexual exploitation, again questioning if and

when processes of care may at times replicate aspects of young people's experience of abuse and exploitation.

Part three highlights how, despite these concerns, young people demonstrate sophisticated understanding and recognition of the need for personal information to be shared and limitations made to confidentiality. It describes young people's acceptance and 'buy-in' to information sharing, where processes are transparent and anticipated, and young people are kept involved.

The chapter then considers information sharing and decision-making within multi-agency sexual exploitation meetings and young people's participation in these activities. I conclude by considering whether and how young people's own priorities can be reconciled within a context that prioritises information sharing as a route to safeguarding.

7.2 'It's all about trust and privacy'

Among interviewees, the concept of trust was positioned as critical to their engagement with services. Within this context trust held a very specific and tangible meaning: defined almost exclusively in relation to how they perceived professionals to manage their personal information. This recurring issue dominated young people's interviews and was raised unprompted, within nineteen of the twenty interviews. Despite including this issue within the topic guide (appendix 8, theme 8) it invariably arose early in interviews in response to questions about effective services. For many young people the concept of trust was presented as the central value on which their assessment of services was based.

> 'It's is all about trust and privacy' (Leia, 18);
> 'the big thing is trust' (Justin, 18)
> 'the main thing you look for is if you can trust someone' (Mike, 16).

When asked to explain or reflect on what they meant when they talked about 'trust', young people regularly positioned the control of private information as the basis on which trust was won or compromised by workers:

> Trust and respect … it's like if you trust someone, it's like.. I don't know how to word it …it means they'll listen to you and they won't go behind your back.
> (Alice 15)

Camille: What makes you trust someone?

Phoebe: It's just the way they act around you …People who just say like, 'Ah we'll just talk - this won't be said; that won't be said', and then they go say it. That knocks me down a bit, and so you've just got to find out where you stand really. (Phoebe, 17)

Fears voiced by Alice about workers 'going behind your back' and Phoebe's point about being lied to about keeping information private, represent recurrent themes. Phoebe's description of being 'knocked down a bit' when trust was breached, allude to the impact on young people's confidence. Meanwhile her description of needing to 'find out where you stand' supports observations made in chapter five about the process of assessment that young people consciously engaged with when first encountering new workers and services. It reflects the assumption that trust needed be earned and trustworthiness could never be assumed from a professional.

An exponential loss of control

Young people's concerns about information sharing were often aligned to their fears about a loss of influence and control. Discussions about information sharing often evoked images of information being dispersed to ever wider and more indistinct audiences: 'everyone' or 'everywhere'. They convey the exponential loss of all command over personal and intimate stories and the related feelings of exposure. Highly illustrative of this point are Alice and Sean's reflections about what they imagined would happen if they shared details about their circumstances with statutory social work professionals involved in their case.

[Information I share is] going to go from everywhere...all your workers are going to know; all your social workers are going to know; people at school are going to know; police are going to know... say if it happened to me my head of year would know. Say they get informed at these meetings – so my nurse would know. Everyone knows about it. (Alice, 15)

When you find out they've told someone else [about your disclosure], then that's when it's gone. (Sean, 16)

There is a suggestion here that young people's rights to maintain knowledge or control of how personal information is shared were rescinded once particular professionals had access to it.

Perceptions about the different ways that services treated information formed a central basis on which service users differentiated between types of professional support. It

impacted directly on who young people chose to engage with, talk to and what details they shared.

> You can't really tell a social worker anything, 'cause if you tell a social worker something she has to tell other people and she has to write it down. Where if you tell Lucia [my project worker] something she doesn't have to write it down. Social workers are more strict and they have to write everything down...It's worrying because I don't want to talk to her about anything... What if I say something wrong and it's all going to twist round or something? (Alice, 15)

Alice's use of the word '*strict*' (to describe her social worker) and '*wrong*' (to describe how she fears her story maybe judged) suggest she typifies, and perhaps experiences, the dynamics of this care as punitive and judgemental. Her reference to the experience of being written about by social workers, and the specific image of having one's words 'twisted' was a motif that appeared in several young people's narratives. This and related comments raised questions about the significance of issues of representation to young people and highlighted fears about how their stories and experiences could be manipulated by others.

As in many accounts, the roles of statutory and voluntary sector projects were described in diametrically opposing ways. While the former was presented as formal, restrictive, punitive and apparently less trustworthy, the latter were invariably framed as informal, flexible and reliable. However, these polarised descriptions were not read literally as evidence of the strengths of voluntary rather than statutory sector intervention. Instead the range of possible reasons why young people were likely to perceive statutory interventions less favourably than that of voluntary sector interventions were considered.

Central to these is the statutory mandate of social care to protect children, that inevitably limits its ability to be flexible or offer young people choices about engagement. The well documented tensions within social work between balancing parallel duties to care and control (Lipscombe, 2007) inevitably colour service users' experiences. What is important here is to hold these contextual factors in mind when considering young people's perspectives, while equally respecting the validity of their experiences of support. It means remaining open to the possibility that there may be new learning for all services (voluntary and statutory) within these narratives, yet recognising that limitations for change also exist within the statutes which frame certain professions.

Sharing information with the police

For several young people interviewed for this research, fears about the loss of control that occurred after sharing information focused specifically on expectations upon them to

engage with investigative processes. Here fears went beyond concerns about privacy and focused on the practical consequences of police involvement.

> Everything that I've told them, they've got police involved and I didn't feel comfortable with that - interviews and that – and they know I'm a shy person and I don't want to. I couldn't do it … I sat there and said I'm not doing it [the police interview] I'm not doing it. (Sean, 16)

> If you tell an adult something then they kind of decide what's going to go on next... then police get involved and everything – and you might not want that –if you tell someone you've got to tell half a dozen other people and you have to tell it over and over again. If it goes to court then you've got to say it in court and it's really hard. (Alice, 15)

Both these comments share a specific and marked fear of the uninvited intervention of police and legal professionals into their lives. From one perspective police interventions may represent an important commitment to prosecutions and provide evidence for young people being recognised and taken seriously as victims. Yet these comments show the need also to acknowledge the difficult and 'highly traumatic' nature of investigative processes for victims of child sexual exploitation (CEOP, 2011:79)[81]. Both Alice and Sean's comments highlight how when young people are deciding what information to share, and considering their own needs for care and support, they are involved within complex decision-making process about the balance of harm resulting not only from their risk taking but also interactions with professionals.

Previous research has highlighted how multiple aspects of investigative processes present difficulties for young victims of sexual violence. Experiences may include: the secondary traumatisation resulting from having to re-narrate (and subsequently re-live) experiences of abuse (Bögner, 2007) ; being subject to threats, and in many cases a real lack of safety, stemming from perpetrators who young people have made claims against (CEOP, 2011); cross-examination, including references to intimate and sexual relations, within a public court setting, in some cases by multiple defence barristers (Jago et al., 2011); and being subject to the deeply defamatory and derisory descriptions of your character from a range of legal professionals (CEOP, 2011; Jago et al. 2011).

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[81] During the consultation for CEOP, 2011, members of the What Works for Us (WWFU) Advisory group spoke at length about this topic. As one young participant surmised: 'People don't go to the police because when you go to the police it makes the situation 150 times worse. You have to go through it again and again'. (Member of WWFU quoted in CEOP, 2011: 79)

The evidence above draws attention to the fact that experiences designed to care and protect children often draw them into processes that they may consider to be far less than kind and benevolent.

In other instances respondents shared specific beliefs about the police who were believed to be untrustworthy recipients of information:

> Why do you think people are so scared to tell the Mavey [police] ? It gets around and it's baistee[82] [totally shameful]. 'Oh you're that girl got raped by that man' – 'nah she didn't really get raped, she did it for money; she did it for cigs; she did it for a bottle'. (Illy, 16)

The belief that police will not, or cannot, protect a victim's identity within a community is revealed here, alongside an expectation that young rape victims may become objects of gossip, shame and derision. In addition Illy anticipates the fear of being further misrepresented by members of her community noting the possibility that being a known victim of rape may be reinterpreted by others in terms of prostitution and promiscuity.

It would appear that in many cases, the desire to avoid painful consequences and maintain control of one's wellbeing, story and self image overrules the need for welfare support or advice. This links to wider evidence of low levels of reporting rapes by women of all ages (Kelly et al., 2005) and the similar reasons given for these figures. These views challenge the unspoken assumption among professionals that when young people share information it will catalyse systems of support which alleviate difficulty and distress. Young people within this study suggest that this is not always their belief that disclosure will lead to better outcomes and they ask us to reconsider the pressure or expectation that may be put on young people to share a story, particularly when that involves investigative processes.

In the following section I consider the grounds on which these perceptions are based, moving away from the rhetoric of young people's fears to look at specific examples on which these views are based.

7.3 Breaches of trust

In over half of the interviews (n=13) young people provided examples of times when personal information about their abuse had been shared without their knowledge or

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[82]'Baistee' - Protracted form of the Urdu/Hindi phrase 'bay izzati' (without honour).

consent. For many young people the realisation that information about their sexual exploitation had been shared occurred by accident or chance. They described instances of encountering personal details about themselves and their 'case', held by professionals to whom they had not granted it's safe-holding and in some instances did not know. Below are three different examples from separate interviews describing this scenario:

> I went to a meeting with a nurse – and she say's 'it looks like you're getting over what happened' and I thought 'how do you know? I didn't tell her. How do you know?!'– Because sometimes I don't know what's being said in these meetings. I can't believe that they've been talking about <u>that</u> [interviewee's emphasis] in front of everyone. It's something personal to me I don't want everyone to know. (Alice,15)

> My Head teacher... I didn't know he knew and he called me up– I was in the ICT room fixing one of the computers – and he called me up into the top bit and he said 'Fiona, you're going to get through this – you're a strong girl' and I was just sort of looking at him and now he sort of treats me differently. I just find it really awkward and I didn't know that he was involved in it...I just think if they're going to get people involved, they need to let the young person know – I think the young person needs to be kept in the know the entire time. (Fiona,15)

> **Stephanie:** Before I came here I had a counsellor. I was going every week and I were telling her stuff, and then she went and got social services involved but I didn't know.
>
> **Camille:** How did you find out that social services were involved?
>
> **Stephanie:** Because they come to my house. They didn't go to me first. They went to my Mum, and then Mum rang me and I had to come home and because Mum didn't know anything what I were doing and that's how Mum found out everything.

Moments such as the ones described above were strikingly familiar among those interviewed. Understandably these unanticipated revelations were associated with a range of challenging emotions. These included: shame and embarrassment; disconcertion and indignation of hearing intimate histories and stories of sexual victimisation revealed to be shared narratives; and an overarching loss of trust. Perhaps most crucially for this discussion they provided stark signifiers to young people of their lack of power to influence the movement of information and their representation to others[83].

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[83] This picture is one which is largely supported by existing research with 'looked after' young people (Morgan, 2007; Oliver, 2010).

In addition they demonstrate that young people's relationships with professionals or family members may be harmed (quite possibly unnecessarily) by information about their past being granted without their knowledge. In Stephanie's case she returns to this example repeatedly throughout the interview, explaining it as the reason she refuses to use counselling services and would not recommend them to others. It is particularly interesting to compare these experiences with Scarlett's account outlined in the previous chapter which demonstrates the sensitive ways in which difficult information could be shared with parents with young people's consent, through negotiation and partnership working.

The examples above highlight how, when considering questions of sexually exploited young people's participation within this context, we need to look beyond young people's involvement in face-to-face encounters with professionals, recognising the wider ways in which their lives are affected by professionals' informal or hidden decision-making. It would appear that in some instances when young people enter systems of care, be these statutory or voluntary, young people's rights to know where personal information is being shared are disregarded or overlooked, even by well-meaning professionals. In particular it highlights the value of transparency to participatory working. This supports research by Healy and Darlington (2009) who suggest that alongside 'respect' and 'appropriateness', 'transparency' was the central quality identified by practitioners which enabled effective participatory practice in child protection.

It is important to recognise, however that there may be a number of complex reasons why workers choose to share personal information about cases outside the appropriate guidelines. These may include a need to offload difficult or traumatic stories as coping mechanism, poor supervision or lack of guidance, or the need to share responsibility for difficult decision-making. However as my own experiences of conducting this research suggested there were also some instances where young people's information was shared unnecessarily and without thought. While clearly not malicious, these examples suggested that the importance of young people's needs and rights with regard to information sharing are not always recognised, perhaps by virtue of both their age and service user status. While this is an area which is not explored in detail in this study, it may suggest the importance of good supervisory mechanisms to help manage these processes and the need for more explicit protocols on how and where cases should be discussed. This issue is explored further from practitioners perspectives in chapter nine.

'It's something personal to me'

When considering the strength of young people's feelings on this subject it is critical to consider the nature of information to which young people refer. Stories of young people's risk and sexual abuse are understandably steeped in sensitivity for service users.

> You don't want those people to know those things because they're personal things and maybe you want to change those things... or just you want them to know about it when you're comfortable with it – and with them breaking your trust and telling everyone it makes you feel totally uncomfortable. (Ursula, 17)

There appears to be, a rarely stated, parallel between some young people's experience of welfare services and aspects of their exploitative relationships. Though critical differences in intent divide these two sets of relationships, the experiences of losing control and humiliation that occur deliberately within abusive relationships can be seen at times arising from professional carelessness, indiscretion or poor practice. The findings suggest that young people's relationships with adults exist on a continuum of trust and that sometimes professionals, like perpetrators, may be characterised as deeply untrustworthy.

Similarly, images of young people's words being 'twisted' and 'manipulated', were used to describe processes whereby both social workers, police and perpetrators dismissed or misrepresented them and led others to disbelieve them.

> Leia: I knew they [the police] wouldn't believe me... Guys [who exploit young people] are really clever. Guys can twist your words round. They say ' where's your proof? (Leia, 18)

The critical importance of professionals modelling reliability and trustworthiness to these young people was raised by several service users who explained their difficulties trusting any adults, based on their prior experiences. Alice explains: 'because of my past – I have a really, really – how can I explain it – I find it really hard to trust people'. Here, as with other respondents, attention is drawn to the direct impact of previous, exploitative relationships on young people's confidence and faith in professionals. They underscore that welfare professionals, no matter how well intentioned, can never assume that they are the significantly different and positive presence in young people lives that they may hope or mean to be.

7.4 Understanding the need for limits to confidentiality

Despite the dominance of young people's concerns about the use of information, most interviewees accepted the need for some level of information sharing and understood the terms under which this needed to take place. They demonstrated recognition of concepts such as 'significant harm' and other legal parameters under which professionals had to operate.

> I mean obviously– they will say something to someone, you know, if we think like you're going to be in danger – or something – but they've told us that. (Rebecca, 16)
>
> I know when he's [my project worker] going to tell someone or not. If its criminal or it will put me in danger it's [information I share] going to go straight to someone. (Jay, 15)

This familiarity with the limits to workers' confidentiality was another indication of young people's extensive contact with multiple safeguarding interventions. Nowhere was this more apparent than throughout the process of obtaining consent for undertaking the interviews themselves. Here young people were quick to express their familiarity with the terms on which I needed to pass information on, often interrupting my opening 'spiel' to demonstrate their experience: 'yeah, yeah, no I understand all that… you won't tell anybody unless I tell you something that makes you worried, yeah I'm used to that…'[84]

Many respondents had direct experience of safeguarding concerns about them being shared. However where they had been made aware of this, or were confident that they would be, this was largely accepted and understood. Understanding professionals' motivation for sharing information, and having an opportunity to inform that process, clearly built young people's confidence in workers and services. This demonstrated that even in decisions where young people's influence was limited, opportunities for dialogue and transparency minimised their resentment and sense of losing control.

> This here [sexual exploitation project] is confidential. Whatever gets said in this building stays in this building. Say if it's really, really, really important they have to report it – but if they don't think it's really important it stays confidential. But they always ask you first. They always tell you [if they're going to pass information on]. (Beth, 19)

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[84] Phoebe, 17

In this statement, Beth presents professional approaches to information sharing as a key means through which she differentiates between different services. Counter to anger expressed elsewhere about breaches to privacy, Beth's acceptance of the need to 'report' some information may seem surprising. Yet these contrasting responses highlight the importance of differentiated and sensitive approaches.

From the above example it appears that Beth accepts information sharing by her sexual exploitation project due to her identification of it as exceptional practice ('say if it's really, really important…') and the project's acknowledgement of her as a stakeholder in the distribution of that information ('they always ask you first. They always tell you'). Here as elsewhere, the degree to which young people saw themselves invited to be partners in their own care directly linked with their willingness to engage and their confidence in systems of support.

> Say if you went to like social services– they'd just - say if you said summit, they'd just go ahead and do whatever they wanted...say report it or whatever… see here [at the sexual exploitation project] they obviously report it but they leave you to try and explain it and stuff. (Stephanie, 18)

Stephanie like Beth, illustrates the opportunity afforded her by her sexual exploitation project to involve her in making sense of her own story. Again a 'good' experience of sharing information is described as transparent, negotiated and undertaken in partnership with young people. This style of approach indicates to service users the presence of respect for both young people's rights and agency. In addition it provides opportunities for services to model 'good' relationships with young people, marking themselves apart from exploitative or untrustworthy relationships.

It is apparent that services were often distinguished by their different approaches and thresholds for information sharing, providing a means through which young people assessed the trustworthiness of services. At times it appears that the differences in approach were relatively subtle and yet resulted in tangible differences for young people.

> Like if I told my social worker something then she'd tell my mum absolutely everything that I said to her – every single detail but if I told Julie the same thing she wouldn't tell my mum all those details – she would tell her something if it was important and if she was worried about me but she wouldn't have to tell her everything. When my social worker tells my mum everything, that's what gets me into all this trouble. (Rapunzel, 14)

Rapunzel draws a contrast here between her perception of an indiscriminate approach to information sharing by social workers and a more nuanced sensitive approach by the voluntary sector. Like others, she highlights how opportunities to limit or control

information sharing with parents or carers are part of a strategy for avoiding or minimising conflict within their home and families.

Elsewhere young people drew attention to internal information sharing cultures within sexual exploitation or other welfare services.

> If I tell Lucia something confidential I want it to stay there –unless it's something really, really serious. It doesn't get spread round here [the CSE project]. It's, like Peter [another project worker] won't know my details –he'll just know my name and who I am, whereas Lucia knows more about me... It's important because it's my life. (Alice, 15)

Alice's comments reveal that her concerns are not just with information that is shared outside or between agencies. Whether founded or not, her comments about information being 'spread around' suggest a fear that information sharing at times extends beyond what is legitimate and into the realm of gossip. Her final appeal for recognition of the importance of this argument ('because it's my life'), highlights the need to view young people's details as more than just data, recognising and respecting how this information embodies their wider sense of identity and experience. Understood this way, unconsidered information sharing represents an infringement of more than just a desire for privacy and rights, but also of autonomy, personal space and young people's sense of self.

To some degree these comments reflect findings from existing literature, demonstrating the significance of trust and management of personal information by other young people in contact with statutory social care (Morgan, 2007; Mainey et al. 2009; Oliver, 2010). This literature highlights young people's request for information to be shared on a 'need to know' basis (Oliver, 2010) and for social workers to properly explain to them when and where information will be shared. Yet despite this there appears to be little within existing research which details the meaning of 'need to know' to either young people or professionals, or which explores experiential aspects of these processes. Within the aforementioned body of research it would also appear that the issue is not prioritised in the same way that it is here, raising questions about the particular relevance of this issue to victims of child sexual exploitation.

Having explored young people's experiences and attitudes to issues about sharing personal information with professionals I now turn to examine processes through which professionals shared information and made decisions. This focuses in particular on multi-agency meetings and describes how relationships of trust were consolidated or further weakened by the opportunities that young people had to participate in these spaces and

receive information from them. It suggests that opportunities for young people to be properly represented within formal information sharing activities may heighten their sense of control and influence.

7.5 Meetings: 'everybody's talking 'bout me'

Multi-agency meetings form a central mechanism through which information about young people is shared and represent formal decision-making spaces in relation to young people's care. In some cases meetings specifically address issues relating to young people's risk or experience of sexual exploitation[85], whereas in others (and particularly for those young people who were 'looked after') this issue was raised within the structure of existing statutory planning or review meetings. Within the research sample, thirteen of the twenty-one young people interviewed referred to knowledge of professional meetings taking place in which their risk or experience of sexual exploitation was discussed and decisions about their care were made[86]. On the whole, young people were not able differentiate between different types of multi-agency meetings which were often talked about interchangeably[87]. There was an overarching sense that young people remained unclear about the purpose of these meetings and the different roles of the professionals attending. This may be because information given to a young person was poor or confusing; or because they are in a position in which they are not able to fully acknowledge the information provided[88].

While some young people explained that they had declined to attend meetings to which they were invited, to avoid anxiety or stress, several other individuals described these as valuable experiences to become informed about decisions being taken about them and have a chance to represent themselves:

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[85] These meetings are referred to variously by professionals and LSCB's as 'sexual exploitation meetings' 'sexual exploitation strategy meetings' or 'sexual exploitation review meetings'. They are presented within DCSF guidance among 'best practice examples' of supporting victims of CSE or those at risk (2009:56). However the guidance gives no indication as to how 'strategy discussions' should organised or whether parents and/or children should be involved. Evidence suggests that such meetings are not undertaken in at least of a quarter of LSCB areas (Jago et al., 2011).

[86] Information on how many of these young people attended these meetings was unfortunately not available from the data. Upon reflection a means of collecting comparable quantitative data on meeting attendance may have proved useful for my analysis. However given the breadth of topics covered this was only recognised in hindsight.

[87] Includes sexual exploitation meetings, strategy meetings, sexual exploitation review meetings, and core group meetings.

[88] If the latter is true, it may be argued that the agency has a responsibility to ensure that the information is portrayed in a different , more enabling way, although it cannot be assumed that there are not cases where a young person is unable to acknowledge the implications of information provided.

In terms of the meetings with all the professionals and that – if you want to have an input, if you want to say something that you disagree with – that's your time to say it. There have been times where I've disagreed with what someone said. If I hadn't have been at that meeting then my support worker and everyone else who was listening would have heard that piece of information and assumed it was right. If I hadn't had been at that meeting I would not have been able to say, 'that's not right', 'that's not what I've said' or 'that's not what I feel'. For example, like I wasn't going to school, I didn't want to go to school and someone had put it, you know - because I can't be bothered and I had to explain, it's not because I'm not bothered at all. That is not the reason, and I had to explain. So it gives you the chance and the opportunity to put your word across. (Ursula, 17)

For Ursula the chance to represent herself directly within these meetings allows her to challenge assumptions made about her and her behaviour. The importance of this opportunity for a young person whose life is subject to scrutiny and interpretation by multiple professionals should not be underestimated. As Ursula explains, her presence is a means of maintaining control of how she is represented publically. In a context where young people's complex lives become depicted through the professional 'short hand' of report writing, such opportunities allow her to enrich and nuance the understanding of her story. It is the means by which Ursula transforms herself from the girl who 'can't be bothered' to attend school, to a girl who chooses not to attend school for valid reasons.

For other young people who do not wish, or are not allowed, to attend meetings, the presence of an advocate provided a valuable means of both presenting their views and feeding back information. Many young people spoke passionately about the value of sexual exploitation project workers adopting these roles, enabling them to be informed and consulted about meetings:

Lucia has helped me write stuff down. Lucia asks me if I'd like anything to be said in the meeting and it's helpful because, because sometimes everything gets said in a meeting without me even being there. (Alice, 15)

I'll say something to Tom [my project worker] and he'll be like, 'if you want I'll bring that up at the next strategy meeting?' and they have brought up about it...and I've been able to say to Tom, and then him and my parents have all said that at the meetings because I've wanted them to. (Jay, 15)

For young people (n=4) who mentioned being invited and willing to attend meetings or those who spoke about being represented through an advocate (n=3), the opportunity to properly prepare for meetings in advance was critical. Given the sensitivity of the information and the presence of young people's families or carers, such preparation provided a critical means to maintain control of how they were represented.

First I had a meeting with social worker and that –and then some other people had come. I didn't really speak – I told the social worker before what to say because I knew my mum were going to be there and I said 'I don't want you to say that bit'. I think they had to tell my mum that I'd slept with someone. They had to tell mum bits, but not some bits, so I did pull bits out. So I think overall I've had quite a good experience with them. (Stephanie, 18)

The opportunity for Stephanie to prepare for her meeting, and negotiate with a social worker suggests that recognition of her as a stakeholder and partner in the process of care were taken seriously. The information shared was contingent upon an assessment about whether it was necessary to do so. Stephanie describes maintaining a level of control in how she is represented to others and the particular sensitivities of young people's relationships with family members is acknowledged. In this example Stephanie has been afforded status and involved in decision-making about the content of the meeting. This appears to enable her ability to remain within the meeting and participate comfortably within it. What is more, it is on the basis of this experience that Stephanie recognises and defends the presence of 'some good social workers' throughout the discussion.

For Stephanie, like Ursula and others, meetings provide opportunities to inform information sharing processes and maintain some degree of control of how they are represented. For others this does not appear to be the case and meetings are associated with further marginalisation and a lack of involvement. When Beth and Sally, were asked to reflect on whether they had any similar experiences to Stephanie's, they depicted very different experiences. Their description reminds us that it is not simply an invitation into professionals' 'space' which creates young people's sense of inclusion and partnership, but also the terms on which this is undertaken.

Camille: have you been involved in any meetings about your care – like strategy meetings?

Beth: I don't know what's that?

Sally: Where there's a room full of very, very important people..(pause).. and they're all picking on you!.. yeah… all the time. I did that when I were at school..

Beth: You stick out like a sore thumb when you...

Sally: [interjecting] There's me in me trackies and hoodie and there's all them in their proper suits and I'm like.. can I go now? 'no Sally you cannot go for a fag'....fuck this then.. [laughter]

Camille: can any of you explain what it's like to walk in through the door at one of those meetings…

Sally: Its fucking horrible.. it is

Beth: I don't like it - I never turn up..

Camille: do you feel like you get listened to?

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Beth: No – you never get the chance to speak

Sally: All they see is some common young child – that is it. Oh it's another hoodie causes trouble.. rarr rarr rarr

Camille: Do people ask you for your opinion in those meetings?

Sally: No

Beth: Our opinion don't count..

Camille: Have you ever had an experience like Stephanie's described - where a social worker has met with you before a meeting to discuss what you want to be said?

Sally: No. Honestly? No.

Beth: Us naughty looking people don't get a chance.

Camille: What do you mean by that?

Sally: They look at you and they say 'oh no mainstream school..what? they're in a project? they're not going to school because they're mouthy little shits...

Beth: [interjecting] …so then we don't have a say'.

For Beth and Sally strategy or review meetings do not appear to represent an 'opportunity' as they do for Ursula, Stephanie or Phoebe. Their expressions of anger and resentment about these processes suggest that such meetings are a space in which they perceive themselves as neither listened to or welcome.

Beth and Sally both identify themselves as 'othered'[89] within the meeting space repeatedly drawing attention to their perceived image in the eyes of professionals. They suggest that they have been invited into a space in which they do not fit and where their difference from professionals is highlighted rather than minimised. Undercutting this is their sensitivity to what they believe to be professional's preconceived notions about them. Their claims to symbols of deviance and difference are positioned by them as barriers to genuine acceptance and involvement, further limiting their ability to redefine the situation to one in their favour. They suggest that they are not afforded the same rights as Stephanie (to be prepared for a meeting) due to their status as 'naughty looking' or 'mouthy little shits', demonstrating how existing marginalisation may compound young people's exclusion from decision-making. Unlike in Ursula's example, meetings are here depicted as an occasion in which their existing image – and more than that – relations of power and powerlessness - are reinforced rather than challenged.

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[89] The process of 'othering' is defined by Charnley, Roddam and Wistow (2009) as 'a process that identifies people on the basis of their difference from the mainstream, reinforcing and reproducing positions of domination and subordination' (199). It is largely credited as being derived from Edward Said's work Orientalism (1978). Within the context of health and social care services 'othering' is noted to be 'related closely to Foucault's (1973) notion of the medical 'gaze',... that Ellis (2000) has extended to a social care gaze in which service users are seen through particular professional lenses that ascribe them to convenient medical or administrative categories' (Charnley et al., 2009:199)

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It is impossible to determine the extent to which their perspectives are accurate or skewed by their more emotional responses to these events. Indeed, it seems unlikely that they are invited to meetings and then afforded no say at all. However the strength of the language used, and the consistency of their narrative, in contrast to Stephanie's (who is also present), suggest that they are experiences in which Sally and Beth feel undermined, excluded and further stigmatised. This example strongly supports the observation by Fitzgerald et al. that 'while inviting children into dialogue is the first step [towards participation] the accounts that they share cannot be heard outside of, or free from, the political, legal, social and cultural discourses that potentially enable, inhibit and resist what they have to say' (2009:301). It also reflect Cornwall's aligned ideas about the limits of meaningful participation that take place within 'invited spaces' (2004), when the terms of such spaces are set by those who own and control them. There is no evidence here that Beth and Sally's involvement has been anything other than tokenistic and procedural. Attempts to allow either young woman any meaningful influence or control at best have left little impression on the pair and at worst did not take place. It highlights how young people's nominal inclusion in formal information sharing processes may sometimes neither deepen trust, nor support any real sense of empowerment.

Exclusion from meetings

For other young people the right to attend, or indeed not attend any multi-agency meetings was not an option. Many young people noted that they were often not invited or informed about meetings in which their sexual exploitation was discussed, or only found out through their voluntary sector project. For these individuals meetings represented a space where they were actively excluded from information sharing and decision-making, often despite their express wishes to attend. Young people's limited knowledge about the content of these meetings served to further emphasise their powerlessness to represent themselves and tell their own story.

> Every so often they have a big massive meeting – and there's like twenty odd people there and it's like they know more about me than I do and I don't even get to go... Sometimes afterwards we get this big massive report about everything they've talked about, about twenty pages long an' I think 'Where did that come from?' ' where did that come from?'.. Someone's missing init – it's like having a meeting without that person there – there's going to be a lot missing. (Alice, 15)

Alice here highlights the irony of simultaneously recognising her centrality to the meeting alongside her physical absence. The attention she draws to the length of the report and the number of professionals attending, stand in stark contrast to both her own and her

family's exclusion. The lack of her own voice within the report and her inability to recognise aspects of her own 'story' suggest this as an alienating process.

Importantly here Alice does not suggest that people should not be discussing her, or making decisions about her, but rather that to do so without her involvement seems ill-informed and unjust. This discussion and similar remarks by other young people reflect an important distinction highlighted by Schofield and Thorburn (1995) between children's involvement in social care decision-making and them actually making a decision themselves. Alice's desire here is for a place around the table rather than an opportunity to take decisions by herself. Schofield and Thorburn note a tendency of professional practice to conflate these two different processes, leading to confusion about appropriate levels of young people's involvement. Understanding the modesty of Alice and other interviewee's desire to be notified and involved is important. These claims do not undermine professional's authority, but potentially strengthen it - enabling decision-making to be better informed and supporting young people's engagement with the care plans that are made.

At least five of the young people I interviewed reported being actively excluded from meetings about their care[90]. In three of these cases opportunities to read meetings notes were described as a means by which they found out details about how they were being discussed.

> Yeah – my mam used to ask [for the notes]. That feels better – but sometimes your worker might not let you see them, or some people might not know that they're allowed to ask. (Sophie, 17)

For others, information about their case and discussions about them was gained through more surreptitious means.

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[90] Not all interviews included a discussion about meetings. However these were discussed with fifteen of the sample of twenty young people. Of these fifteen, a third reported being actively excluded from meetings. No comprehensive reasons were given for their exclusion although personal discussions with project workers elsewhere suggest that key concerns include: the need to share third party information within these meetings and that it would be inappropriate and potentially risky to do so in front of young people or their parents and carers; the concern that meetings are likely to be experienced as difficult or traumatic for young people; that meetings are primarily a means of sharing information between professionals or that differences in perceptions of risk between professionals and young people may inhibit discussions. A fuller description is provided in chapter nine.

All my workers have meetings like once a month or something –and then whatever I tell people they'll discuss it - and they'll just say a load of stuff – and then my mum will come home and tell my sister what's happened, what's been said – she'll tell me sometimes if I'm nice to her -make her a brew [laughter]. She tells my sister and I earwig and that – so I know what's going on –because I don't like being kept in the dark –if someone's talking 'bout me I have to know. (Phoebe, 17)

Phoebe's means of accessing information about her case is neither transparent or reliable. Like several other young people she describes relying on furtive methods to gain knowledge about her own case and decisions being taken. Her desire to access this information and the stories told about her is entirely understandable. Yet the nature of how she accesses this information means there is no possibility for her to input or challenge what she hears about herself. Other young people described similar instances of eavesdropping on conversations, finding copies of notes or in one case hacking into their Dad's email account as a means of accessing information that was being shared about them[91].

From the above discussion it is apparent that multi-agency meetings can exist as both inclusive and exclusive spaces that either promote or limit young people's meaningful participation in the processes of information sharing. The picture that emerges is one of variable and inconsistent approaches and a lack of clarity about young people's rights. Young people clearly demonstrate an appetite to be informed and involved in these meetings in some way, either through advocates or in person, and to receive feedback from any meeting they did not attend. However they also explain how attendance alone was not an automatic means to feeling involved and could at times compound exclusion and further distrust in professionals. These particular examples highlight how the organisation and management of decision-making spaces could itself inhibit meaningful participation (Cornwall, 2004; Gaventa, 2004)

Recognising the importance of this latter point highlights that young people's access to information about meetings and invitations to represent their views did not necessarily equate to their meaningful participation. In the table below the interplay between different variables which promote possibilities of young people's representation and influence is illustrated, highlighting different ways in which young people's inclusion, partial inclusion and exclusion from meetings was realised.

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[91] 'I can get onto my Dad's email, I know his password, so I do see the emails he sends the police and everything - he'll like say stuff like 'Jay's been really bad today' or he'll give information to the police without me knowing and I just want to sort of be in the loop more' (Jay, 15)

YP's level of representation→ YP's choice to attend meeting↓	Young people are present in meetings in person	Young People absent but represented through advocate	Young people absent and not represented
Young person is invited to meeting	Young person has choice and opportunity for influence*	Young person has choice and opportunity for influence*	Young person has choice, no opportunity for influence
Young person is informed, but not invited	N/A	Young person has opportunity for influence, no choice	No choice/ no influence
Young person is not informed and not invited	N/A	N/A	No choice/ no influence

TABLE 4: Young people's choice and influence in meetings

In addition to these two sets of variables, interviews suggested the following additional factors as significant in supporting young people's meaningful participation:

- **Ensuring young people understood the purpose of all meetings**

- **Careful preparation for meetings** (including an opportunity to see and input into the agenda and what might be said about them – particularly if this was in front of parents and carers)

- **Consideration about who should attend** (and explaining professionals roles to young people before and during meetings)

- **Ensuring young people arrived at the same time as professionals** (and so were not walking into a room where professional were sitting talking about them)

- **Considering ways to make young people feel valued and welcomed** (recognising the challenges likely to be faced by any young person choosing to attend a meeting in which their sexual exploitation will be discussed)

- **Building in opportunities for young people to challenge information shared about them** or language used to describe them

- **Ensuring all young people received detailed feedback** (particularly from any relevant meetings that they did not attend in person)

- **Providing young people attending meetings with breaks**

- **Considering how to facilitate the creation of a non-blaming or adversarial atmosphere** within meetings

7.6 Conclusion: information sharing – a route to safety?

What emerges from this data is a picture of inconsistent approaches to management of young people's personal information which impacts directly on service users' ability to develop trusting relationships with professionals. At best, interviewees describe situations where limited information was shared about them on a 'need to know basis'; they were kept informed; and had opportunities to negotiate or challenge representations that did not feel fair or appropriate. In these scenarios it appeared that young people were respected as legitimate partners.

At worst, young people describe having information about themselves passed on without their knowledge; often against assurances or expectations. Information was often passed on to, and by, professionals who they did not know or whose roles weren't explained to them. Consequences of these instances at times posed risks to their existing relationships with family or carers; engaged them in investigate processes that they did not agree to or left them feeling exposed and humiliated.

The opportunities to share information with young people about their case – through attendance or representation at meetings were described in similarly inconsistent terms. While some young people suggested meetings were a means to enhance their participation in self representation and decision-making, others described these as exclusive and excluding spaces.

It would appear that the salience of these issues for this cohort is heightened by both the potentially intimate nature of the information under discussion, and previous experience of significant breaches of trust from those seemingly closest to them. Parallels drawn between young people's relationships with workers and other adults in their lives highlighted the need for caring professionals to attend to and recognise young people's difficulties in trusting them.

All these findings suggest the need for clear protocols and additional sensitivity around information sharing with adolescents within sexual exploitation services. It is likely that this also requires an additional call for better staff supervision, to support them in holding information that may appear frightening or disturbing.

Over the past two decades multiple government inquiries and responses have highlighted the pivotal role of information sharing in the protection of children, implicating a failure to do so in poor assessments; resultant abuse and even child deaths (Children Act, 1989; 2004; Lord Laming, 2003; 2009; Munro, 2011). In the main such inquiries focus upon risks to babies and younger children although a number of serious case reviews involving victims of child sexual exploitation have also raised this issue (DerbySCB, 2010; RochdaleSCB, 2012). Despite the equally important messages about 'listening to children' which emerge from these inquires (Munro, 2011) the space in which to listen to young people's own questions about why or how information is shared appears to have become marginalised or diminished. Critical perspectives on information sharing are rarely heard. When issues of confidentiality and information sharing are raised by children or young people they are easily dismissed as reflecting unrealistic demands by those who simply don't understand the importance of processes of protection and risk management. Young people's need for privacy is then easily over-ruled by a professional value system that remains largely unquestioned.

What I hope to have demonstrated here is a need for further clarity about how professionals handle the sensitive issue of information sharing with adolescents at risk of abuse and differentiate between young people's desire for secrecy and privacy. A lack of detail within current guidance about the significance of these issues for service users allows inconsistent and potentially harmful approaches to flourish. While fully supporting the importance of information sharing processes to safeguarding, it is important to recognise that young people's particular wishes to be informed and involved in these processes may strengthen rather than undermine child protection.

Chapter 8: Resistance and agency

8.1 Introduction

The data presented so far focuses on the means by which choice, decision-making and control are enabled or inhibited by the various styles of services that young people encounter and approaches of individual workers. In chapter 5 I presented how young people's initial involvement with voluntary sector services was determined by professional decisions about their needs and risk. In chapter 6, I explored young people's preferences for styles of support, which included an emphasis on partnership and illustrated the importance of enabling young people's own 'voices' to inform practice. Finally in chapter 7 I evidenced the varied levels of influence young people maintained about how and where information about them was shared and the significance of this. This means the choices which are *sanctioned* by project workers and other adults. In this chapter we turn away from the role of professionals in legitimising young people's decision-making to consider how young people make choices in relation to their own care, independent of those paid to support them.

In the main, this chapter focuses on processes of resistance, 'as when youth resist interventions, dominant cultural norms, or pressures by caregivers' (Ungar, 2004:75). While these responses do not represent the sole type of independent decision-making which young people engage with, they are presented here as demonstrations of young people's exercise of agency outwith (and often in conflict with) the plans and intentions of caring professionals.

The chapter is split into three parts. The first considers the issue of young people's agency in more depth, explaining its meaning in this context and questioning its interplay with professionals, welfare services and child protection systems (Jeffery, 2011).

The second, central part of this chapter, demonstrates evidence of young people assessing and responding to their own needs, describing their own accounts of circumventing or avoiding aspects of support. This section focuses on the different strategies that young people employ to resist support.

Finally I present evidence of how young people justify their potentially obstructive behaviour, exploring the meaning of this resistance from young people's own perspectives and consider how this conflicts with or supports professional's ideas about

how best to protect them. I apply a constructivist approach to resilience and agency to examine these issues. This questions how dominant professional paradigms may mask young people's own 'hidden resilience' and strengths (Ungar & Teram, 2000; Ungar, 2004). I subsequently argue that behaviours which outwardly appear deviant and uncooperative may internally be motivated by help-seeking and protective tendencies.

The chapter concludes by proposing a relationship between young people's resistance to, and active participation in, services. This argues that attending to young people's own value base and desire for partnership within safeguarding, may counter their resistance to support and promote their engagement in processes of safeguarding.

8.2 Agency and risk

As noted in chapter three (section 3.3), the concept of agency is critical to considerations about children's participation, influence and decision-making in services. Archard (2004) contends that recognising children's agency is central to arguments supporting their participation in formal decision-making processes. He explains how children's rights of self-determination (i.e. participation rights) *'can only be exercised by those thought capable of doing so'* (1993: 65), alluding to the concept of children's 'evolving capacities' (UNCRC, Article 5) as a means by which adults assess whether and how they may support children to access these rights on a meaningful basis.

Yet Archard, like others (Lansdown, 2005; Valentine, 2011) recognises that adult's assessments of children's capabilities are themselves problematic. He notes that 'it is all too easy to cast children as cognitively incompetent when the standard of competence by which they are measured is both culturally specific and unrealised by many adults' (1993:66).

Thomas (2000) builds on this argument, noting that 'particularly in relation to older children it is not fair to assume they are obviously incompetent compared to adults' (p. 42).

Yet what about when young people's self determinism is recognised, but is understood to be exercised negatively, in ways which do not further their safety and life chances? For while recognition of children's agency is a central idea to this study, it is important not to allow this apparent celebration of children's abilities to obscure the fact that individual agency may not always be pro-social (Ungar,2004; Jeffery, 2011). Nor to assume that systems and structures always operate oppressively or inhibit an individual's life chances.

The relevance of these ideas to safeguarding adolescents is well documented. Rees et al. (2010) note how professionals perceive 'specific challenges in engaging with young people in this age range to ensure their safety' (p. 108) based in part on 'young people's increased capacity for self-determination' (Ibid.). Meanwhile research and policy addressing child sexual exploitation often draws attention to the fact that older young people are likely to be resistant to support (CEOP, 2010; Beckett, 2011) and 'may display highly complex and challenging behaviours..[which] appear abusive and anti-social' (DCSF, 2009: 42). Within this context, my own decision to highlight behaviours used by young people to challenge services is not meant to pathologise young people or compound problematic images of sexual exploitation service users as defiant and 'hard to reach'[92]. On the contrary it is a means through which to reconsider notions about what constitutes young people's resilience and participation from the perspective of services users, asking whether they support a construction of young people's agency as a problem or a resource.

8.3 Circumventing care: methods of resistance

The next section outlines how young people describe their own role in limiting or enabling the influence of professional support following their referral to sexual exploitation support. Across the interviews with twenty services users I identified five different groups of strategies through which they avoided services or sought to limit the impact and efficacy of interventions. Though these are inter-related I distinguished them as: *non- disclosure; partial disclosure; non compliance or rebellion; avoidance or non-engagement;* and *defiant or abusive behaviours*. In the proceeding section I present examples of each of these strategies and the contexts in which they are employed, alongside a consideration of how they were justified and their impact on young people's safety.

Non disclosure:

The most commonly cited strategy young people described for resisting professional interventions was a process of *non-disclosure*: the decision not to share personal information with professionals or adults responsible for their care giving. Given the level of service user concern regarding information sharing, it is no surprise that almost all of those interviewed (n=19) described employing this strategy to some degree.

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[92] I use the term *problematic* in recognition of the fact that perceptions of young people as challenging or 'hard to reach' have been widely cited as justifying a lack of professional intervention in cases of child sexual exploitation. There is documentation of how behaviours which are characterised this way have led to young people's abuse being overlooked (REF – SCR – Derby/ Rochdale) and individuals misrepresented as either 'willing victims' (Swann, date) or in some cases perpetrators themselves (Phoenix, 2012).

Young people described applying this strategy both indiscriminately and selectively depending on the levels of trust they experienced with workers and services. These behaviours supported a picture of young people actively assessing professionals' and organisations' trustworthiness and legitimacy before deciding whether and to what degree to 'open up'.

Non-disclosure often appeared to represent a means of asserting control by one of the few means available to young people and was particularly apparent in relation to services which young people were required to attend. In the majority of cases it was described as a response to experiences of professionals failing to manage information in a way that they felt respected their need to maintain privacy and control. A number of these experiences were outlined at length in chapter seven.

For a number of young people, experiences where confidentiality was breached marked watersheds in their engagement with services.

> After what happened, I never tell my social worker anything no more. If she [my social worker] needs me then she'll come to me, but I never ask her nothing or tell her nothing no more because I don't trust her. (Sean, 16)

For others, concerns were not limited to statutory social care workers. They shared beliefs about the need to 'stop telling anybody anything' [93] as the only reliable means of maintaining control. In these cases their stance appeared to be absolute and unwavering. Even where young people described having supportive relationships with adult welfare professionals many explained a belief in a continued need to manage information in a wholly closed way. In these cases the possible benefits arising from disclosure were subsumed by a range of fears and a profound lack of trust in all professionals.

> You can't trust no-one. You just can't trust no-one. There's no point telling anyone because I've tried and it didn't make any difference. (Rebecca, 16)

> I wouldn't phone even Childline as they ask too many questions (Leia, 18)

For some young people non-disclosure was catalysed not only in relation to a lack of trust but also as a defensive response to the perceived pressure from professionals. These examples described instances where professionals' desire for young people to disclose was experienced as intrusive and demanding. Sophie described her own response to

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[93] Illy, 16

these behaviours explaining: 'I've had it where someone's just shouting the question at you and I think I'm not going to tell you'. She goes on to explain:

> School used to push you into telling them, which makes you back away and close up. See cause – school are a bit like, ' what's going on at home?' and that makes you like 'how d'you know? kind of thing', and that makes you close up. (Sophie, 17)

Sophie details alternative less directive approaches which she was happy to respond to: situations where professionals 'make sure you know that they're there for you – they'd ask you questions – like, not direct like – they'd work around the question'.

Recognition of young people's own agency in regulating personal information, sometimes termed 'information management', has previously been observed in a number of studies derived from psychological literature (Kerr and Stattin, 2000; Stattin and Kerr, 2000; Marshall et al., 2005; Keijsers and Laird, 2010). In each of these studies the focus is specifically on information management in relation to children's relationship with their parents. However similar messages emerge about young people's tactical use of information, their active role in contributing or restricting adult's knowledge about them and the considerations they give to adults' anticipated responses when deciding what information to share. A key finding from these studies is evidence for the bi-directionality of influence that exists within children and adult relationships.

Similarly in Kohli's discussion about unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) he draws attention to children's strategic use of silence as both purposeful and protective(2007; 2009). Considering how young people in my research use non-disclosure in a similar way allows us to consider such behaviour as resilient and resistant – an idea explored later in this chapter.

Yet young people's own cultures of secrecy and non-disclosure are not entirely unproblematic:

> If something happened like that [a rape] I wouldn't tell my [CSE] project – I would be worried that they'd tell my mum. Obviously Muslims – we're not even allowed to have boyfriends. Who would I tell?... that's why [perpetrators] choose us young girls because they know that we can't do anything. (Illy, 16)

Illy here explains how risks for young people are heightened within an ongoing culture of silence. She reveals a belief that perpetrators target 'young girls' (referring to adolescents) based on assumptions about how age compounds their difficulties in sharing information. Illy also draws attention to the role of cultural sensitivities in

heightening her anxiety about disclosing. This supports existing research about additional barriers to disclosure faced by members of some minority ethnic communities (Ward and Patel, 2006).

Later in the interview Illy also alludes to how non-disclosure may arise in response to the direct threats of violence. When explaining the situation of a 13 year old friend who was raped she explains:

> We didn't want to get involved because he [the perpetrator]'s 22. He's one of the 'top-enders' – he's one of the drug dealers. So what was we meant to do? (Illy, 16)

Stephanie similarly suggests that young people's fear of getting into trouble becomes a mechanism through which exploitative individuals exert control and influence, building on existing pressures to ensure young people remain silent about their abuse.

> They [men] buy you drink - 'Oh like come on I'll buy you some vodka' or, d'you know like, give you summit. Then I think people – get dragged into it you know that way. They might just get you there [a party in another town] and then you can't leave. Because they think you're going to be stuck..and they know that you'll be sacred to tell whoever because they know you're going to get into trouble. (Stephanie, 18)

In these examples it is important to recognise that non-disclosure no longer represents the free choice or form of resistance described in earlier examples. Rather than being a strategy for challenging services it clearly also can become a means of serving perpetrators' needs. These examples highlight ways in which similar 'resistant' behaviours may have multiple meanings. At times they undoubtedly represent assertions of power and control, but conversely they may also reflect young people's oppression and limited choices. This suggests some of the challenges facing practitioners who aim to support young people and who must manage a sensitive balance between not pressuring young people to share information, while also not colluding with the 'cultures of silence' in which abuse flourishes.

Partial disclosure (or superficial compliance)

For some young people another means of managing information and retaining control of safeguarding processes involved limiting or editing the information that they shared. Although in many ways this was another form of 'non-disclosure', it appeared to represent a distinct set of decision-making processes and motivations. Descriptions of such behaviour often revealed a willingness of service users to partially engage with

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practitioners or carers, recognising them as a stakeholder in their support, while also maintaining a desire to retain some level of control about what was known about them.

> I'll tell them [project workers] all like good stuff – I wouldn't tell them any bad stuff. I'll tell 'em like this and this positive... so I don't get into – so they don't get me into trouble. (Phoebe, 17)

Like several young people Phoebe describes intentionally limiting what she shares in order to avoid conflict. Despite her choice to restrict the ability of her worker to support her, she simultaneously suggests a desire to maintain and even nurture a positive relationship with them (evidenced by her desire to share 'the good stuff' with them).

In other cases young people described the provision of information to practitioners or carers as part of an effort to present themselves as open and engaging, in order to avoid further scrutiny. Several young people suggested that 'sometimes I just tell them [project workers] what they want to hear'[94]. These instances involved young people presenting a front which appeared genuinely willing to share information while in reality maintaining close control of what they revealed. Their presentation of compliance was used to mask some of the more problematic or contentious aspects of their lives.

> I tell my Mum what she wants to hear. That's the truth – as long as she's happy. If my mum knew I were back with the lad I'm with now she'd kick the shit out of me. So what she don't know don't hurt her. Some things are better left unsaid. (Sally, 19)

Although Sally is referring to information sharing with carers rather than professionals, it is included to illustrate the sometimes contradictory justifications that young people give for these types of behaviours. When Sally explains that 'what she don't know don't hurt her' it belies her own assertion that telling her mum would in fact mean Sally facing difficulties (and possibly even having the 'shit kicked out of her'). Her suggestion that she is protecting her mum by non-disclosure appears to act as a cover for the protection she affords herself by withholding such information, allowing her to position her motivations as selfless when in fact, like Phoebe, they support her own desire to avoid further conflict and 'trouble'.

Fiona expresses a similar choice to withhold information about new relationships from her workers.

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[94] Alice, 15

> I just try and talk about things that are happening now and I don't talk about any things that are happening in the past. Like if I've got back into a relationship I wouldn't tell my Project S worker or I wouldn't tell my [family intervention] worker because I'll know that they'll think that's bad or something. (Fiona, 15)

Like Sally, Fiona reports how a fear of being challenged (and possibly judged) makes her selective about information she shares with her workers. Particular sensitivities surrounding intimate relationships for those affected by child sexual exploitation prevent her sharing the very information with potentially most relevance to those supporting her. While her intention to maintain privacy and hide details of her relationship is understandable, she also limits the ability of those charged with her care to support her, possibly exacerbating the risks she faces.

Similar strategies or approaches were described as being motivated by young people's belief that they were in fact best placed to assess whether professionals needed to know certain details about their lives.

> **Camille:** Do you always tell the truth when they [project workers] talk to you?
>
> **Sean:** No I just.. when I don't think there's nothing to worry about, then I just make something up.

In some ways Sean's approach represents the opposite of Sally and Phoebe's. Sean described withholding the information that was least contentious from his worker. He suggested that he recognised the importance of sharing information when there was 'something to worry about' or a risk involved, but that in the absence of such instances he wished to maximise his privacy and control. What is unclear from Sean's comments are the thresholds he employed for deciding when something needed to be shared and how this might correspond to professional's own thresholds or assessments of risk.

Like Fiona, Sean negates the opportunity for workers to apply their own experience and knowledge to his case which may bring alternative, and potentially helpful perspectives to bear on his circumstances. As when Stephanie recounted travelling to different cities with older men (chapter five) Sean suggests a belief that he is best placed to assess when his circumstances are unsafe. However as Stephanie's example illustrated, in making such assessments young people may not always recognise or acknowledge the dangers they face. As in Hoggett (2001) and Ferguson (2003) accounts of service users' agency, an ability to make informed choices is limited by knowledge available, individual biography and circumstance, and the degree to which these all contribute to enabling individual's reflexive capacities.

Non-compliance or rebellion:

In a number of interviews young people drew attention to being in situations with professionals where they felt their compliance was presented as obligatory or enforced. Under these circumstances several respondents remarked on how the presentation of instructions as mandatory evoked a specific desire to defy or rebel.

> **Stephanie:** say if my Mum said to me you've got to be in at a certain time I would make sure that I'd be a bit late. If I'm pushed then I push back. I just want to do the opposite. But if someone's saying to you please do it – like these lot here [project workers] then I think 'Ohhhhhh [sounding reluctant], they are being really nice'. When workers are like 'you've got to do it' – then I'm just like 'No''....I think they shouldn't ever say to you you've got to. They shouldn't ever put your ways like 'you've got to' –
>
> **Beth:** - yeah, the more they say 'don't do it', the more you want to do it.

The sentiment expressed by Stephanie and Beth was echoed in a number of the interviews. For example, Lorraine described her own risk taking as a direct response to the control that professionals attempted to exert on her.

> I think that's why I did it (ran away) – I just did the opposite of what they said. I thought that if they said to me that I shouldn't do it, I would just do it. I think to be honest that made me want to do it more. The more that they told me not to – the more I would do it. (Lorraine, 15)

In these cases when young people's choices were seemingly limited by those in authority, they noted a clear desire to be able to reassert control and challenge the power embodied by their professional services. This overt non-compliance appeared to be one means of young people demonstrating their own agency and self-determinism, regardless of what ends their behaviour may serve. As Jay explained:

> I've always hated the idea of people trying to make me think something, instead of giving me advice so that I can either do it or not. No, if they act like that then I'll do what I want'. (Jay, 15)

Sophie talked about similar dynamics in regard to her relationships with men, explaining the links between the restrictions imposed on her and her motivation and desire to be with someone. These behaviours clearly relate to broader patterns of risk taking and defiance of authority, commonly associated with adolescence (Bandura, 2006)

> Just because an adult is telling you what to do – you just like think - 'I'm not listening to you, I'll do my own thing'. When they just say ' you shouldn't' be going with him'– you think they just don't want you to have a life. (Sophie, 17)

Like Sophie, Jay discusses situations in which he has 'done what he wants' , counter to the directives of police, parents or social workers. His story is filled with ambivalence about risk taking: indicating both knowledge of the potentially hazardous consequences of his choices, while simultaneously acknowledging his decisions to engage with unsafe behaviours:

> We [young people] can definitely decide [how to stay safe] but no-one gives us a chance to do that. Everyone just becomes over protective and in my case I've been shut off from the internet ; shut off from BBM; shut off from anything on the internet that's social - because people thinking that I don't see the risks and don't have responsibility for myself... well it's like we can [recognise risks] - we just chose not to. We wanted to do this... I have chosen to take the risks – I have chosen to go to London – I wasn't forced into it – but now I'm choosing to stay safe and have a normal childhood – but everyone's sort of like – no we don't believe you – you've done all this (Jay, 14).

Such examples clearly provide carers and professionals with real challenges within this field. In Jay's case the extreme nature of his risk taking (travelling to London with older men) and the obvious vulnerability that his 14 years afford him, support the need for interventions that monitor and restrict certain behaviours. In many ways his case returns us to the crux of the tensions between child protection and participatory principles in this field. His comments seemingly justify a need for children's own decision-making to be over-ruled by those with the means to properly assess the dangers involved in their relationships and behaviours. Yet Jay also illustrates how, with the exception of referral to a secure children's home[95], workers and carers are forced to work within and alongside the choices that he is making for himself. In addition the observation that he is now 'choosing to stay safe' suggests his own central role in the process of safeguarding, no matter how problematic that at times this may be.

It would appear that in some cases where workers acknowledge the limitations of their influence on young people's behaviour, it may support young people's ability to respond positively to their advice and comply with adults suggestions. In keeping with the value of working in partnership (section 6.2.), several young people (n= 9) described how workers who presented them with choices or negotiated with them were more likely to secure their compliance. Advice appeared to be much easier to respond to than mandatory directions.

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[95] Interestingly Jay is the only young person for who the issue of secure children's homes arose within the interviews. Later in his interview he talked at length about how the threat of sending him to a secure children's home and the fear of going there had helped motivate him to modify some of his risk taking behaviour.

Young people's recognition and subsequent management of risk needed to be a process which was facilitated rather than directed by project workers. There is a suggestion within these narratives that explicit recognition of the role and influence of young people within safeguarding, no matter how problematic, supported them to engage with professionals' suggestions and expertise, while more directive or punitive responses furthered their resistance.

Avoidance or non engagement

As previously noted, many of the sexual exploitation services that young people accessed engaged with them on a voluntary basis. Whether they had been formally referred by other professionals or simply signposted, these were services which young people could choose to access or avoid without threat of legal consequences. In these cases one simple and obvious method of resisting interventions was through non-attendance. Although this was only mentioned in a small number of interviews (n= 4) it represented a straightforward means by which young people chose to desist support.

In Stephanie's case her decision 'not to go back to my counsellor' was a reaction to experiencing a perceived confidentiality contract breached without her knowledge or input (See section 7.3). She goes one to explain 'That's why I'd never go to one [a counsellor] again. I'd come here [to the sexual exploitation project] but I'd never go to a counsellor or owt'.

Meanwhile Phoebe describes her own refusal to attend a counselling project for different reasons. She begins by explaining how she feels about her lack of involvement in the decision to refer her to the counsellor:

> If I don't ask for counselling even then, they [social care] just go and do it anyway. Like with my other counselling they did that and I didn't like it. I went once... they said 'yeah, yeah - you've got to go to this appointment'. I went and didn't like it so I didn't go [back].

It is hard to tell to what degree Phoebe's experience of counselling is influenced by the fact she felt forced to attend, although it might be assumed that it is unlikely to have provided the best basis for her engagement. Meanwhile later in the interview Phoebe returns to provide a more detailed explanation for her non-engagement, noting her discomfort with the style of support that counselling offered:

> I went to that other counselling place and that just wasn't for me. It were just sitting talking. That just wasn't for me. I like to go on Wii [video games console] and or have some food and that while I'm talking. Whereas just sitting in a room talking – it just bores me. I'm just sitting there being serviced and it just doesn't happen. (Phoebe,17)

Like many young people, Phoebe describes a preference for conversations with workers that take place in an informal setting and are non-directive. These are situations in which the sole focus of an interaction is not on eliciting information from a young person but rather workers 'talk round the issue'[96]. These might be seen to represent therapeutic interventions delivered through a youth work rather than more formally therapeutic model[97]. Here dialogue becomes a by-product of another activity such as a game or creative process and the pressure on young people to share information, described earlier, is dissipated. As the above example illustrates, organisational interventions or styles of working that are less responsive to young people's preferred communication styles run the risk of distancing potential service users, or as in the case of Phoebe prompting her to opt out entirely. Though it may be easy to dismiss Phoebe's desire for flexible provision and use of a 'Wii' as caprice, it represents a preference which has overridden the additional value which counselling might provide. It would appear that projects which consider young people's 'whims' for certain service activities as *valid claims* about appropriate styles of support, are attending to some of the difficulties and sensitivities of being a sexual exploitation service user. In addition they are providing the alternative 'pulls' for young people discussed in chapter six. While only a small aspect of service development and delivery, such approaches provide an additional tool in promoting inclusion and access in valuable services[98].

Defiant or abusive behaviours

The final examples of young people's resistance to services fall under the category of defiant or abusive behaviours. These were examples where young people admitted to consciously disrespecting workers or adopting an insolent stance. In Phoebe's case this was simply about her challenging what she perceived to be a disrespectful attitude of staff.

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[96] Sophie, 17

[97] The term 'formally therapeutic' refers to interventions specifically targeting mental disorders or psychological distress by psychological means such as counselling; psychotherapy or clinical psychology.

[98] In the cases above young people described desisting from services that were offered to them on a voluntary basis. It is important to acknowledge that in many other cases young people's interactions with services were not optional and they were obliged to engage with interventions through youth offending services; child protection orders or police procedures. These examples are as important as those where young people successfully avoid an intervention because they highlight the limits to young people's means of resisting support and the boundaries within which their agency operates.

It's just like, when I first met my social worker, I didn't like her one bit. It's just like I were looking down my nose at her and she were doing the same at me...she were proper snobby towards me...You can just tell the way they act around you and stuff –but I did the same to her – two can play that game if you know what I mean. [laughing] (Phoebe, 17)

In two of the interviews young people chose to portray themselves displaying more overtly abusive attitudes and responses to professionals. Interestingly both these examples arose in group interviews raising a number of questions about what motivated the telling of these stories. An example of one of the stories is given below:

Sally: Social Workers - Kiss. My. Big. Fat. Behind.

Camille: Can you explain why you don't like social workers?

Sally: Because she got mad when I tried throwing her out my house and she didn't like it. Bunch of pricks – that's it – they've been to my house twice and they've had the same thing – 'get the fuck out of my house' and they don't like me for it' (Sally, 19)

During discussions with Sally about her experiences of social workers she repeatedly resorts to abusive language and a mocking tone. There are a number of possible interpretations for these types of stories and the behaviour they depict. For example these could be interpreted as emotive responses to situations that young people found particularly stressful or disempowering. Alternatively they may be seen as young people's attempts to sabotage interventions, rendering themselves 'unworkable' and in this case fulfilling Sally's own ideas about how professionals perceive her as hard to reach or disruptive. As noted previously, it was also difficult to ascertain the degree to which this story and others like it depicted actual events and the degree to which they represented fantasies about what Sally wished she could do or say to her social worker, or what she wanted me and others in the group interview to believe.

Regardless of the relationship between this narrative and actual events it is still possible to consider credible explanations and truths that can be derived from Sally's story. As noted within the methodology chapter, throughout my interviews I was conscious of the need for respondents to protect their own vulnerabilities within the context of the interview and to use of a variety of devices to support this (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Such devices could include exaggeration, omission and lies, and yet they could continue to reveal 'truths': not of 'the past 'as it actually was', aspiring to a standard of objectivity...[but rather] the truth of...experiences' (Sangster, 1998:87).

Applying this perspective to Sally's narrative suggests that regardless of the facts about this interaction with her social worker, her relationship with social care is one in which she

felt deeply disempowered. A number of indicators within her interview allude to this. They include: her repeated reference to the derogatory manner in which she believed herself to be viewed by professionals; the extreme lack of choice she described feeling within this context and the anger she expressed towards members of the profession. This interpretation was supported by how Sally used her story to evoke both empathy and laughter from others present in the group interview: countering her powerlessness by positioning herself as in control of humiliating the character of the social worker. Regardless of whether she is describing a true incident or a fictional or embellished account, the need for her to discredit the social worker and present her own empowered sense of identity in the face of limited control appears here as a clear and powerful message.

8.4 Defiance or protection?

In the previous section, and in preceding chapters, we have seen a range of ways in which young people consciously resist or circumvent aspects of the support or welfare with which they were supposed to engage. These are stories in which young people demonstrate their own agency and draw attention to the limits of professional's power to influence and exert their authority. Even in cases where young people describe their statutory obligations to attend services, they continue to provide examples of how they demonstrated their own influence and self-determinism through non-cooperation, silence or deception.

We have seen how these self-directing behaviours of resistance are problematic and may disregard or exacerbate risk. We have also seen how at times these choices negate opportunities for young people to benefit from the expertise and support that professionals and organisations offer. In addition there is clear evidence that some of young people's choices respond to pressures and coercion from perpetrators. They highlight how young people's demonstrations of agency are not always pro-social and that, at times, further scrutiny and control of young people's behaviour may be justified in the name of protection.

Yet although the appearance and impact of young people's choices to resist support may always be problematic, the internal motivations of young people making these decisions presents a more complex picture. Within these narratives a multiplicity of additional explanations are given by which young people justify their decision to exert agency and challenge authority. I propose that these can be grouped as follows:

i.   *a desire to maintain control over sensitive information* – particularly in the context of an absence of trust in workers and organisations (e.g.; Sean p.147/ 170; Alice p.149)

ii. *the avoidance of shame and embarrassment*; (Illy p.150; Alice p.151, Ursula p. 153)

iii. **a desire to avoid additional trauma and difficulty anticipated from police involvement** (e.g. Alice p.149; Sean p.149)

iv. *the avoidance of conflict* (or 'getting into trouble'); (Justin p.123; Sally p.173)

v.   *fears about safety being exacerbated by service involvement* (e.g. Illy p. 172; Phoebe p.181) and

vi. *a desire to challenge or resist authority to assert their own power* (e.g. Jay p.175; Lorraine p.175; Sally p.179).

Close examination of the narratives within this study reveals that young people's reasons for resisting support are as likely to demonstrate aspects of resilience and engagement in protective choices, as they are to be simple examples of defiance and difficulty. It is important to distinguish here between what I am calling 'protective choices', understood as a choice *motivated* in some way by a desire to protect your wellbeing, and choices which *genuinely result in* greater protection. In this context when I talk about 'protective choices' I am aware that they may not always realise the aim of greater protection.

In some instances young people's protective tendencies were explicit and practical as in cases where young people resisted service intervention due to fears about their physical safety (v). In Phoebe's case she described weighing up the balance of risks that result not only from ongoing abuse but also from the experience of disclosure:

> 'It's proper difficult – if I tell someone they're [perpetrators] going to hurt me, they might do more stuff, hurt my family'. (Phoebe, 17)

These comments are supported by evidence from a range of other studies (CEOP, 2010; Firmin, 2010; 2011).

Elsewhere young people's fears were associated with emotional rather than physical safety. When asking Rapunzel what might make it difficult for young people to engage with services she explained:

> I also think it's more that people are scared.. they're scared to trust – if they've trusted someone before and been let down then if it happens again then it's another knock. (Rapunzel, 14)

Rapunzel, like Phoebe, directly relates young people's experience of abuse to limits on their ability to trust professionals offering care and support. It is not the threat of physical

violence she fears but rather a fear of experiencing further hurt at the hands of adults. A reluctance to trust services here is a means of protecting oneself from further harm and avoiding replicating breaches of trust which clearly characterise many sexually exploited children's relationships with adults.

Elsewhere the protective nature of young people's choices was more subtle and involved goals such as protecting their self-esteem (ii); avoiding conflict with adults or carers (iv) or allowing them to maintain a sense of control (i). While questions remain about the efficacy of these choices in keeping young people safe, there is no denying that many of them are borne of young people's own desire to promote their well being.

When considering the list of motivations above it is also useful to reflect on Ungar's (2004) observation that there is often a tendency to conflate young people's resistance to support with vulnerability. He notes that although at times the two are closely linked, the relationship between them should neither be assumed nor read as strictly causal. Such thinking tends to 'assume that one set of behaviours is maladaptive and another, more conventional set is adaptive' overlooking the important influence of context (Ungar,2004: 27). Ungar works from a constructivist perspective to call for a reconsideration of notions of resilience. He suggests that a preoccupation with deviance among vulnerable young people overlooks the possibility that actions which are resistant to authority can also be displays of resourcefulness, adaptability and strength. While Ungar is not blind to the problematic nature of some of these behaviours he notes that particularly when young people's access to legitimised forms of power is limited, their means of protecting themselves may utilise less conventional and less legitimised approaches. The findings suggest ways in which particular choices and approaches of professionals are themselves catalysts to young people's resistance. They also support the contention that not all behaviours that outwardly appear defiant are necessarily so. Finally I argue that they demonstrate how including the perspectives of service users may better elucidate the meaning and motivations of young people's 'challenging' behaviours (Ungar and Teram, 2000; Ungar,2004: 27; Radford, 2012).

8.5 Conclusion: reinterpreting resistance

What these findings suggest is a complicated picture. On the one hand they provide further evidence for young people's demonstrations of agency and self determinism within processes of safeguarding and support the bi-directionality of influence between young people and their parents, carers and those in authority. This highlights not only young people's abilities to make decisions and take control but that to some degree they are always doing this. In itself this might be seen as a particularly interesting example of

young people's 'participation' in services, recognising that even where young people are not involved in formal and legitimised processes of decision-making about their care, they are able to circumvent these processes and make choices independent of adult influence.

Yet we have also seen that young people's displays of agency can be problematic. Despite evidence that many of these behaviours are motivated by a desire to promote their wellbeing, it is also clear that when young people's decision-making takes place outwith or in opposition to professional support, it may result in them exacerbating risks and negating opportunities for protection.

This highlights that while safeguarding services are of vital importance in the lives of these young people, significant limitations are placed upon practitioners' effectiveness unless they can secure the cooperation of the service user. It strongly supports the need to reconsider the safeguarding of adolescents explicitly in terms of a partnership. These findings suggest that the self determinism that some practitioners suggest minimises their ability to safeguard adolescents (Rees et al., 2010) or specifically victims of sexual exploitation (see chapter nine) could be recognised as an important resource when understood as motivated by the same desire to promote well being underpinning practitioners' own endeavours.

Considering these processes from young people's perspectives provides new ideas about the routes they take towards healthy or unhealthy behaviours in relation to their care, and their reasons. I hope that attending to service users' own accounts of engagement and non-engagement presents new ideas about effective approaches.

Chapter 9: Practitioner Perspectives

9.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters focus solely on the perspectives of young people. This chapter marks a departure from this approach and considers the perspectives of practitioners working within sexual exploitation services. It seeks to gauge both support for service user perspectives and the extent to which service user values can be accommodated within the practical and ethical constraints placed on providers.

As noted in chapter four, interviews with practitioners predominantly took place after interviewing service users. Practitioner interviews were based on a short topic guide (see appendix 9) that asked questions about whether young people's involvement in decision-making was appropriate; if and how they involved service users in their care; and what challenges and barriers exist to implementing participatory practice within sexual exploitation services. Analysis of practitioner interviews was completed using thematic coding based on the topic guide and findings emerging from young people's interviews.

Analysis of practitioner interviews is presented in two main sections. The first highlights professional observations and understanding of participation with sexually exploited young people. It argues that practitioner interviews largely support findings derived from service users, suggesting that participation within sexual exploitation services remains ill-defined and dependent on individual workers rather than service-wide or LSCB commitments.

This section is followed with an overview of opportunities to implement participatory practice identified by practitioners and barriers to doing so. This demonstrates a number of parallels between the perspectives of young people and practitioners, and evidences practical possibilities for promoting young people's inclusion in key aspects of their support.

The chapter concludes by arguing for a need to further explicate the meaning and value of children's participation within sexual exploitation services in order to embed it more fully in practice.

9.2 Understanding participation: practitioners' perspectives

Interviews with practitioners largely supported the findings from service users of inconsistent and piecemeal approaches to participation. This was evidenced from observations on the wider professional cultures they worked within and alongside, and discussions about specific barriers to integrating participatory approaches in their own work. Like service users, they suggested that sexually exploited young people's involvement in their care was rarely prioritised, at times considered inappropriate and continued to rely on individual workers' commitment, interest and understanding of participation.

An overlooked priority

Several practitioners indicated significant disjuncture between the intentions of policy and the realities of practice. They supported the view that though 'debates about how to empower and increase participation [of service users] now occupy the centre ground the rhetoric exceeds reality' (Adams, 2008:xiii).

> Policy and guidance tells us we should be involving young people in conversations and decision-making – but in practice it doesn't happen –I think if it did – I don't think young people would have this perception of statutory services that they do. (Practitioner, project G)[99]

> On paper young people's views have to be taken into account – but in practice that is not what we find – and we still find really poor attitudes, and a blaming culture –[young people] are seen as a problem and not seen as part of solution. (Prroject Manager, project B)

The latter quote asserts the link between professional perceptions of service users and the degree to which young people are engaged as legitimate stakeholders in their care. The presentation of sexually exploited young people as blameworthy recalls historical attitudes which positioned victims as deviant and complicit in their own abuse. It supports the argument of previous chapters suggesting that young people's agency, where recognised, is often regarded as a problem and obstruction to safety. This view both justifies young people's exclusion from decision-making and overlooks the possibility that they embody vital resources for safeguarding.

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[99] Quotes from interviews with professionals are attributed to individuals via the use of their role ('project worker' or 'project manager') or an abbreviation of this to 'PW' or 'PM' and a letter to indicate which project they came from.

The same project manager drew specific parallels between this approach to safeguarding and aspects of young people's abusive relationships. She explained how approaches antithetical to participatory practice have the potential to replicate aspects of coercion:

> There's a huge imbalance of power in the relationships between young people and professionals. It just mirrors the abusive relationships. That's all these young people know. In these relationships where they're being told what to do, where to do it and then they experience the same types of things with services...professionals lying or tell them part truths, telling them what to do– its quite frustrating actually – one of our biggest challenges (Project Manager, project B)

These comments draw attention to dangers of failing to minimise the ongoing power imbalance between professionals and young people. They also support my contention that questions of power and control in service delivery have particular significance for victims of sexual exploitation.

Participation as an 'add on'

Several practitioners were able to identify one-off participation initiatives or consultations within their projects, though on the whole, these were presented as dependent on individual or local service level innovation that was rarely embedded in or supported by wider children's services or partnerships.

> .. a lot of participation of young people it's down to the individual workers isn't it? It's not the organisational culture... Local authorities, they're meant to do participation but they don't. And, even if they do, it's very tokenistic. (Project Manager, project J)

As one worker explained, 'a lot of people see participation as an add on – you do your work and *then* you do participation'. In one case a practitioner described how a manager presented him with the remit for participation because 'we've been told by head office that we need to be doing it' (PWF). She told him, 'go on internet – have a read of it and see what you come up with'. He explained his subsequent struggle to apply models of children's participation that he identified (from children's rights, advocacy or campaigning initiatives) to the child protection work he delivered with sexually exploited young people. Rather than considering the potential to integrate participation within existing practice he described how the pressure was ultimately for him to 'deliver' young people to represent the work of the organisation publically: through attendance at national events and sharing stories of abuse with the media. This account demonstrated the contested understandings of participation within social care, providing evidence for participation co-opting young people to serve organisational needs (Carr, 2004; Adams, 2008). Another

worker noted how her manager's view of participation tended to err towards tokenistic and performative projects. She described this as 'event participation' and explained:

> Management are obviously like 'we want kids'. There are different agenda's at different levels and they [management] don't necessarily get the subtleties of using a child in that way. They're not show ponies you can just reel out. All our kids are very chaotic and maybe they don't want to come out and just wave at rich people for the evening. (Practitioner, project G)

The irony of such approaches were not lost on workers who themselves at times explicitly articulated the potentially 'exploitative' nature of these events.

Similarly tokenistic approaches were highlighted within an account of involving two young people in staff recruitment. The worker explained that though young people were on the interview panel it was not appropriate or feasible for them to influence the outcome of the selection process. She presented this as a positive learning opportunity for young people and valuable chance for applicants to meet service users. However she overlooked the possibility that service users could offer insights which might benefit the recruitment process itself. In this instance young people's participation again focused on their visible presence but stopped short of providing them with real influence.

In all these examples, there is evidence that enthusiasm for involving young people often reverts to oversimplified models of participation or is driven by self-serving organisational needs. These findings indicate that even when there is a nominal commitment to children's participation there is often little attempt to engage with questions about promoting service user influence or challenging existing relationships of power within service delivery. They support Hart's recent argument that an emphasis on children's participation 'in formal settings is a much too narrow view of children's social participation for citizenship' (2009:7). Equally they epitomise critiques of children's participation which highlight the tendency to promote select representatives: privileging more stable and articulate voices and reproducing existing hierarchies (Hinton, 2008).

These narratives suggest a need to further explicate the values and principles of participatory work before expecting services or professionals to apply it in a meaningful way. This finding supports Woodhead's argument that children's participation has often not been 'based on.. a sufficiently elaborated conceptual framework' (2010: xxi) and in the absence of this analysis it appears that more tokenistic or manipulative forms of participation may flourish.

Participation as an integral part of support

There were exceptions to these approaches and three practitioners talked about young people's participation in services in more integrated terms. In one case the worker identified participation as 'a really important tool for working with young people' (PMB) and noted how it was something that underpinned everything they did and delivered as a service. She also drew explicit links between working in a participatory way and keeping young people safe, going on to explain that 'there's a huge benefit for us – but also a huge benefit for young people in working like that'. These comments suggested a genuine sense of reciprocity within her model of work and a clear understanding of the interdependence of participation and protection rights. Meanwhile another worker explained:

> I might be wrong – but participation as I understand it is much broader than doing an activity or a consultation – it's about the way you work. There are so many different ways of involving young people. (Prjoect Manager, project C)

For a third project worker, the development of a grounded understanding of participation, embedded in all aspects of sexual exploitation provision was expressed as a gradual process. He described engaging in a process of trial and error to develop an approach which was relevant and meaningful for all service users and supported their influence on all aspects of care:

> I think that's how we're looking at participation now – encouraging them to take responsibility and ownership of what they do when they're here and taking a role in working out how we can make what they do, when they're here, better. (Practitioner, project F)

This practitioner's thinking moved from prioritising a few young people's formal involvement in project governance, towards a more inclusive approach, enabling all service users to influence the development and direction of their support. This aligns with emerging ideas about children's participation which extend beyond consultation or formal decision-making and consider it as an opportunity to foster 'active citizenship' (Woodhead, 2010; Thomas and Percy-Smith, 2010).

From these findings I suggest that children's participation within sexual exploitation support remains a fluid and contested concept, often, though not invariably, divorced from the theoretical principles which underpin it. The failure to articulate or make meaningful the rhetoric of 'children's participation' within this context appears to have resulted in its application in partial and unsystemic forms. Nonetheless, there is evidence of local innovation that highlights possibilities for more integrated and embedded forms of

participation. In the subsequent section I explore the potential and challenges of such approaches in practice.

9.3 Barriers and opportunities to participatory practice

Having acknowledged the different meanings given to 'participation' by practitioners I return to a definition of children's participation as 'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives' (Hart, 1992:5)[100], exploring the challenges and opportunities of delivering this in practice. This builds on young people's narratives about their experiences of involvement in decision-making, considering potential explanations for the variable and inconsistent approaches that they describe. It argues that alongside limitations to young people's involvement determined by safeguarding requirements, there are also barriers rooted in professional perceptions of young people, staff development and a broader lack of commitment. An intentional focus on young people's involvement in formal meetings and information sharing seeks to respond to priorities identified in young people's own narratives.

i) tensions between children's and professionals' perspectives

Only one of the ten practitioners interviewed for this study worked within an LSCB who systematically invited young people to attend CSE strategy meetings. Although on the whole practitioners were broadly sympathetic with the aims of participation many still expressed reservations about its feasibility in this sector. In several interviews professionals highlighted recognition of a desire to involve young people in formal decision-making processes, but attested to real challenges in making this happen. This supported an observation in Jago et al. (2011:68) which noted that 'some [professionals] found the prospect of involving young people to be daunting and struggled to make it a comfortable experience'. These reservations were often associated with the discord between professional and young people's perception of risk.

> The challenges of involving young people in decision-making is that they [service users] obviously don't always think they're at risk, sometimes its just easier to leave them out of the process. (Practitioner, project H)

There was a clear sense here of a desire to avoid conflict that might arise from disparities between professional and young people's perspectives. The validity of such fears were outlined by two practitioners describing instances of adversarial multi-agency meetings

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[100] As outlined in chapter 1 this definition is applied in its broadest terms, where an understanding of 'sharing decisions' means having influence as well as a voice. In addition decisions are understood to include both those which take place in formal processes and those occurring in the incidental fabric of everyday life.

where young people 'stormed out' after hearing professional views which failed to correspond with their own.

> A lot of young people walk out [in the middle of meetings] because they're blagging a bit and their blagging's been uncovered – so there's a bit of embarrassment – and so they get mad and vexed then and say 'you're a load of tossers. I'm not sitting here listening to this'. (Project Manager, project C)

These comments reiterate the sense expressed by Sally and Beth (section 7.5) that young people's presence in formal decision-making spaces does not, by itself, enable their meaningful involvement or empowerment. They also attest to the credibility of concerns about involving young people in stressful or distressing decision-making processes. Such fears understandably raise questions about the appropriateness of young people's involvement in such contexts, with one practitioner suggesting it was sometimes 'naive' to think we were 'helping young people by making them attend meetings' (PWH).

Such conflicts were understandably seen to make decision-making processes more convoluted and difficult. In two instances this tension was described as justifying either the marginalisation of children's influence within these processes, or their complete exclusion.

ii) Preventing professionals speaking openly

Fear of conflict also appeared to align with a broader belief (noted in four interviews) that young people's presence within meetings meant 'professionals feel that they can't speak openly' (PWE). This suggested that young people's presence obstructed professionals' information sharing and decision-making. Some practitioners who recognised these difficulties suggested that they could be overcome through the development of professionals' skills and 'confidence':

> I think the challenge for workers is to be able to convey the same information as you would have done without them being there.... people can find that really, really difficult to do, but actually its better – because [professionals] have got to be prepared to be challenged... They've got be upfront and tell people what their professional judgement is. It's only fair that the people on the receiving end should know about it.... I'd much rather they [young people] were there than they weren't there. (Practitioner, project I)

In this description conflict and challenge are accepted as legitimate and constructive. Young people's presence and involvement is not only welcomed but seen to promote both scrutiny and accountability within decision-making processes. There is also a sense

that narratives about young people's risk or victimisation are negotiated and contested rather than fixed and authoritative.

Despite the commitment of several practitioners to involve young people, there were some aspects of meetings where it was always deemed inappropriate for young people to be present. These relate to instances where 'third party information' is shared, in discussions about investigative processes or other young people. Nevertheless a number of professionals point out that these concerns should not over-ride young people's rights to be involved with other aspects of a sexual exploitation strategy, review or planning meetings devised to address their particular problems. Rather it requires professionals to reconsider how to organise meetings. It was noted for example that leaving a young person outside a meeting, until professionals shared third party information, was an unhelpful approach which simply heightens young people's anxiety and sense of exclusion. In one practitioner's words this left young people 'getting stressed out their head [thinking] what are we saying that they can't hear'? (PMC). Alternative approaches were suggested which scheduled third party information sharing at the end of a meeting, and took time to explain the rationale for this to young people.

iii) the use of advocacy

Four workers mentioned advocacy as a critical tool in supporting young people's meaningful representation and influence in a range of decision-making situations. Their views supported Scott and Skidmore's assertion of the centrality of advocacy to effective sexual exploitation provision (2006). Yet as one worker explained, adopting such a role created tension for both her and other professionals.

> We tread a fine line when we go to meetings and say 'I'm not giving my professional opinion, I'm here as an advocate'... They've been like - 'but you need to give your professional opinion' and I've had to say 'no, either I stay here in the role of advocate or me and the young person can go'. (Practitioner, project E)

This practitioner also described the strain of being asked to present a young person's perspective which did not align to her own professional judgement. She described attending a meeting with a young person who wanted her to say that she wasn't being sexually exploited and she should come off the [child protection] register. Contrary to this viewpoint the worker described holding extensive information that pointed to the young woman's exploitation. However rather than reject the young woman's request she explained:

I told her that I couldn't say what she wanted me to say in my own capacity, and the indicators suggest she was at really high risk, but that I could advocate for her and present her thoughts. I thought I might lose her because we'd just started working together but she was alright with it... I said I'm an advocate and this is not my professional view - I was very clear about that. I cannot say 'she is not being sexually exploited'... instead I said 'these are S's thoughts – she wants you to know that she is not being sexually exploited. (Practitioner, project E)

Here the role of advocacy clearly recognises and promotes a young person's right to be heard no matter what their perspective. It respects their representation of life as they see it (or wish it to be seen), while remaining honest about holding differing views. A similar approach was supported by another worker who noted the need 'to put value on what a young person says even if you think they're wrong, because really how she perceives her situation is right for her - is true in her eyes' (PMC). There is a sense of genuine respect for young people's voices here that does not necessarily collude with their perspective but importantly affords them status and legitimacy in discussions about their care.

iv) integrating young people's involvement in sexual exploitation strategy meetings
Throughout discussions about young people's involvement in meetings attention was drawn to their dynamics and organisation. Several practitioners highlighted the need to think beyond simply getting young people to attend meetings, recognising the multi-dimensional aspects through which power was reproduced. One explained 'I don't think anyone understands what its like to be 14 sat at table with loads of adults talking about you in the third person' (PWF). He noted that 'meetings are arranged by professionals, for professionals, about young people – they're not arranged *with* young people, at a time and date that suits them, with their agenda'. It is clear that there are multiple ways in which existing hierarchies between professionals and service users are reproduced within the 'invited spaces' of formal meetings (Cornwall, 2004). While aspects of this hierarchy are inevitable within a formal child protection context there is evidence that attention to the planning, delivering and debriefing of meetings may engender service users' more active and less adversarial involvement: supporting horizontal rather than hierarchical engagement.

Contrary to expectations the only identifiable example of young people's participation in safeguarding processes being formalised was in an established LSCB led sexual exploitation service. Here a practitioner described systematic procedures for facilitating young people's meaningful involvement in the preparation, participation, feedback and evaluation of strategy and review meetings. What was striking about this account, other than its rarity, was the multiple ways in which imbalances in power were addressed.

[before the meeting] we try to make sense of why we're having the meeting – because sometimes – quite a lot of times they don't really see that they're at risk... we're saying that because their parents, or professionals noticed the warning signs – people are worried about them...We're not saying that they are being sexually exploited but we are saying that we're worried...We're saying that the meetings being arranged so everyone whose concerned can discuss it and find out how they can be protected and supported. We're also saying that we want them to actually come to the meeting. But if they can't – if they don't feel that they're able to - giving them the option of asking someone they trust to come to the meeting to pass on their point of view. (Project Manager, project A)

There is a means here of acknowledging discord between young people and professionals' understandings of safety, while ensuring that young people's narratives are never discounted or over-ruled, even when they are dismissive of risk. This approach responds to service user interviews which articulate resentment of professionals presenting their views as unequivocally wrong, and acceptance (albeit gradual) of contrasting professional perspectives that are presented as subjective and alternative accounts to their own.

These comments reinforce the importance of valuing young people's presence regardless of whether they concur with professionals' own point of view. They suggest strategies for managing tensions between young people and professionals' perceptions: simultaneously challenging young people's views while respecting their right to a differing perspective. This provide a means of working in partnership with young people perceived to be wilfully exacerbating their own vulnerability without colluding in their narratives. This formalisation of young people's involvement in sexual exploitation provision also represents an important commitment to embed service user involvement and so upholding principles of both the SCYPSE guidance and wider social work codes of practice (GSCC, 2004; IFSW, 2000)[101].

v) Information sharing

In all practitioner interviews I specifically asked about approaches to confidentiality and whether young people could influence how and where personal information about them was shared. The anxiety service users described about this issue was well recognised by practitioners:

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[101] Feedback received from young people attending these meetings suggested that on the whole they were able to understand the purpose of these meetings (86%), feel listened to (86%), take part (76%) and agree to the plan of action (76%). 74 % stated that they found meetings supportive. Figures taken from unpublished collation of feedback forms received from each young person attending CSE strategy and review meetings. These feedback forms and their collation were presented to me as part of the interview with the practitioner. This was the only example I identified where young people were formally asked to feedback on their experiences of meetings.

In nine of the twelve young people's advisory group meetings that we had – I'd say nine of them focused on this as a discussion topic. Regardless of what we planned to talk about, it always seems to come back to this – this information sharing discussion. (Practitioner, project F)

Professional responses to this issue ranged from their acceptance of the inevitability of this as an area of conflict, to offering suggestions of tactics to address this. For those seeking to support young people's influence in this area, the importance of clarifying the meaning of confidentiality was presented as critical. Supporting young people to understand the context and consequences of their decisions to share information was noted to be particularly important when the meaning of confidentiality was described to lack clarity or be contextually specific.

This whole Idea of what confidential means – they don't get it - its just a word and its lost all meaning – I've become really conscious of this. (Practitioner, project F)

I think it is also about making sure young people understand what confidentiality really means– we use so much jargon and we forget that young people may not understand. Confidentiality does not mean the same thing from one service to another, or one person to another anyway. (Practitioner, project G)

The lack of trust young people described in the ability of certain workers or services to keep their information safe was shared by some professionals. In comments highly reminiscent of service user interviews, one practitioner expressed reticence to share information with certain professionals for fear that they would manage this inappropriately and jeopardise his own working relationships.

So many professionals out there are not very skilled at delivering information properly to young people. I can't trust that the workers at the other end [of the phone] know how to be confidential. (Practitioner, project F)

Where professionals or services chose to adopt a rigorous approach to confidentiality which respected young people's wish for information sharing on a 'need to know' basis, there was potential for this to be perceived as obstructive. Practitioners described having to make difficult decisions about whether to respect their commitments to service users or bow to pressure for a more open approach to information sharing from other professionals.

It's really difficult if you are positioned between a young person and statutory services. You may have that commitment to getting a young person's consent to share information and involve them in decisions– but then the presumption I find of statutory services is that you are just going to hand all of the information over to them. (Practitioner, project G)

These comments support the picture evoked in young people's interviews in which their rights to retain control of personal information are often overlooked and invalidated by their service user status. It also demonstrated how professionals' decisions to respect young people's right to privacy (within the bounds of safeguarding protocols) were often challenging within the context of partnership working.

Despite recognition about the sensitivity associated with information sharing, practitioners also described the importance of discussions with colleagues about service users, both as a coping mechanism and to facilitate good decision-making. Strategies for responding to this need, while being mindful of young people's concerns about workers 'gossiping' included: the provision of clear information to service users about when and how information would be shared among the team; ensuring young people had access to their files; and the provision of both internal and external supervision. Across all these discussions a picture emerges of varying levels of attention given to the issue of when and how to share, record and manage young people's personal information. Differences in approach appeared to depend on both the degree to which young people were seen as stakeholders in this issue and wider organisational protocols and resources.

vi) questions about resourcing

The issue of resources arose in several interviews with practitioners exposing gaps between organisational interest in children's participation and the means of enabling it. Time was noted to be a key resource required to prepare and support young people to take a more active role in their care and other aspects of service delivery:

> I thought I'll have a go at setting up a [service users] advisory group – and I had no experience of participation at all and it went really badly – and in a way I think that was really helpful because I realised that it's flipping difficult to get participation right...it takes so much time and effort and pre-engagement work and briefings and check-ins and phone-calls and confidence boosters to get young people ready to participate'. (Practitioner, project F)

Recognition that young people's meaningful engagement in services, particularly at the level of governance, does not 'just happen' appears to be an important message. One practitioner noted how despite management support for the outputs of participation, the lack of available resources betrayed the organisation's lack of commitment to working this way. She explained: 'No-one wants to support it [participation], people only want to take from it and I think that's why I feel a little bit resentful of things...everybody praises me when the young people turn up but nobody actually wants to provide resources to do that' (PMJ). These comments again suggest limitations to deeper understanding of the purpose of participation work among professionals. They evidence an appetite for the

fruits of participation on very tokenistic terms: welcoming the symbolic power of young people but failing to engage with this work on a more meaningful level.

vii) Constraints within statutory services

Discussions of resources often drew attention to the particular constraints on staff within statutory services, where the time required for working in more participatory ways is often unavailable. Several voluntary sector workers remarked upon the size of social workers' caseloads and the limitations this places on their ability to develop the meaningful relationships with young people that were seen as the foundation of participatory working. Similarly, the target led culture within statutory services is seen to restrict workers' ability to adopt the flexible, open-ended approaches required for facilitating partnership work with young people.

> From working in that [statutory] system for so many years I was happy to step into voluntary sector and see that the focus is very different. It's not as target or objective led. Although there are objectives, there is much more freedom to set your own agenda - and obviously involve a young person with that.
> (Practitioner, project F)

The voluntary nature of engagement was also seen as critical for facilitating less hierarchical approaches. One worker noted how the option for a young person to disengage from support facilitated her or his sense of choice and control:

> They choose to opt in [to the service] –they don't *have to.* It's not something that's put upon them and that's what we say to them at the very beginning - 'you're not going to hurt my feelings if you say well thanks but no thanks'. I think that's helpful – give them some control over it. With most services I think they have to engage. (Practitioner, project E)

As in findings from service user interviews, in most cases participatory approaches were presented by practitioners as more viable within the voluntary sector. The legal framework of social work and their role 'as enforcers'[102] were noted to impose significant limitations on the degree to which more collaborative approaches to working with young people were feasible. This reflected well documented tensions between the dual responsibilities of care and control which social workers inhabit.

Yet beyond questions of statutory duties and resources, there were also perceived differences in organisational cultures and priorities that appeared to impede the ability of some services to deliver work *with* rather than *to* young people:

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[102] Project Manager, Project C

The danger is that [the LSCB] work very differently to us. It will be this big reaction which will totally scare off a young person who doesn't even see what the problem is. They just don't seem to get the idea that if you don't adopt an approach which a young person can feel part of and which takes the time to involve her, they'll reject it immediately and in the long term that's going to make her less safe. (Project Manager, project D)

This project manager described how increased pressure from central government and the media meant her LSCB were increasingly aware of a need to respond to child sexual exploitation. However she felt their approach failed to draw on the longstanding expertise of her own specialist voluntary provision and overlooked the value of more participatory styles of work. While she contended that facilitating young people's involvement in their support was key to promoting their safety, she felt such approaches were at odds with the traditional child protection responses increasingly being mobilised. Her comments support the contention proposed at the beginning of this thesis that while efforts are made to bring sexually exploited young people under the fold of child protection, these frameworks still require adaptation to the needs of older young people and responding to non-familial patterns of abuse.

Supporting young people's choices through developing knowledge
A key point raised in the previous quote is that minimising risk in sexually exploited young people's lives requires long term support developing young people's own decision-making skills. This acknowledges the choices and decisions young people face beyond the bounds of service influence. It supports findings from other interviews demonstrating a role for services in promoting young people's access to knowledge and providing them with space for supported reflection.

When you're helping young people to make decisions, often young people have got little information, little awareness of their options, of the consequences of things... How can they really make, what I would call good decisions, without having all that first? I mean how many sexually exploited people understand where they're coming from and how that's influencing where they are now?... I don't think anybody we've ever come across has known the consequences [of the choices they make] (Project Manager, project C)

Here meaningful participation in decision-making is described as depending upon detailed work supporting young people to reflect critically on their circumstances, and identity. It foregrounds limitations on sexually exploited young people's ability to make wholly 'free choices', noting the impact of both knowledge and experiences. Yet it also recognises the potential to build young people's capacity to engage in decision-making in a more informed way, supporting them to reflect upon the constraints they face.

In a separate but related description of support for sexually exploited young people a practitioner described the work he delivered as 'creating space for young people to find their own solutions' (PWI). In this account young people are positioned as central to their own safeguarding. Service users' individual agency, specifically their ability to make positive choices, is the recognised resource through which protective outcomes are delivered. Nonetheless, the role and responsibility of services and professionals is not diminished in this account but is realigned from one of *rescue* to one of *empowerment*: facilitating young people to consider questions about their identity and oppression. This approach supports Freirian ideas (1970) about the development of critical consciousness as a foundation for empowerment and Fitzgerald et al.'s assertion that young people themselves emphasise 'the importance of dialogue with adults for affirming, challenging and developing them as people' (2010:300).

Clearly this is work which extends far beyond questions about young people's attendance or exclusion from meetings or whether they have been informed and consulted about their options. Instead it is the work that ideally precedes these events, furthering possibilities for young people to engage with professionals on more equal, reflective and active terms.

9.5 Conclusion: a model of practitioner attitudes towards participation

I conclude this chapter by proposing that there appear to be four distinct approaches to children's participation within sexual exploitation services which align to professionals' understandings of service users' agency and victimhood.

TYPE 1: 'avoidant exclusion' Firstly, it appears that in some instances service user involvement remains entirely overlooked or dismissed, often based on particular prejudices about children considered as either difficult and blameworthy. In these cases it appears that practitioners recognise young people's agency but delegitimize it, framing it in problematic terms predominantly associated with deviance. Practitioners thus avoid involving young people in decision-making based on beliefs about the inevitable and obstructive conflict that arises from their involvement.

TYPE 2 'paternalistic exclusion' A second approach also deems sexually exploited children's participation inappropriate but is based on disregarding young people's agency, highlighting their victimhood and interpreting their choices as products of coercion or delusion. A paternalistic approach is justified to protect young people's physical or emotional safety in the context of their own limited capacity. This approach also seeks to

avoid colluding with young people whose narratives may be seen to deny their own vulnerability.

TYPE 3: 'nominal participation' Thirdly I suggest that a commitment to participation may be adopted which considers it in overly narrow terms equating it solely with formal consultation or young people's presence at public events, often for the benefit of an organisations' own image. In these examples there was evidence of organisations recognising a need to 'do' participation but considering it very much as an add on to their existing work. In these cases young people's participation adopted a largely procedural and sometimes tokenistic approach neglecting the conceptual underpinnings of children's participation. In this approach it appears that a limited view of children's agency is adopted which restricts young people's contributions and influence to certain domains.

TYPE 4: 'authentic participation' Finally there was substantive evidence of a fourth more integrated approach to participation. Here there was a sense that supporting young people's involvement in decision-making stemmed from recognition of both young people's right to be involved; a need to address the power imbalances that characterised existing provision; and beliefs about the value of such endeavours for young people and organisations. Interestingly, although this latter approach appears to be most feasible within the voluntary sector there was also evidence of embedding some of these approaches in LSCB practice.

Critical to this fourth approach is recognition of the role of young people themselves in promoting their safety, and the role of dialogue and trusting relationships as a means to negotiate the tensions identified by the other approaches. This appeared to rely on professionals' abilities to respond to young people's agency and victimisation simultaneously. There is an emphasis on principles and values within this work which seeks to overcome some of the barriers described in the other two approaches:

> There's been such an evolution in terms of professional awareness and documentation in terms of policy and guidance but its still far from affecting the way people work...for us it all comes down to values and how you perceive young people. You can have new definitions but if your attitude to young people is still the same there's no difference. You're still going to think all young people of a certain 'type' are hard work. You're still going to do things to them rather than with them. (Project Manager, project D)

Ultimately practitioners advocating more participatory approaches sought to promote young people's own abilities to make safe choices over the longer term and tended to address some of the more hidden or implicit dimensions of power in order to include young people as active participants. Interestingly within a sample of professionals who

were broadly sympathetic to children's participation – such approaches remained the exception rather than the rule.

Part three: conclusions and implications for practice

A precondition for a personally meaningful participation is a sense of recognition, the space to be a subject and the source rather than object [of change]

Liz Jeffery, 2011 p.69

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 Contribution to new knowledge

At the outset of this study I set out to answer questions concerning the degree to which young people affected by sexual exploitation experienced involvement in decision-making about their care (Q1); to explore the significance of these rights as understood by young people themselves (Q2); and to consider them in relation to the broader child protection aims of specialist sexual exploitation support (Q3).

In this penultimate chapter I identify the findings that emerged in response to this methodological approach and my research questions. I present my distinct contribution to knowledge and consider its relevance and meaning for child sexual exploitation practice and policy. This conclusion is divided into three sections, each corresponding to one of the original research questions.

Part one considers evidence for the inclusion and influence of young people in decision-making within professional support for child sexual exploitation. It concludes that in this context children's participation rights are an overlooked priority, attended to in inconsistent and largely superficial ways.

In part two I consider the meaning that young people themselves give to active participation within sexual exploitation services. It begins by arguing that young people's perspectives on sexual exploitation support, though rarely allowed to influence practice, provide invaluable insights into the efficacy and appropriateness of existing provision. Considering their viewpoint acknowledges the contested meaning of 'authentic participation' and offers a context specific definition rooted in young people's own descriptions of a desire for status; influence, dialogue and control. This looks beyond an understanding of participation solely in terms of involvement in decision-making, recognising a need to counter the multiple ways in which the experience of being a sexual exploitation service user reproduces existing hierarchies and experiences of powerlessness.

Finally in part three I present evidence of why attending to these issues is critical to promoting young people's safety and well being. I argue that failing to attend to sexual exploitation service users' needs for choice, status and influence reduces their engagement with support and ultimately increases their risk. I argue that exploring young

people's own narratives about decisions to circumvent professional support elucidates the rational and protective motivations behind them, recognising their agency as a resource rather than a problem. This challenges traditional understandings of such decisions, and related behaviour, as deviant or irrational. Subsequently I argue that the authority to care for young people affected by sexual exploitation is derived not just from those managing services or developing policy, but also from young people themselves. This is great!

10.2 Key findings theme 1: Participation – an overlooked priority

At the outset of this study I presented evidence from literature alluding to polarised approaches to child protection and participation with victims of child sexual exploitation. The analysis of interviews from young people and practitioners strongly supported this picture. It demonstrated that children's participation in sexual exploitation services is often tokenistic, fragmented and dependent upon individual workers. From the analysis I propose children's participation is undermined or overlooked in this area for three reasons:

- **a failure to fully articulate the meaning and value of children's participation in relevant policy and guidance** (reflecting in part a weak commitment to upholding participation in this context)

- **a failure to conceptualise participation as an integrated, value based approach to work,** and

- **an emphasis on the minimisation of risk** in responses to individuals affected by child sexual exploitation, **which overlooks a parallel need to focus on opportunity, resilience and young people's futures**.

In addition the process of interviewing young people itself provides a powerful demonstration of the value of service user perspectives as a vital source of learning about the efficacy and limitations of services. These narratives provide unique insights into the experience and impact of being a recipient of welfare and particular sensitivities relating to support for sexual exploitation.

Overall young people's narratives depict deeply polarised experiences of involvement in sexual exploitation support, ranging from being informed and involved in decision-making, to being excluded and discredited by professionals acting to protect them. This appears true within a range of aspects of care, from initial referral through ongoing patterns of information sharing, care planning meetings and investigative processes. Evidence of strikingly similar experiences and concerns were raised across a small but diverse

sample of CSE service users. This in turn strengthens evidence for an overarching failure to integrate participatory approaches within staff development and across service provision.

In relation to referral pathways I identify two contrasting types of experiences. On the one hand there are those in which young people's engagement with services framed them as subjective, reflexive and agentic beings. Engagement in these instances was generally voluntary and is characterised by choice and self-representation. On the other hand, experiences are presented in which young people describe themselves lacking choices about whether and how to engage and often 'passed on' between multiple services without real knowledge or understanding of the processes and organisations involved with their care. Descriptions of these experiences portray them as deeply objectifying, highlighting the inherent difficulty of adopting a service user identity. These narratives provide an important reminder that while services are primarily viewed by professionals as solutions to a problem, service engagement *itself* remains highly problematic for many young people – associated with loss, a lack of control, stigma and fear (*chapter five*).

Young people also contrasted services in which they perceived choices about the pace of work and about when things were discussed, with those where they felt pressured to disclose before they were ready to do so. Additionally they suggested that a professional focus on young people's past and risk taking may narrow opportunities to consider young people's strengths or future plans (*chapter six*).

Similarly polarised experiences were revealed in relation to formal decision-making processes and information management. Multi-agency 'sexual exploitation meetings' were described by both young people and practitioners as both inclusive and exclusive spaces which can promote or limit young people's meaningful participation. Where young people were excluded or their participation was poorly conceived there was evidence that meetings compounded young people's sense of stigma and reinforced existing relations of power and powerlessness. Importantly these stories demonstrate how young people's meaningful participation is not just about presence and physical inclusion but about support, respect and cultivating service users' own contributions to their safety and wellbeing (*chapter seven and nine*). They highlight the need for professionals seeking to involve young people to address the multiple 'dimensions' of power, exercised within relations of professional care (Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 2003; Cornwall, 2004) and to consider the role of advocacy as a means of brokering these relationships.

Likewise descriptions of how professionals share young people's personal information provided striking evidence of how young people's participation rights and needs are

overlooked. These accounts illustrate the failure of some professionals to acknowledge children as stakeholders in key aspects of their care *(chapter seven)*. This picture was supported by interviews with professionals who acknowledged both the sensitivities around these issues and their own lack of trust in particular services' abilities to deal with confidential information appropriately *(chapter nine)*. I argue that instances where personal information was shared without service users' knowledge or consent act as critical signifiers to young people about their status as service users: indicating a lack of respect, and undermining them as stakeholders in their own care and protection. In addition these experiences, where information is not managed appropriately, may also result in young people facing additional risks through stigma, trauma, conflict, and in some cases threats to their physical safety *(chapter eight)*.

There are examples where young people and practitioners describe work which adhered to more recognisable images of 'participation work', understood as involvement in service governance and delivery. These opportunities are clearly significant and valuable to those they involved. I propose that they support a significant shift in service users' identities from being *recipients* of care to *contributors*. As noted in both sets of interviews these were usually either one-off or time limited initiatives which figured in a minority of young people's experiences of care (*chapter six).*

Despite the adoption of principles of participation within policy and guidance it is evident that these have failed to be embedded systematically in sexual exploitation practice. Both sets of interviews sugggest that dominant conceptions of both childhood, and sexually exploited children, continue to influence whether and how they are included or excluded in decisions about their care. This supports findings from existing literature suggesting that social care professionals' attitudes towards vulnerable children often become ensnared in a simple dichotomy based on their own constructions of childhood (Munro, 2011). All too often in these accounts children are objectified and framed as dependent, incompetent or untrustworthy (Schofield and Thorburn, 1995; Trinder, 1997:301; Shemmings, 2000; Thomas, 2000; Munro, 2011). When these ideas are coupled with dominant discourse of risk and victimhood in relation to child sexual exploitation it would appear to further justify young people's exclusion from decision-making processes.

Where children's 'authentic participation' is apparent, in both stories of voluntary and statutory services, it appears to rest on a number of factors: the degree to which young people are respected as partners within the process; practitioners' own sensitivity to issues of power within professional caring relationships; and responses that apply a commitment to children's active involvement across all aspects of services. Evidence for such approaches was rare across interview narratives in this study.

10.3 Key findings theme 2: Articulating a need for status, dialogue, control and influence

One aim of my research was to consider the meaning and significance of participation rights for young people themselves within sexual exploitation services. This was also rooted in a desire to look beyond a concern with the principle of participation solely in terms of service governance and representation, and explore it in relation to the day to day experience of receiving support. In addressing these mutually supportive aims, a distinct and tangible definition of children's participation emerges, rooted in the narratives of young people. This is described in terms of opportunities for young people to access **status, influence, dialogue,** and maintain a sense of **control** in their experiences of care[103]. The identification of these priorities further evidenced the value of listening closely to young people's own perspectives. In particular service users' insights and particular sensitivities exposed a range of subtle signifiers of power embedded in the language and behaviours of professionals and service delivery.

These concerns cut across service user descriptions of accessing support (*chapter five)*: the analysis of the value base that emerged from this (*chapter six)*; and accounts of information sharing and meetings (*chapter seven*). Several practitioners also remarked on the importance of these concepts, recognising their relationship to their own ability to build trust with young people.

In terms of **status**, I propose that alongside the challenge for young people of dealing with risk or exploitation, adopting the role of service user itself can also be a marginalising experience. Although engagement with services enables young people's access to advice and support, it is also almost invariably associated with some elements of risk, loss and stigma. Upon engaging with services young people are simultaneously forced to inhabit intersecting and contradictory identities of victim, service user, and agent. In addition, they are encouraged to renounce aspects of their lives that though clearly problematic were described as serving a range of needs (for risk, excitement, affection, fun, attention, to be desired and to be consequential).

Several interviewees articulated an experience of being 'othered' within the context of welfare, where their sense of difference and alienation was emphasised through disjuncture between how they view themselves and how they perceive professionals to

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[103] The related concepts of **choice** and **self-representation** were also highlighted but were framed as facilitating young people's access to status, influence and control, rather than being ends in themselves.

view them. Their narratives demonstrate how 'the practice of 'othering' is antithetical to promoting agency' (Jeffrey, 2011:71) and help to explain young people's ambivalence towards services: providing them with much needed support while reinforcing their sense of powerlessness.

Meanwhile young people's associated concerns with exerting **influence** align to opportunities for choice and the degree to which they can affect change within decision-making processes. A range of experiences through which service users were enabled or prevented from influencing decisions about support were described. Key opportunities for young people included chances to represent themselves directly in decision-making processes; being informed about and managing to negotiate *what* and *how* information was shared and *with whom*; participation in wider service development; and engagement in relationships in which their strengths and resilience were recognised. Influence was also associated with aspects of reciprocity in relationships with professionals which went beyond formal and strictly bounded roles.

Dialogue is another critical concept that young people repeatedly emphasised. I propose that dialogical rather than didactic approaches respond effectively to the disjuncture between young people and professional's accounts of risk, crucially signifying respect for young people's perspectives even where these differ significantly from those of professionals. Through processes of *negotiating narratives* about young people's exposure to risk and exploitation, alternative and challenging perspectives were shared without building hierarchies of truth which systematically dismiss young people's choices about how to represent themselves.

In addition practitioners' interviews highlight how dialogue is associated with facilitating young people's own critical *reflection skills* and *knowledge* to enable their meaningful involvement in protective choices. These ideas align closely to practices advocated by youth work (Jeffs and Smith, 2008), and Freirian notions of empowerment (1970; 1973), supporting young people to be able to claim or assert their own rights to protection and participation.

Finally the associated concept of **control** appears as a cross cutting theme throughout all young people's discussions of care. I propose that in the context of child sexual exploitation services, control has particular significance due to both its self-evident relationship to participation and empowerment and its relevance to dynamics of child sexual exploitation. I argue that a concern with responding to the control and coercion of perpetrators in sexual exploitation literature has unfortunately narrowed the space to consider young people's own needs to exert autonomy and agency.

Young people's own discussions about control began in their descriptions of what it meant to engage with sexual exploitation services and to 'become' a service user. Throughout young people's testimonies, their desires for control overwhelmingly rested on concerns about being informed, self-representation and being given opportunities for influence; rather than wanting a desire for total control or independence. Indeed when considering the place of 'control' in young people's narratives it is important to recognise that they did not wish to see professional decision-making or support abrogated. There is no suggestion here of over-simplified notions that young people always know what is best for themselves. Repeatedly young people acknowledge their need for professional support, their understanding of why information was shared and the benefits of professional advice on influencing their changing perspectives on risk. What their concerns focus on was the terms under which such processes were undertaken.

Perhaps the most significant finding about young people's involvement in services builds on this concern with control and relates to the parallel between the dynamics of professional care and aspects of exploitative relationships. These parallels were drawn both consciously, when young people explain their difficulties in trusting adults, and were implied, in young people's descriptions of feeling like they were 'being serviced'[104], or of the controlling or humiliating nature of support. While critical differences in intent divide these two sets of relationship, dynamics that occur deliberately within abusive relationships can be seen here in professional carelessness, indiscretion or poor practice. Furthermore, the ethical distinctions that divide these two sets of behaviour are clearly not always perceptible to young people.

This finding was further supported by comments from several practitioners who noted a need for their relationships with young people to model significantly different dynamics to those experienced by young people with their abusers. Such comments bring to light the particular salience of issues of participation for this cohort. It echoes messages from existing research about the dangers of services reflecting and reinforcing the limited choices in young people's lives (Brown, 2006). Finding ways to work with young people that attend to the issues of participation, through facilitating opportunities to maximise their status, influence, involvement in dialogue and control, appear to be critical when addressing existing relationships defined by patterns of domination and subordination.

10.4 Key findings theme 3: Participation: a route to safety?

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[104] Phoebe, 17 yrs – See page 178 for full quote

In this final section I argue that when young people's 'participation' and involvement in decision-making were not facilitated through legitimised means 'within the system', their choice and control were asserted outwith it. This contention was also supported by interviews with several practitioners who asserted a need to maintain young people's sense of ownership over support as a strategy for maintaining their engagement with safeguarding processes. Such narratives support evidence for the mutuality and indivisibility of children's participation and protection rights (Lansdown, 2012).

When young people had experiences of services in which control was lost; their status undermined; or opportunities for choice and influence denied, they described employing a range of approaches to resist interventions. These demonstrations of agency support Giddens' contention that individuals maintain transformative capacities to act upon the very structures which simultaneously constrain or even form them (1991). Young service users are engaged in ongoing recursive relationships – which though not always conscious or rational – see them influencing the structures of welfare and safeguarding which aim to support them.

I have noted how service users' choices to disengage from support, are often interpreted as irrational, deviant, or ill-informed. Indeed we cannot deny that these demonstrations of agency may be self-defeating, potentially exacerbating young people's ongoing exposure to risk and abuse. One response, suggested by practitioners' interviews, is an attempt to control or minimise opportunities for young people's influence amid assumptions about their limited competence or rationality. An alternative perspective, in keeping with Giddens' structuration theory, recognises that young people will retain the capacity to exert influence and create change no matter what their circumstances. Therefore rather than disregard the complex framework of constraints imposed by structural oppression and biography this approach acknowledges and chooses to work alongside them. It enables young people to be actively engaged with decision-making even when their perceptions and choices are at odds with the professionals charged with keeping them safe. This approach identifies young people's agency (in all its forms) and considers it (in all its forms) as a resource rather than a problem. Young people thus become partners *in* (rather than simply recipients *of*) safeguarding and protection, and interventions happen *with* rather than being done *to* young people. The alternative, I argue, is to adopt an approach which young people don't feel part of and potentially encourages them to navigate risks alone.

In addition and more importantly I argue that there is evidence from the narrative analysis of a need to reinterpret young people's 'irrational' or seemingly 'self-defeating choices', recognising they have a basis in rational and protective aspirations. The findings chapters

have shown how sexually exploited young people's decisions to share details about risks or abuse, and engage with services, are set against valid fears about the subsequent loss of control that results from these processes. When young people are considering their own needs for support it would appear that they are involved in complex decision-making processes about the balance of harm that results not only from their relationships with perpetrators, and from taking 'risks' but also from their interactions with professionals. In line with Ungar's constructivist approach to resilience (2004) these findings provide a reinterpretation young people's seemingly 'rebellious' or 'illogical' decisions to reject support, demonstrating that they are often attempts to avoid the humiliation, stigma and shame that young people anticipate or have hitherto experienced when engaging with support.

These findings both highlight the value of attending closely to service user perspectives and reveal a need to adopt approaches that integrate active participation as a central principle of practice. Such an approach asserts that services derive key aspects of their legitimacy and authority to care from young people themselves. The ability of professionals and services to protect young people affected by sexual exploitation is therefore contingent on the degree to which they involve young people in decision-making about their care from referral, assessment, planning and all other aspects of support. Professionals much recognise young people as vital partners within safeguarding *and* seek to minimise the sense of powerlessness implicit within so many experiences of care. It is clear that such approaches will deepen trust, further service user engagement and subsequently maximise young people's safety. Rather than opposing paternalistic approaches to protection these narratives highlight how participation and empowerment are necessary and fundamental conditions of a protective service, especially for those considered most marginalised and vulnerable.

Chapter 11: Recommendations for practice:

In this final chapter I consider potential implications of the thesis for developing policy and practice. While recognising that the small-scale nature of the research limits its applicability I propose that the in-depth nature of analysis, its focus on practice and the resonance of findings with existing literature justify a consideration of the possible relevance of this thesis to wider sexual exploitation provision.

11.1 Implications for practice

1. Conceptualising safeguarding of sexually exploited young people as an active partnership

In this thesis I argue for approaches which explicitly state, understand and position young people as *active partners* within processes of safeguarding. While recognising that the language of partnership is partially integrated into child protection policy discourses, I argue that there is an ongoing lack of clarity about its meaning that currently inhibits its full realisation. In addition I suggest that the language of 'partners' rather than 'participants' implies an active rather than passive status that may promote more authentic participation. The use of the term 'active' aligns to calls within participation literature for children's 'active citizenship' conceived as a step beyond a focus on simply listening and giving children a say (Woodhead, 2010:xxii).

The findings from this thesis suggest that safeguarding sexually exploited young people should be understood as something undertaken *with* and not *for* young people. This seeks to move beyond an understanding of young people's involvement in their care simply in terms of entitlement. Instead young people's active participation is proposed as the critical basis for achieving the intended outcomes of policies and services– to protect young people and facilitate their transitions to healthy adulthood. The findings also indicate that the self determinism of young people, which some practitioners suggest minimises their ability to safeguard adolescents or victims of sexual exploitation (Rees et al., 2010; Jago et al. 2011) could be recognised as an important resource. This is supported by recognition that many of young people's seemingly 'resistant' behaviours may be driven by the same desire to promote wellbeing that underpins practitioners' endeavours. I propose that such a perspective should be embedded within all relevant professional training (more details of which are provided below).

Framing young people as active partners in safeguarding rejects an approach to participation as a box to be ticked, or as an additional aspect of care; an 'add on' or luxury, which though desired may not always get prioritised. Rather I argue that young people's input should be seen as the foundation for safety, realising the mutuality of young people's rights to participation and protection. In this account participation and empowerment are not only *objects of* the realisation of young people's rights but also *the means* through which they are achieved and authority to protect *is derived from* children rather than *asserted over them.*

My contention is also that children's engagement in a safeguarding partnership should not be conceived in overly simplistic or indistinct forms. Rather a commitment to enabling young people's meaningful partnership in sexual exploitation services would recognise the multi-dimensional nature of this endeavour building on observations by Thomas (2000). This could systematically consider facilitating and evaluating opportunities to promote young people's *choices, empowerment, dialogue, self-representation, status, influence* and *control* as a means of fostering their engagement in this partnership*.*

Similarly I am not suggesting that young people and professionals bring equal types of knowledge, expertise and capabilities to the relationship. This does not mean that professionals' roles, rights and sanctions are abrogated or that very real needs and dependencies of young people affected by sexual exploitation can be overlooked. Framing safeguarding as a partnership would accept that young people and adults adopt different roles. Young people's contributions need to be differentiated by their own changing circumstances: facilitating young people's fullest involvement while recognising factors that constrain them. It also recognises that there are circumstances where specific decisions may be taken without a young person's input, but that such processes benefit from both transparency and possibilities for young people to re-negotiate decisions at a later date. Ultimately such an approach aims to respond to calls to 'build children's own capacities to take responsibility for the exercise of their rights while not exposing them to unnecessary risk or excessive expectations' (Santos-Pais, 2005).

2. Embedding knowledge about the meaning, value and delivery of participatory practices when responding to sexual exploitation, within all relevant training, guidance and monitoring processes

It was evident from many interviews that some individual project workers have developed a range of innovative and creative approaches to involving young people sensitively, safely and meaningfully in their sexual exploitation support. Unfortunately this knowledge appears to be held and applied inconsistently. Similarly there is evidence of a broad spectrum of understanding about the meaning and value of children's participation rights

within this context. In response to this it is vital that knowledge about the meaning, value and delivery of participatory practices is systematically integrated into all core safeguarding training for a range of professionals, challenging the piecemeal and inconsistent application of these principles to date.

Key professionals for whom such training should be prioritised (and integrated into professional development) include police, social care professionals, health workers, youth workers, youth justice workers and other LSCB staff. In addition it should be provided for those involved in investigation and prosecutions involving young people as victims or witnesses (CPS staff, lawyers, judiciary and victim support). Training should address professionals' understanding of both children's rights and the legislative frameworks which uphold them; the relationship between protective and participatory rights; and the role of participatory practices in challenging discrimination, inequality, oppression and abuse. In addition training should address the specific application of these principles into processes of assessment, planning, information sharing, direct support and investigative processes. Integrating existing practitioner expertise and examples of good practice into training could support the replication of effective models or participatory practice that are appropriate and specific to victims of child sexual exploitation.

It is recommended that embedding these principles and their application into training, should be upheld through inclusion in relevant government guidance and professional development curricula, and supported by integration into relevant Ofsted inspection regimes and serious case review processes. The successful implementation of all other recommendations is understood to be dependent on this.

3. For local LSCB's and children's service commissioners to retain and resource specialist sexual exploitation services based on voluntary engagement and youth work principles

Findings throughout this thesis suggest a need to uphold and develop approaches which prioritise voluntary engagement and youth work principles in the provision of services to support victims of child sexual exploitation. Within this study the element of choice underpinning young people's initial and ongoing interface with services appeared to be vital for those whose lives have been characterised by relationships of dominance and control. Evidence here suggests that the provision of safeguarding, using these approaches offered flexibility to respond to young people's own needs; advocacy to uphold young people's rights; and opportunities for support that were not perceived to undermine young people's status or identity in the same way as many statutory interventions. Within this study examples of support characterised in this way were cited by young people as the most meaningful, protective and transformative. This supports

existing findings about the important role of the voluntary sector in supporting victims of child sexual exploitation (Scott and Skidmore, 2006; DCSF, 2009). At a time when statutory youth work is both under threat and undervalued, and voluntary sector services are struggling to survive[105], specific recognition of the need to retain such approaches appears vital. The closure and cuts to several voluntary sector sexual exploitation services suggests that even amidst a current swell of commitment to respond to child sexual exploitation, the aspects of a response that young people themselves most value remain vulnerable.

4. Incorporating a commitment to identifying young people's strengths within safeguarding processes alongside a focus on minimising risk and addressing deficits.

Throughout this thesis young people expressed sensitivity to perceptions that their identity was framed predominantly by risk, victimisation or deviance. Allied to this there was evidence that chances for young people to gain new skills, access new opportunities, and develop their strengths were highly valued. Recognition and nurturing of young people's resilience and opportunities appeared to strengthen their transitions to adulthood and contribute to their sense of self worth. While such an approach characterises much of the work that is currently done by specialist sexual exploitation workers there is a tendency for this work to be undervalued or seen as an add-on to 'core' intervention. Incorporating a formal acknowledgement of young people's strengths into all assessments and decision-making processes (and related training procedures), to supplement assessments of risk, would be one step towards embedding this as central to interventions.

5. Incorporating young people's service user experience and values into training and service development, where possible through direct involvement.

In recent years public responses to child sexual exploitation have been led by leading children's charities (e.g. Barnardos, NSPCC, The Children's Society); government departments (e.g. DCSF/ DoE, Home Office); police organisations (e.g. ACPO, CEOP), campaigning organisations (e.g. ECPAT, NWG, PACE) research organisations and the media. Within some of these endeavours significant attempts have been made to secure the voices of children and young people (Pearce et al. 2002; CEOP, 2010; Jago et al., 2011). However where present, these 'voices' often (and understandably) exist as an

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[105] At least one of the specialist voluntary sector services highlighted in this study by young people as providing them with vital support has subsequently closed due to funding restraints.

adjunct to the thrust of policy level messages. Alternatively where children's and young people's perspectives are placed at the heart of research literature they tend to be drawn upon to highlight the horrors and trauma of abuse and exploitation. In these instances young people's voices present a powerful and emotive tool – but one which draws solely on their experience of risk and victimisation. The findings from this research demonstrate the importance of looking beyond young people's deficits and identities as victims, to engage them on the basis of their broader skills and expertise. The process of undertaking this research has, I hope, highlighted the potential for young people to engage in critical and thoughtful reflection about the services and individuals who support them. It argues that practice may benefit from listening deeply and directly to young people, recognising that they continue to see and know things we as adults or professionals do not.

This evidences the value of integrating 'end user' viewpoints at the heart of all relevant staff training and development: asking young people for their insights into service delivery; learning from their resilience and recovery; inviting them to support other young people's trajectories into positive adulthood and enabling them to adopt new roles as contributors to, as well as recipients of, services. One obvious means of addressing this would be creating development opportunities for ex-service users to enable their direct involvement in the design, delivery and evaluation of training. In addition, the findings suggest the value of the systematic integration of participatory service user consultation into ongoing service evaluation and development. Those developing staff training and development material could similarly consider a range of ways to enable service users to influence its content. Ideally all young people's contributions to service delivery should be supported by appropriate training, mentoring, accreditation, and where appropriate opportunities for paid employment.

6. Formalising young people's inclusion in all sexual exploitation strategy and review meetings to support their meaningful involvement in care planning and information sharing.

As noted in chapters seven and nine, there are currently isolated examples of best practice in relation to sexually exploited young people's involvement in meetings. This suggests that there is value in sharing this learning to support the adoption of such practice across all LSCB sexual exploitation multi-agency meetings. Unlike in mainstream child protection guidance there is no clarity about the need for children's representation in sexual exploitation review and planning meetings (DCSF,2009). The findings from this thesis suggest that young people benefit from formal involvement but that meaningful participation requires a consideration of multiple factors that support or inhibit active service user engagement. This may include addressing questions about the preparation,

time, space, agenda, chairperson and attendees of all meetings. In particular it means ensuring that attention is given to developing and managing a culture conducive to mutual respect, non-adversarial communication and the avoidance of blame of, or judgement against young people within meetings. Interviews with practitioners suggests that such an approach requires additional support and training for professionals to enable them to successfully engage young people in multi-agency meetings with confidence and sensitivity. Any approach would also require support for young people to input into meetings in their absence and receive follow up support. Where there is a need to share third party information between professional attendees, this should be fully explained to young people (including the reasons why) and time set aside at the end of meetings for this to happen.

7. Placing the development of trusting, consistent and supportive relationships between young witnesses and professionals as the foundation of investigative work and maintaining a commitment to supporting young people's sense of control over the process.

Although not focused on in detail in this study, where mentioned, young people's experiences of investigative processes and prosecutions relating to their exploitation stood out as deeply troubling and traumatic experiences. This supported evidence from previous research (CEOP, 2010; WWFU, 2011). However, there was also evidence provided by two young people in this study of the potential for some of these challenges to be minimised through supportive work with a specialist worker they knew and trusted. The findings suggest that, where possible, effective support to young people involves promoting their sense of control over the investigative process and ensuring that intensive partnership work takes place at every stage. This should happen through sensitive and ongoing information sharing between young people, police and parents and carers. Additional opportunities are required to share learning between services about effective participation of young people in Achieving Best Evidence interviews; preparation for court cases; facilitating access to specialist therapeutic support (that accords with legal restrictions); and intensive support throughout and following legal proceedings.

8. Providing clarity about, and consistent management of, young people's personal information, in line with safeguarding best practice.

Findings from this thesis highlight how, despite the availability of existing protocols relating to information management (Data Protection Act, 1998; Working Together, 2006) there remain significant discrepancies between how individual workers and different services approach information sharing and how the concept of confidentiality is interpreted. Alongside evidence from young people and practitioners' testimonies, examples of this were also witnessed during the course of undertaking this research. This

evidence strongly suggests the need for additional guidance and training for professionals to assist appropriate and consistent information management i.e. that which promotes a young person's safety while simultaneously recognising young people's rights to privacy and, where possible, their access to information about when and how information is shared.

It would appear that an important related consideration is how service users are informed about confidentiality and information sharing when first engaging with services. This could include providing clarity to young people about their rights, and recourse where these are overlooked. Exploring these scenarios with young people may lead to practitioners experiencing greater freedom to share information – albeit agreed to and with authority derived from young people themselves.

9. Recognising the limitations to some young people's willingness to engage with, or ability to access services, and delivering harm minimisation approaches where appropriate.

Chapter eight identified instances where young people refused to engage with professional support or advice at a certain moment in time. While the message to all young people must be to encourage them to seek help from professional services, there must also be an acknowledgement that for some young people this may not always feel feasible. In these circumstances, supporting young people's own protective strategies could mean delivering harm-minimisation advice focusing on minimising the risks posed to young people by going missing, maintaining their contact with exploitative individuals or other behaviours.

10. Considering the potential for explicitly empowering practices: that engage young people in discussions about the wider nature of oppression as a means of protection from child sexual exploitation.

Alongside calls to support adults to involve children in decision-making and promote service user influence there would also appear to be value in nurturing the development of practices that engage young people in considering the wider systems of oppression and structural inequalities that frame their lives and are intimately related to their abuse. This draw on antecedents in youth and community work (Freire, 1970; 1973; Davies, 2005; Ledwith 2005; 2007; Jeffs and Smith, 2008) and explore ways of openly discussing power with children and young people. Such approaches lend themselves to supplementing individualised case work with group work and ensure that the dominance of individualised accounts of abuse are contextualised within their wider structural meanings. This is potentially challenging work which requires careful development but may hold significant benefits for young people.

11.2 Concluding comments

Throughout this thesis I have argued that, ideally, young people's safeguarding should be recognised as a collaborative and discursive process, building on key principles of participatory youth work which seek to engage young people in voluntary relationships and support them to engage in ongoing processes of self-reflection. Practitioners must be able to challenge the views of young people, particularly when they are known to facilitate their ongoing exploitation, but time and respect must equally be given to young people's perspectives, unpicking the rationale behind the stories that young people choose to tell about their own risk. Within such a dialogical approach, narratives are recognised as negotiated, contestable and subject to shift. The hierarchies of truth or authenticity which so often undermine young people's own perspectives and cause them to resist support, may thus be avoided.

It follows from this that there is a need to look beyond a consideration of children's participation solely based on a perspective of entitlement but also to recognise it as critical to enhancing the welfare of the most vulnerable children and young people, understanding their agency as a resource rather than a problem. The thesis concludes by suggesting that the ability of support services to protect young people affected by sexual exploitation is contingent on the degree to which young people are involved in decision-making about their care. Rather than standing in opposition to paternalistic approaches to protection, the narratives suggest that participation and empowerment are necessary conditions of a protective service, especially one hoping to challenge the exclusion and discrimination of those considered most marginalized or vulnerable.

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Appendices

The 'How we see it'? Research Project

My name is **Camille Warrington** and I am a student at the University of Bedfordshire. I'm doing a research project for my studies to find out more about what young people think about the services or help that they receive.

I want to learn about the chances young people like you get to **make decisions, have your say** and **make choices**. I think the best way to learn about this is to speak to young people. I want to do this project to make sure young people's views are heard by people who are able to **improve sexual exploitation services for young people**.

What will taking part in the project involve?

If you want to take part in the project I will come to your project to meet you and explain a bit more. If you still want to take part we will arrange a time for me to meet up at your project to help me to learn about you views and experiences.

When we meet I will talk to you about what you think of your project and the support that you've got. If you would rather not talk to me but would still like to take part in the project we can discuss other ways you could share your view – this might be through writing something down or drawing. This meeting will take between 30 minutes – 1 hour and we'll have a break to have a drink and a snack - but if you want to leave before then - that is fine.

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If I take part will the things I say be kept confidential?

When we meet I will ask you if it is OK for me to record what you say, either by writing notes or using a recorder. If I use things you say in my project report I will make sure nobody can tell who has said these things. I will ask you to choose a new name and I will use this when I write your comments. I will keep all my notes and the tape recordings in a locked drawer in my office. Nobody else can see these and I won't keep these after the project is over. If you decide that you don't want me to use the things you've said I will remove them from the project. If you want I will show you what I've written so you can check what that you're happy.

The only time I will tell someone what you have said is if you tell me something that makes me worried about your safety or someone else's safety. If this does happen I will try to tell you straight away that I have to report this to someone else who might be able to help you and how I will do this.

Do I have to take part?

You only have to take part if you want to. If you do take part you can change your mind and leave at any time. It won't affect your involvement with your project

How do I get involved if I want to?

If you want to take part, tell your worker at your project. I can then arrange a time to come and visit you at the project and tell you more about it. Or if you want to talk to me about it or ask questions you can call or text me on:

☎ **07500 255 700** (I can call you straight back)

If at any time during the project you have any worries or questions about the project or want to make a complaint about me you can either speak to your project worker OR call my manager Jenny Pearce ☎ **01234 400 400**.

"How we see it" Project Consent Form

To be read to all participants

- This is to confirm that I _____ have read, or been read, the information sheet about the '**How we see it**' research project.

- I understand that taking part in this project will involve taking part in an interview and/ or discussion exercise with Camille Warrington. She will ask me questions about support for young people affected by sexual exploitation.

- I understand that taking part is voluntary and I can leave the project at any time without giving a reason and that I can ask for my contributions to be taken out of the project.

- If I agree, interviews and discussions will be tape recorded to ensure a good record of what I say.

- I understand that the information I share will be stored in a locked drawer.

- I understand that what I say in the interview or discussion is confidential unless I say anything that makes Camille worried about my safety or another young person's safety. If that happens Camille will report this to someone who might be able to help. She will tell me if this is going to happen.

- I understand that everything I say will be "anonymised". This means my name and anything else which identifies me is removed from it. If any of my comments are used in the final report nobody will be able to tell that I said them. None of this information will be kept after the end of the project.

- I understand that at the end of the project Camille Warrington will come and tell me about her final report and give me an information leaflet about it.

I (name) _____ agree to take part in the "How we see it" project

Signed _____ Date _____

Contact details (if you want Camille to keep in touch) _____

Keep a copy of this form and if you have any questions or are concerned about anything in the project you can:

1) Speak to your project worker (*insert name and contact no.*) _____

2) Call me on ☎ **07500 255 700** (I will call you straight back)

3) Call my manager Jenny Pearce on ☎ 01234 400 400

Information for project workers:

How we see it project - interviews with young people

My name is **Camille Warrington** and I am a student at the University of Bedfordshire. I'm doing a research project for my professional doctorate to find out more about the opportunities sexually exploited young people have to participate in decisions made about them and in influencing the projects and services they are involved with. I'm really keen to hear young people's direct views because I think we can learn a lot from them.

What does the project involve?

I am hoping to interview 15 young people and 10 practitioners. Young people who wish to get involved will be invited to attend one or two sessions with me. During these sessions I will invite them to take part in a semi-structured interview. If they would rather they can also write something down or draw something.

If you know young people who may be interested in taking part, or would consider taking part yourself I will come to visit you and your colleagues, or speak on the phone to explain more about the project. I can show you the questions that I plan to ask.

If you identify young people who may be interested in taking part I would ask you to speak to young people about the project and show them and talk through the young people's information sheet. If young people are interested and you feel it could be a positive experience for them, I will then arrange a time to come and talk to them at the project.

Any young person who takes part will be asked to sign a consent form and I will explain that they can leave the project at any time and ask for their comments to be removed. I will fully explain issues around confidentiality and recording of the discussions.

All young people who take part will receive a thank you card and a certificate. I will also commit to return to visit all those who took part to give them verbal and written feedback.

Safeguarding Issues

I hope that young people who take part will find it fun and interesting. The research should not be stressful or upsetting for young people to take part in but I do understand that in some instances it may be. If young people are referred to take part in the research, I would ask that there is a named individual to whom I can refer them for additional support or a debrief. I will also provide all young people with details of various places where they can get additional support. This research has been approved by the University of Bedfordshire's ethics committee and the chair of the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People. I have a full enhanced CRB check.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

All information shared during interviews and discussion groups will be confidential except in the case where information is shared that makes me concerned for the welfare of a young person. Under these circumstances I will explain to the interviewee what information I'm going to share and who with and local child protection procedures will be followed. Every participant (both adults and young people) will be reminded of this prior to every interview or discussion which takes place.

In the event that you have any concerns or questions about the way in which the research is conducted or my behaviour you can contact my supervisor Professor Jenny Pearce whose details are outlined at the bottom of this sheet.

Communication and feedback to project staff

Prior to undertaking the research I will speak with project staff to answer any questions about the project and familiarise myself with your local safeguarding and complaints procedures. This will be a chance for us to discuss how and when I will share information and procedures to follow if a participant makes disclosures or voices complaints either about me or anything else.

If you have further questions or concerns about the project please contact me or my supervisor,

Camille Warrington, c/o University of Bedfordshire, Park Square, ,Luton, LU 3JU. Email: Camille.warrington@beds.ac.uk / ☎ **07500 255 700 / 01582 743026**

Supervisor: Professor Jenny Pearce, Director of The Institute of Applied Social Research c/o University of Bedfordshire, Park Square, ,Luton, LU 3JU. Email: jenny.pearce@beds.ac.uk / ☎ **01234 400 400**

"How we see it" Parental Consent form for parents

- This is to confirm that I _____ have read, or been read, the information sheet about the '**How we see it'** research project.

- I consent to _____*(name of young person)* taking part in this project and understand it will involve them taking part in an interview with Camille Warrington about how services can support young people who have been sexually exploited.

- I understand that taking part in the research is entirely voluntary and _____ ____*(name of young person)* can leave the project at any time without giving a reason and can ask for their contributions to be removed from the project.

- I understand that if my son/ daughter agrees, interviews and discussions will be tape recorded to ensure an accurate record of what they say.

- I understand that the information I share will be confidential and stored securely. Only Camille Warrington and her supervisor Professor Jenny Pearce will have access to this information.

- I understand that anything my son/ daughter _____ *(name of young person)* says will be anonymised, which means their name and anything which identifies them will be removed. None of this information will be kept after the end of the project.

As parent or carer of_____ *(name of young person)* I agree to let them take part in the "How we see it" project if they choose to do so.

Signed (parent/ carer)_____Date _____

Address/ Contact details

_____

_____

_____

_____

Keep a copy of this form and if you have any questions or are concerned about anything in the project you can:

  Speak to project worker (*insert name and contact no.)* _____

  Call me on ☎ **07500 255 700** (I will call you straight back)

  Call my manager Jenny Pearce on ☎ 01234 400 400

Appendix 5: Practitioners information form

Information for project workers:

How we see it project - interviews with practitioners

I am inviting you to take part in an interview for my research exploring young people's involvement in decision making and service development.

What would your involvement mean?

I am hoping to interview approximately ten project workers for my project. Project workers will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview lasting between thirty to ninety mins. The interview will focus on questions about how young people may or may not be involved in decision making about the services and support they receive. I am interested in:

- The type of support that you feel is effective and valuable when working with sexually exploited young people

- What are the challenges and barriers to involving young people in decision making

- When and why it is appropriate to involve young people,

- When it is not appropriate to do so

During the interview

If you are willing to undertake an interview with me we will arrange a time and place convenient to you for the interview to take place. Before an interview I will ask you to sign a consent form confirming your understanding of the project and agreement to your interview data to be used in the project. Consent to take part in the project is voluntary and you can choose to stop the interview at any time. Interviews will take between 45 and 90 minutes and will be digitally recorded to allow me to accurately recall what you say. All information shared during interviews will be anonymised. This means I will remove all details that would allow either you or the project you work in to be identified from any information I collect. Interviews will then be transcribed. Both the digital recordings and transcriptions will be stored in password protected files and locked drawers. Only myself and my supervisor (Professor Jenny Pearce) will have access to this information. During

the final stages of my research I will feedback the results and my conclusions to all those who have taken part.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

I hope that taking part in the interview will be a pleasant and interesting process. I do not anticipate that the research would be stressful or upsetting. This research has been approved by the University of Bedfordshire's ethics committee and the chair of the NWG. I have a full enhanced CRB check.

All information shared during interviews will be confidential except in the case where information is shared that makes me concerned for the welfare of a young person. Under these circumstances I would discuss with you what information I have to share and who with and local child protection procedures will be followed. Every participant will be reminded of this prior to every interview or discussion which takes place.

In the event that you have any concerns or questions about the way in which the research is conducted or my behaviour you can contact my supervisor Professor Jenny Pearce whose details are outlined at the bottom of this sheet.

If you have further questions or concerns about the project please contact me or my supervisor,

Camille Warrington, c/o University of Bedfordshire, Park Square, ,Luton, LU 3JU. Email: Camille.warrington@beds.ac.uk / ☎ **07500 255 700 / 01582 743026**

Supervisor: Professor Jenny Pearce, Director of The Institute of Applied Social Research c/o University of Bedfordshire, Park Square, ,Luton, LU 3JU. Email: jenny.pearce@beds.ac.uk / ☎ **01234 400 400**

How we see it project – practitioners consent form

- This is to confirm that I _____ have read, or been read, the information sheet about the '**How we see it'** research project.

- I understand that taking part in this project will involve taking part in an interview with Camille Warrington about how we can support young people who have been sexually exploited.

- I understand that taking part is entirely voluntary and I can leave the project at any time without giving a reason and can ask for my contributions to be taken out of the project.

- If I agree, interviews and discussions will be tape recorded to ensure an accurate record of what I say.

- I understand that the information I share will be confidential and stored securely. Only Camille Warrington and her supervisor Professor Jenny Pearce will have access to this information.

- I understand that everything I say will be anonymised. None of this information will be kept after the end of the project.

- I understand that at the end of the project Camille Warrington will provide feedback to me about her findings in both written and verbal form.

I (name) _____ agree to take part in the "How we see it" project

Signed _____

Date _____

Address/ Contact details

_____

_____

Keep a copy of this form and if you have any questions or are concerned about anything in the project you can:

4) Speak to your project worker (*insert name and contact no.)* _____
5) Call me on ☎ **07500 255 700** (I will call you straight back)

Call my manager Jenny Pearce on ☎ 01234 400 400

How we see it: Statement of Ethical Practice

Please note this research project has been approved by the University of Bedfordshire and Institute of Applied Social Research ethics committee

Receiving information about the project

Project workers will receive information about the project initial via email. Young people will be initially informed about the project via project workers with whom they have existing relationships.

I will arrange an initial meeting with all project workers who feel that they may be interested in supporting the project or taking part. During this meeting I will provide detailed information both verbally and in written format explaining the project and safeguarding procedures. All projects with workers and young people who are interested taking part will receive an information sheet informing them about the project, the different ways in which they can participate, why they might like to take part and clarity about what they can expect to get out of it. In the case of young people, those who are s interested in taking part after receiving this information will then be invited to meet with me for an informal chat to check they understand the project and what it may mean for them to be involved, what they may gain from it and any potential risks (i.e. feeling upset) and how this would be dealt with. They will be invited to have another project worker with them at this meeting if they request this.

Enabling participation

I am committed to ensuring to, where practically possible, that young people who wish to take part are enabled to do so by a commitment to the following: flexibility of time and place where interviews take place; willingness for young people to undertake interviews or research activities either in the presence of a worker or another individual of their choosing; flexibility in the length of time the interview take; opportunities for young people to contribute through alternative means (writing or drawing); a commitment to finding resources to enable a non English speaker to receive translation support if they wish to take part; a recognition that the potential participants of this project are likely to have many competing priorities and issues which may mean that they may cancel or not turn up to prearranged meetings. Where the latter scenario happens and a potential participant would still like to take part an alternative time will be arranged.

Project workers who agree to give an interview will be offered choice of the time and location in which the interview takes places in order to make their involvement as convenient as possible.

Gaining informed consent

Consent will be required from all potential participants wishing to take part. Young people will be asked to sign the consent form following the initial meeting with myself. The form will be read out to them and if they are happy to take part they will be asked to sign this.

During the process of gaining consent it will be stressed to participants (both verbally and in the form) that consent is voluntary and that they can choose to leave the project at any time, for whatever (or no) reason. If they choose to leave the project they can choose that all their contributions to the project are removed and destroyed.

A young person's capacity to provide consent will be assessed in partnership with project workers. Only if they are assessed to be Gillick Competent will they be asked for their consent and involvement in the project.

For the purposes of this project consent is viewed as an ongoing process. At the end of every data collection event I will check with them if they still consent to being involved and their input being used.

All participants will be reminded of the limits of confidentiality (both verbally and in writing on the form) i.e. that if they share anything which makes me (the researcher) seriously concerned for their safety or the safety of someone else I will have to share this information with their worker, but that if I have to do this I will tell them that this is what I am going to do and I will explain what is going to happen.

Gatekeepers

Initial contact with potential participants will be made via information emailed out to projects. This will be sent to projects who are currently members of the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (hereafter referred to as NWG) via the mailing list which is managed by me (the researcher). Please note that information about these projects is also available publicly via the NWG website.

Projects who are interested in taking part (or supporting young people to take part) will only be contacted if they respond to this initial information. Once they have responded I will provide them with more detailed information via a face to face meeting and information sheets for workers and young people.

Relationship with researchers existing employment/ potential conflicts of interests

I am based at the University of Bedfordshire and holds a post as the Project Coordinator of the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG). In this role the project coordinator does not provide any individual case work and is not responsible for the care and welfare of any young people. In addition the project coordinator does not manage any of the project workers who may take part. The NWG are seen as the chief collaborating establishment. The NWG's collaboration will be solely as a source of identifying potential projects and participants who may wish to participate in the project. It is likely that those participating in the project will be likely to be members of the NWG network of practitioners. It will be made clear that details of involvement in this research project will not be shared with any other members or management of the NWG (this is with the exception of Professor Jenny Pearce who is acting as supervisor and is on the management board of the NWG).

A written agreement will be made with the Chair of the National Working Group to outline in writing agreement to the project coordinator of the NWG acting as researcher on this project and using NWG contacts to recruit participants for this project. In addition it will be agreed that in my role as researcher I will feedback the findings from this research to all members of the NWG - both through the existing mailing list AND through a presentation to members if requested.

Sensitive topics and potential distress to participants

The research primarily focuses on young people's experience of gaining support and interventions relating to their sexual exploitation. The primary questions for young people will focus on their views and experiences of services and not their personal experiences of sexual exploitation.

Participants will be contacted via specialist sexual exploitation projects through which they will be accessing support. It is anticipated that the research could be sensitive for some participants. The project will attempt to minimise the chance of any stress or discomfort to participants through the following actions:

The use of gatekeepers (project workers) will enable identification of young people for whom this may not be an appropriate opportunity. Those for whom project workers feel are likely to suffer undue distress by involvement in the process will not be approached or invited to take part.

All interviews or sessions will begin with a discussion about confidentiality, feeling safe and consent. Reassurance will be given to children that they do not have to talk about anything they don't feel comfortable with and opportunities will be given to them to 'opt out' of any activities, leave or take a break whenever they wish. In addition at the end of each interview, or research activity, some time (up to 15 minutes) will be set aside to check that the young person is feeling okay and ask them if they would like to take some time to speak with their worker. It will be made clear that as a researcher I cannot offer any counselling, advice or therapeutic support to participants, however I will be committed to responding with compassion and listening to any needs the young person may share and help to signpost them to other forms of support. As outlined above, all participants will have named project worker who has agreed to offer follow up support if required. Information will only be passed to this worker if the young person has requested that I do so (with the exception of serious concerns about their safety – see above).

As far as possible all questions will be designed to offer them the opportunity to respond without referencing their personal experiences. This will be done through encouraging the use of talking in the third person or about service users generally. Though this will elicit their perspectives, it does not require sharing personal details. I will take care not to overburden participants with requests for too much information, regularly checking out whether the participant is happy to continue with the session.

Despite these safeguards it is acknowledged that the nature of some of the information shared by participants is likely to be sensitive and does have the potential to evoke painful memories and emotional distress. While this potential scenario cannot be eliminated completely, I will ensure that any signs of distress are responded to by inviting the participant to pause and consider if they want to continue with the interview or research activity. As an experienced and qualified youth worker I will draw upon my skills to assess this and respond accordingly.

Overall it is also hoped that participant's will find involvement in the project to be a positive experience. Their advice and opinions will be genuinely valued. The sessions will be a chance for young people to express their views in a safe, non-stigmatising and enjoyable way. The research findings will be used to promote understanding, influence the development of services and raise awareness of children's experiences of sexual exploitation.

Questions for practitioners will focus on: the type of support that they feel is effective and valuable when working with sexually exploited young people and the challenges and value to involving young people in decision making. It is not envisaged that practitioners participation in interviews will be in any way distressing.

Potential disclosures of information about child abuse or neglect

There is a significant possibility that children will disclose information that they or another child are experiencing (or at significant risk of) physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect. In this scenario I will draw upon my child protection training and prior experience at dealing with disclosures of child abuse and neglect. It is essential that prior to undertaking work I have copies of the relevant project AND local authority child protection guidance and have the appropriate contact names and telephone numbers.

At the beginning of every session I will discuss confidentiality issues with the participant and explain that "whatever you tell me will be confidential unless you tell me that you or someone else is in immediate danger of serious harm". If a child does disclose information it is essential to work with children in a way that is respectful of whatever information they have shared by listening carefully to them, reassuring them and talking to them about what action will be taken. It will be explained that the information cannot be kept 'secret' and that local child protection guidelines will be followed. The designated child protection officer for the project will be contacted by myself (the researcher) as soon as possible. A written record of the child's account using their own words where possible and including everything said, heard or witnesses should be recorded as soon as possible and passed onto the child protection officer. There is a moral responsibility to ensure that following disclosure children and young people are adequately supported. The ongoing involvement of the project will ensure this support (an ability to provide this being a precondition to my involvement with young people from a project). It will be my responsibility to ensure that support has been provided and if for any reason this does not appear to be the case to highlight this to project workers and those responsible for safeguarding. If for any reason it is not appropriate for a young person to access additional support from their project I will have information on other local and national support services and will support the child to access these - I will inform the project I am doing so in this case. All safeguarding issues and concerns that arise during the project will be recorded and shared with my supervisors. I have an enhanced CRB check.

There is also an unlikely scenario that projects workers who are interviewed will disclose something that makes me concerned for the welfare of a child. In this event the same child protection procedures will be followed, as outlined above. I will explain to the interviewee that I need to share this information and who with and if appropriate work with them to ensure an accurate record of what was told to me is recorded and passed on to the appropriate person.

Disclosures of illegal involvement

It is not envisaged that details of any illegal involvement of participants will be elicited during the interviews. However it is acknowledged that some information pertaining to their illegal involvement may arise during interviews. If this is the case they will be reminded (by me) that if they disclose something that makes me concerned for their or someone else's safety I will have to pass this on (see above for fuller outline).

Disclosures about bad or dangerous practice

Disclosures may be made by young people about bad or unsafe practice. In this scenario the response will depend upon the nature of the disclosure. If information shared highlights possible risks to the safety or young people due to the nature of practice it will be explained to the participant that I will need to share this information (in accordance with child protection procedures). If the disclosure does not relate to a young person being in serious harm I will ask the young person whether they would like me to share the information and we will discuss options i.e. the potential for me to raise their concerns while maintaining their anonymity or the potential for them and/or me to utilise the organisations own complaints procedure for young people. In addition I will share this information with my supervisor (who is independent of the project) and a decision will be reach about how best to proceed or feed this information back.

Support to young people following the research

Young people who participate will be invited to take part in the research on the understanding that there is a named project worker with whom they can speak should anything arise for them after the interview.

Research can only take place with young people who are connected to a project that has agreed to provide this additional support and follow up support should it prove necessary.

All participants will also be provided with a list of telephone numbers and local projects that may be able to help them.

Management and maintaining confidentiality of records

Data gathered during fieldwork will be gathered in one of several ways depending on the consent provided by participants. It will either be i) recorded and then transcribed ii) notes made during an interview and then typed up iii) notes made after an interview and then typed up.

When all interviews or research activities are typed up ALL information which may potential identify a participant will be removed (this will include changing names, project names, place names AND additional details that could be likely to identify them). Original tapes and notes will be stored in a locked cabinet (in room C425 at the University of Bedfordshire) to which access is restricted to Camille Warrington (myself) and my supervisor, Professor Jenny Pearce. Any other files holding date about the project and participants will be password protected, and if stored on a memory stick kept in a locked drawer. These will be stored until the end of the Professional Doctorate study and then destroyed. All young people will be given a pseudonym which will be used to identify their data and credit their quotes when used in the final report.

If the services of an external transcriber are employed then they will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that they are bound not to share any details of the transcript that is completed (Appendix 8).

Incentives to participants

As a thank you to the projects and young people for their participation I will send a thank you card and a feedback sheet to all participants. Young people will also be given a certificate to acknowledge their contributions.

Feedback to participants

I will make a commitment to meet with all participants (both young people and project workers) prior to the final submission of the report to feedback the key findings and record their responses to this. This will be done via a verbal presentation. In addition a simple information summary sheet will also be made available at the end of the project.

Appendix 8: Service user topic guide

The following topic guide is a list of broad areas to cover with possible follow up questions. It is not anticipated all areas will necessarily be covered in each interview.

1. **Introductions**

2. **Initial engagement with service:** how did you come to get involved with service? Was it your choice? Understanding of why you were attending service? How would you describe project to another young person?

3. **Understanding of the term 'sexual exploitation'**: yes/no? Who and how explained? Is it a useful term to describe young people's experiences? Do adults and children see these issues differently? If so how? If you had to explain "sexual exploitation" to another young person in your own words, what would you say?

4. **Experiences of accessing support in specialist sexual exploitation service:** What is it like to receive support from this project? What do you do? How often? Where? What type of help do you think young people who have been sexually exploited need? What do you value about support you get? What makes a good project worker? Aspects of support that 'made a difference'? Anything difficult or less positive?

5. **Experiences of other forms of support:** What have been their experiences of using other services – positive? Difficult or less positive?

6. **Involvement in decisions about care:** If and how are they involved in decisions about keeping themselves safe? Situations where young people need support to make positive decisions? Times when seen things differently to project workers?

7. **Involvement in meetings about sexual exploitation or risk of sexual exploitation:** *Lots of young people who are at risk of, or affected by sexual exploitation are invited to attend formal meetings about their care with professionals* – have they ever been part of these? If so can they explain experience? Did they get to represent their views? How could they make these meetings better?

8. **Information management and disclosure:** *We know that it is really hard for young people who've been sexually exploited to tell someone about what is happening?* Why do they think this is? Who are they most likely to talk to? What makes it easier/ harder. What do they understand about how their information is shared within services? What does confidentiality mean?

9. **Participation in service governance or participation initiatives:** Experiences of being asked to help develop or improve services? Experiences of working with other service users?

10. **Moving on: Aspects of care that made a significant difference?**

11. **Finishing up:** Anything else they would like to share? Thanks. Reminder of confidentiality. Opportunity for questions. Contact details

Appendix 9: Practitioner topic guide

The following topic guide is a list of broad areas to cover with possible follow up questions. It is not anticipated all areas will necessarily be covered in each interview.

1. **Introduction to their project**

2. **Attitudes toward sexually exploited young people's involvement in decision making?** Understanding of 'participation' in this context. Whether and when young people's participation in decision-making was appropriate?

3. **If and how they involved service users in their care:** Who determines? To what extent? In what forms? Involvement in formal decision-making process (i.e. multi-agency meetings)

4. **Information sharing and management:** approach to information management and sharing. Approaches to involving young people in decisions about information management and sharing.

5. **Challenges and barriers to implementing participatory practice within sexual exploitation services**

6. **Opportunities and benefits of implementing participatory practice with sexual exploitation services**

Appendix 10: NWG agreement to contact practitioners

Agreement between Camille Warrington (University of Bedfordshire)

and

National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People

This is to confirm that the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (hereafter referred to as the NWG) will allow Camille Warrington (in her capacity as a Professional Doctorate student) to approach members of the NWG network to take part in her research project titled: "How we see it".

It is understood that Camille Warrington will make it clear when approaching members of the NWG network for this purpose that she is undertaking this project in her capacity as a Professional Doctorate student at the University of Bedfordshire and not in her capacity as Project Coordinator for the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People.

It is understood that none of the data collected for this research project will be disclosed to any other members of the NWG network, other than Professor Jenny Pearce in her capacity as supervisor to Camille Warrington.

Camille Warrington commits to feeding back the final results from her research to members of the network, both in person and via the email list.

Signed   Date

Sheila Taylor: Chair of NWG and Chief Executive, Safe and Sound Derby