

# **Professor Jenny J Pearce**

Agency Responses to Sexually  
Exploited Children and Young People:  
Developing Participatory Practice

[Jenny.Pearce@beds.ac.uk](mailto:Jenny.Pearce@beds.ac.uk)

<http://www.beds.ac.uk/iasr/nwg>

# **Sexual exploitation**

Keep listening to the young person's voice

however upsetting or difficult

that might be



in love,

sleaze

NO

choice

relationship, ed in an unhappy

Try me for FREE



'He smashed the pan on Simon's head'



'You were thrusting a knife into my son's chest'



Could you love me?



DANGEROUS DESIRE

## **Defining child sexual exploitation**

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' (eg food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities

## **Defining child sexual exploitation**

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

## **Young people's definition of sexual exploitation**

- 'Why shouldn't I'
- 'its someone taking a part of you' (aged 15)
- 'He told me he'd bash up my face.' (aged 12)
- 'I was sexually abused by my dad, so it makes no difference if I do it with strangers, at least I get paid.' (aged 15)
- 'I was promised some designer trainers and jeans.' (aged 12)
- 'I'd be walking to and from school and he'd make me get in and then drive me off to parks, back streets or a flat. I couldn't tell my family as it would bring such shame on my family, and he knew that.' (aged 14)
- 'He said no one else would ever want me.' (aged 13)
- 'He said he'd buy me a teddy.' (aged 12)

## What we know about the victims of child sexual exploitation

- **age** – often begins at age 12 or 13
- **gender** – girls and boys
- **ethnicity** – affects all communities
- **vulnerability** – particularly young people in and leaving care, young people with drug and alcohol problems, young people who go missing, and those with learning disabilities

## ***1885 Pall Mall Gazette***

The 'social evil' of 1885 was the presence of an organised traffic and the widespread existence of juvenile prostitution in London

## Prevalence

*Young women and young men from all communities are sexually exploited*

2002 LA ACPC review: average of 19 young people **known** to be sexually exploited (selling sex) (Swann and Balding 2002)

2002 Two local authorities identified 269 sexually exploited young people (Pearce 2002/2007)

## Prevalence

2004/5 Barnardos UK services worked with 2,075 sexually exploited young people (Scott and Skidmore 2006)

Nov 2009 to Nov 2010 NWG projects worked with 4206 referrals: 11% were young men.

## **Gang affected neighbourhoods Pearce and Pitts 2011**

- London Metropolitan police reported 93 gang rapes in 2008/9 (compared to 36 in 2003/4)
- 36% victims in 2008 were aged 15 or under
- 42% of suspects were under 19 in 2008 compared to 38% in 2003
- Proportion of white victims of reported gang rapes fell from 69% in 1998/99 to 50% in 2008. During same time black victims rose from 17% to 34%

## Defining trafficking

### International and 'internal/domestic' Trafficking

- Trafficking of children and YP from abroad into, within and out of UK
  - Trafficking of UK nationals within and out of UK
- 'Internal trafficking' can be of any child for any reason

**But**, for the purpose of sexual exploitation there is specific UK legislation (Sexual Offences Act 2003)

## Young people's definition

*“ Have I ever heard a young person use the word ‘trafficked’? No, never!”*

*‘But they will explicitly say things like “I have been sold” or “I was given to so and so” and “I was made to work long hours without rest and with little food.”*

*‘She was very annoyed that somebody had betrayed her trust and made to work. ... But the words ‘trafficking’ and ‘exploitation’ are not words that most 14 year olds would use on a day-to-day basis.’*

# Thomas

- *Thomas, 16-year-old white British boy, history of neglect, had been abused by his uncle and cousin. Mother was unable to care for him; Number of placement breakdowns*
- *Involved with older men : suspicion he was given money for sex. Problems with alcohol and cannabis use. Often went missing: returned with large amounts of cash, mobile phones and expensive items. He didn't want to talk about what was happening*
- *Overseas travel of between two and six weeks was arranged by men friends. Alongside concerns over sexual exploitation, suspicions that he might have been involved with drug traffickers.*

## Thomas continued

- *Journeys often staggered: he was sent to a country, refused entry, received instructions to move to another country where given further tickets for travel.*
- *The Sexual Exploitation Unit became involved. Took his passport to prevent him leaving the country*
- *Thomas did not see himself as being trafficked. When asked if he thought that he was at risk and he asked ‘why social worker worried about me now when they didn’t care that my uncle abused me’.*

## **The University of Bedfordshire National Review of LSCB's**

- Implementation of the DCSF Guidance 2009
- Looking at 'dual role': protecting and prosecuting
- Create data monitoring system
- Findings to be launched in autumn 2011

## **Themes from interim report**

### LSCB's need

- a protocol/set of procedures
- a sub committee that focuses on sexual exploitation
- a service delivery strategy to work with young people.

## Interim findings

- Interim findings : under 30% of LSCBs report they are meeting the dual aims.
- There are 29 sex ex coordinators in post: less than a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of LSCBs
- Current protocols in less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  LSCBs
- LSCBs and community safety strategies rarely collaborate
- LSCB = focus child protection, CS= focus gangs

## **‘child’ Protection fails teenagers**

Local Safeguarding Children Boards do not safeguard teenagers : the priority is on safeguarding younger children, usually within the family.

## Report to Children's Interagency Group (CIAG)

Most safeguarding boards fail to recognise that young people need to be treated differently

*‘ adolescents are a high risk group. There is a danger that we focus too much on the risk to babies and very young children... a number of services for young people, including youth offending services, tend to come into effect “after the horse has bolted” ’*

(Kim Bromley-Derry, chair of CIAG in Children and young people now, Dec 09)

## Do we like 'difficult' young people?

- Demonization of young people: fear, loathing and negative images (Coleman 2010)
  - Practitioner's described sexually exploited children and young people as :
    - *Lying*
    - *Uncooperative*
    - *Difficult to engage*
    - *Unreliable*
    - *Aggressive and abusive*
- (Pearce 2009)

## **The Munro enquiry?**

BASW's chief executive has urged Barnardo's to submit its hard-hitting report on sexual grooming (Puppet on a string) to the Munro enquiry into child protection.

# Participation

- Council of Europe Campaign to stop sexual violence against children (2010)
- Launch in Rome 2010
- Young people's role in the campaign

## **Two main aims of campaign**

- to support the signature, ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse;
- to raise public awareness on the extent of sexual violence within the child's circle of trust, how to empower children to break the silence and to find the ways to prevent and report sexual abuse of children.

## **Rappertour's report**

- Diversity of forms of abuse : different forms of sexual violence, prevalence within all communities
- Recognition of needs of all age groups: older young people can be victims of abuse
- Child perpetrators are often child victims
- UNCRC overrides variations in age of consent

[http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/News/Vienna/Affiche\\_Vienna.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/News/Vienna/Affiche_Vienna.pdf)

## Young People's involvement

- ***Not*** victim led: YP as active agents: ***Youth advisors***
- Risk assessment: joint fears and expectations
- Scrap books and photo albums
- The presentation: only a very small part
- Process not outcome
- Debriefing and moving on: sustainable involvement

## **Participation**

### **Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' (1997)**

- 8. Young people-initiate and adults share in decision making**
- 7. Young people lead and initiate action**
- 6. Adult initiated, shared decisions with young people**
- 5. Young people are consulted and informed**
- 4. Young people are assigned and informed**
- 3. Young people tokenised**
- 2. Young people are decoration**
- 1. Young people are manipulated**

## Young people's voices

- *They lump us all together. Generalise.*
- *They think we are stupid.*
- *They talk to you like you are a baby and are quiet surprised when you show intelligence*
- *You need to educate people: there should be a course that they would be sent on*

## **Young People's voices**

- Engagement: relationships
- Expectations: penalised if not victims
- Expertise: while managing pain, anger and emotion
- Time and effort
- What they can do:
  - training,
  - art, drama and on line exhibitions,
  - mentoring,
  - conference presentations

## Why: Outcomes for young people

- *I have a silver and a gold award*
- *I spoke to 150 people and they clapped*
- *I have changed*
- *I developed skills in using computers*
- *I wrote a book*
- *My CV has improved*
- *I am going on to work as a freelance trainer*
- ***I made a social worker and teacher understand: at last!***

## What Works

- Safeguarding Children Boards: Sexual Exploitation Sub Committee with police presence and a dedicated (multi agency) service for sexually exploited young people
- Services targeted to three levels of risk (prevent, divert, treat)
- Supported, specialist foster care and therapeutic supported residential care for Looked After Children (who are disproportionately represented)

## **What to do**

- Increase 'joined-up' awareness of safeguarding young people: Adolescent Intimate Partner violence/ y.p. in gang affected neighbourhoods
- Locate capacity to talk and manage change within lifespan (developmental) stage and social/economic context
- Support interventions that increase participation and resilience: strengths not deficit model
- Time aware, therapeutic outreach services

**The National Working Group For  
Sexually Exploited Children and  
Young People**



[Jenny.Pearce@beds.ac.uk](mailto:Jenny.Pearce@beds.ac.uk)

<http://www.jennypearce.info>