

Working with children and young people who experience running away and child sexual exploitation:

An evidence-based guide for practitioners

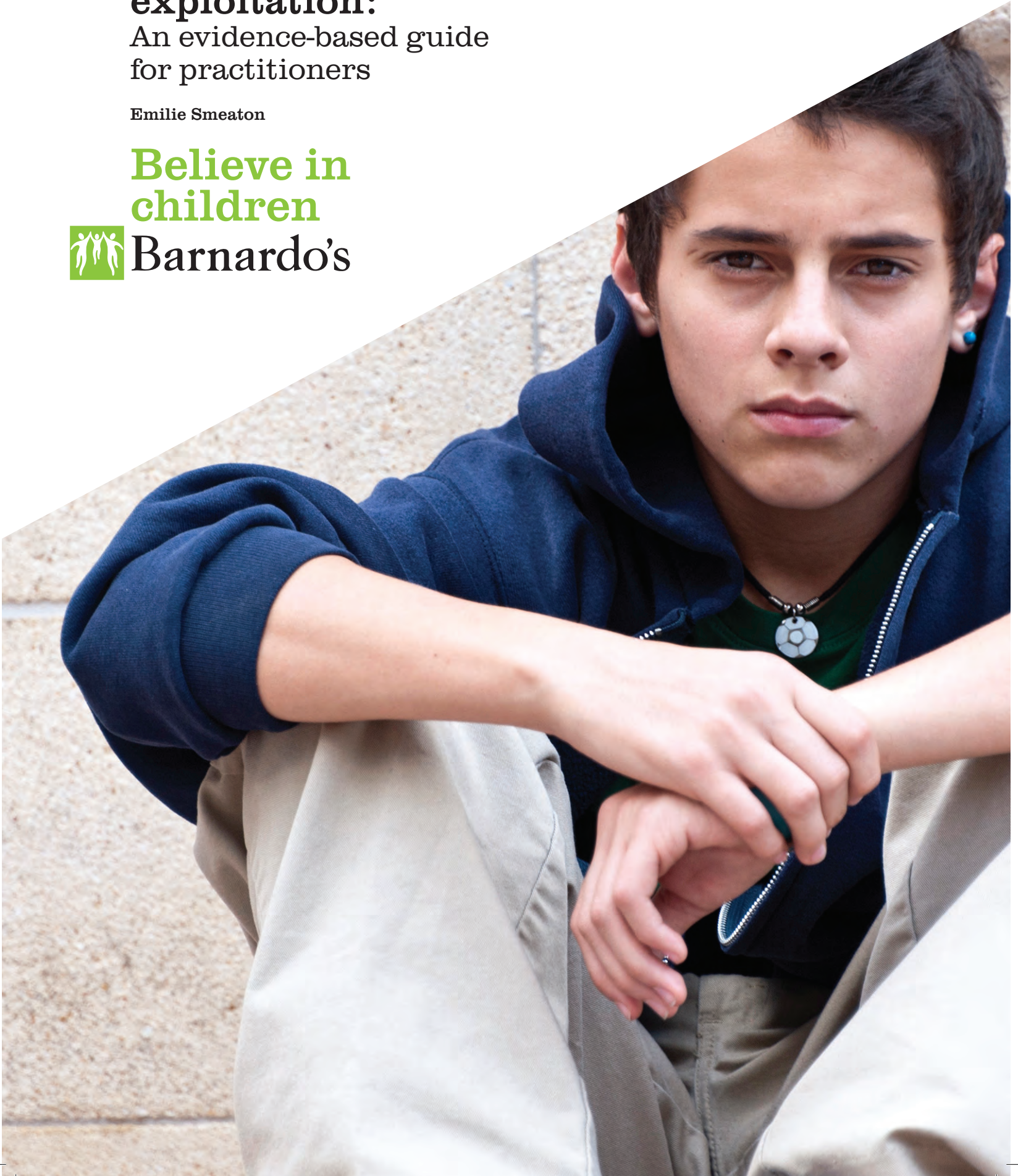
Emilie Smeaton

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Emilie Smeaton

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Further information

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Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide practitioners working with children and young people with learning from an action research study addressing the relationship between running away and child sexual exploitation (CSE) so that, where appropriate, this learning can be incorporated into direct practice.

The action research study which produced the learning presented in this guide was funded by Comic Relief and undertaken in partnership by Barnardo's and Paradigm Research. The aims of this research were to:

- collect data relating to the experiences of children and young people under the age of 16 who experience both running away and CSE
- collect data from practitioners and projects working with children and young people who experience both running away and CSE
- produce an evidence-base that outlines the relationship between running away and CSE and makes recommendations to support policy and practice responses to children and young people who experience both running away and CSE
- work with key national agencies to ensure evidence-based findings are incorporated into national policy and practice.

The research and information presented in this guide is based upon a consultation with children and young people who experienced both running away and CSE while under the age of 16 and a consultation with professionals working directly with this group of children and young people.

Forty-one children and young people from a range of backgrounds participated in face-to-face semi-structured interviews presented by the researcher in an informal manner

while focusing upon a specific line of enquiry that allowed for children and young people to discuss issues and experiences that were unique or important to them. Children and young people told stories of their lives and experiences and these are presented in this report in their own words. While practitioners are used to dealing with the reality of the lives of children and young people who experience both running away and CSE, the children and young people's words can be challenging.

There were two stages to the consultation with professionals. The first stage was a survey questionnaire which was completed by staff at 28 projects. The second stage was telephone interviews with 27 professionals who work with children and young people who experience both running away and CSE.

The full research report can be found at: www.barnardos.org.uk/15505_cse_running_from_hate_21_web.pdf

1.1 Definitions used in the research and guide

The term 'running away' is used to describe children and young people either leaving home or care, staying away without permission or being forced to leave home by parents and carers. The term is often used to describe being away from home or care for one night or more.

It is important to note that while some children and young people are reported as missing to the police by parents and carers when they run away, it is not appropriate to use the terms 'running away' and 'going missing' interchangeably. The majority of children and young people who run away are not reported as missing to the police (Rees

and Lee, 2005; Smeaton and Rees, 2005)¹ and many children and young people who are reported as missing do not fit the definition of running away, such as those who are abducted, get lost or are routinely reported as missing when returning late to a care placement.

The National Working Group (NWG) has developed the following definition of CSE which is also used in government guidance to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation (DCSF, 2009)²:

‘The sexual exploitation of children and young people under the age of 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 the 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.’

(National Working Group for sexually exploited children and young people, 2008)³

The research and this guide addresses running away and CSE among children and young people while under the age of 16.

In England a child is defined as ‘anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday’ (DCSF, 2010)⁴; and this is also reflected in the definition under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the UK ratified in 1991. Those participating in the research were aged 14 and above, and throughout this guide we have used the terminology ‘young person’ and ‘young people’ to recognise the particular age and vulnerabilities of this group of adolescents, although they are still children.

1.2 The structure of the guide for practitioners

The guide takes the following structure:

- section two indicates the prevalence of young people under the age of 16 who experience both running away and CSE
- section three outlines the different forms that the relationship between running away and CSE can take
- section four addresses diversity and running away
- section five highlights issues to consider to achieve positive outcomes with young people who experience running away and CSE
- section six presents issues that should be incorporated into direct practice with young people who experience running away and CSE
- section seven provides a range of resources addressing running away and/or CSE.

At the end of each section, there are a number of questions for practitioners to consider in relation to their practice.

1 Rees, G; Lee, J (2005) *Still Running II*. The Children’s Society, London and Smeaton, E; Rees, G (2005) *Running away in South Yorkshire*. The Children’s Society, London.

2 Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation*. DCSF, London.

3 www.nationalworkinggroup.org/who-we-are/what-is-child-sexual-exploitation 16 April 2013.

4 Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) *The Children Act (1989) Guidance and regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review*. DCSF, London.



2. Indication of prevalence of both running away and CSE

While the research is not able to provide exact representation of the extent of running away and CSE among young people under the age of 16, it is able to give some indication of prevalence. Information provided by professionals who work with young people who experience running away and/or CSE revealed differences in the proportions of young people who experience both running away and CSE:

- Projects with a focus upon working with sexually exploited young people reported that anywhere between 25-57 per cent of the young people they work with experience both running away and CSE. Some of these projects do not record information about running away so were not able to provide figures relating to what proportions of the young people they work with experience both running away and CSE.
- Projects with a focus upon working young people who run away reported that between 11-12.5 per cent of young people they work with experience both running away and CSE. Some of these projects do not record information about sexual exploitation so were not able to provide figures relating to what proportion of young people they work with experience both running away and CSE.
- Projects with a focus upon working with young people who experience running away and/or CSE reported that anywhere between 50-90 per cent of their caseload experience both running away and CSE.

2.1

Issues for practitioners to consider in their own practice

1. Does your project collect data about both running away and CSE?
2. How do the figures given for indication of prevalence of young people under the age of 16 experiencing both running away and CSE reflect your experience of prevalence?
3. Is there scope for improving collection of information about children and young people who experience both running away and CSE, and how this information can be shared to influence responses in the local area?

3. The relationship between running away and CSE

The research confirms that there is a significant proportion of young people who experience both running away and CSE. This section of the guide presents the different forms that the relationship between running away and CSE can take.

3.1 CSE following running away

In some cases, a young person starts to experience running away prior to experiencing sexual exploitation. When this is the case, the relationship between running away and CSE can take the following forms:

3.1.1 CSE as a risk of running away

Sexual exploitation is a serious risk of running away. Through the act of running away, a young person can find themselves in situations where they experience CSE:

'If you run away, there's more chance; well, you're probably going to end up in one of them situations [where sexual exploitation takes place].'

Young people who run away can be targeted for sexual exploitation by adults who take advantage of the young person's circumstances:

'It's obvious isn't it? If they [adult males] see some 15-year-old girl walking around in the middle of the night, they are going to think "well, why is she walking around in the middle of the night? No one must care about her. No one's looking for her".'

Running away can unintentionally lead a young person to be sexually exploited. Jasmine's experiences provide a stark reminder of the risk that young runaways can face:

Jasmine started to run away when she was 11 because she was so unhappy living with her aunt and cousins. On one occasion, when still 11, Jasmine ran away and was taken by an older female friend to a male's house:

'And that's when everything started to mess up like.'

Jasmine's friend was going to the male's house to meet an older male she viewed as her boyfriend. She took Jasmine with her because Jasmine had nowhere to go. Once at the older male's house, Jasmine was offered alcohol:

'I was getting more and more drunk cos', them days, I was drinking to just forget everything and all of the time I was meeting more and more people [who were] coming to the house ... and I started to feel a bit iffy and everything ... and I started to get more and more paranoid. And when I was going to leave, I dunno, something happened and I ended upstairs just getting raped. And what happened is I tried to go and couldn't go and my friend was gone. ... I tried to scream and that but they [the men who raped Jasmine] wouldn't let me and then I felt something in my arm and the next minute I was knocked out. And I woke up feeling drowsy and I was hurting; all down there [around Jasmine's vagina] I was really hurting. And I was in the bedroom with no clothes on and, I dunno like, I just didn't have any energy to go, move or anything. ... I didn't know what to do really. And one of the lads came in and gave me some food and I asked him what was going on like ... and he just laughed and closed the door and locked the door. And I couldn't even touch the food that he made me. ... When I

stood up, my legs were all numb and in pain and that. ... And later that day ... this lad came up the stairs and let himself on to me and they [the other men] all just kept doing that and I couldn't move and my legs and all that were numb and I just couldn't move. ... I did try and crawl out of the bed and that – I did fall over a few times – and I did try and get through the [bedroom] door but it was locked from the outside and I was only a kid and couldn't get it open. The windows were all blacked out so I couldn't do anything.'

Jasmine experienced further running away and CSE but was referred to a specialist CSE project and has received long-term support to enable her to move on with her life.

3.1.2 Living on the streets and experiencing CSE

The transition between making the decision to run away and ending up living on the streets can take place very quickly. In turn, living on the streets can very quickly lead to sexual exploitation. Once on the streets, becoming part of the homeless community can act as a survival strategy. However, while the homeless community can be protective towards young people who have run away, integration can also lead to CSE:

Leanne had an argument with her adopted parents and packed a bag and ran away. She initially stayed with a friend but this arrangement broke down very quickly and Leanne found herself living on the streets. Her parents made it clear to Leanne that she was welcome to return home and Leanne did spend the odd night at home but found herself wanting to leave after a night or so. Leanne survived on the street by becoming involved with a group of homeless adults:

'It was like one big family. ... We [Leanne and another young person] were like the babies of the group so everyone was around us making sure we were alright and that.'

While a number of the homeless adults were caring and protective towards Leanne, she was sexually exploited by a number of males

who used some of the homeless community to gain access to her.

When a young person runs away and has nowhere safe to go, they can often find themselves in dangerous environments, which increases their risk of CSE:

'If I hadn't left home then the things that happened to me wouldn't have happened because I would have been in a safe environment. ... If you leave home and spend time in dangerous places it is more likely that you are going to get raped and more likely that you are going to get sexually exploited.'

3.1.3 CSE as a survival strategy

A young person who runs away can find themselves being sexually exploited as part of their survival strategy to manage their circumstances. Young people may not foresee that they will be sexually exploited when they run away, or view themselves as being sexually exploited, but may find that it is something they may have to do in exchange to meet their basic needs. One professional said:

'If they've [young people] not got a roof over their head, they may end up performing some sort of sexual favour in order to have food or a roof over their head.'

In some circumstances it can be much easier for young people to manage their survival when they have run away by exchanging sex for money than trying to get hold of money in other ways. A young male who sold sex on the streets after running away said:

'If you're on the streets and you're begging for money or something like that, you're trying to hustle up a bit of money to eat, you'll be going round the less salubrious places and people will see that you're vulnerable and will see that you're desperate for money and they will offer you it [money]. ... They'll say "do you want to come into this toilet with me? I've got some money; I'll give you 20 quid". And

20 quid's very tempting when it took you all day to make a couple of quid. Twenty quid for 10 minutes is very tempting for a young person.'

3.1.4 Perpetrators exploiting the vulnerability of young people who have run away

Perpetrators of CSE can be very skilled at recognising when a young person is vulnerable. A professional said:

'Abusers see their vulnerability ... if they are straying from their parents or there is domestic conflict. ... When they're on the streets ... exploiters can pick up a young vulnerable person on their radar. [For example] A young person sat on a wall upset when they've had a row with their dad and the perpetrator moves in and 'befriends' them and, the next thing you know, they're raped. The transition can happen very quickly. ... The young person genuinely thought that person [the perpetrator] had their interest at heart.'

Young people who run away are an easy target for perpetrators of CSE. They are vulnerable because they are away from their usual environment and likely to be susceptible to being groomed because of the offers of love, affection and attention that perpetrators often present. Sometimes the fact that a young person has nowhere to go and faces the risks associated with staying out overnight means that an adult is able to exploit them as offers of a place to stay can be welcomed by young people who do not know where they will be spending the night:

'Now I get it. If kids are on the streets, if they run away or their parents kick them out, there are men out there who will take advantage of them and 'cos you've got nowhere else to go, you'll do it [have sex with them]. ... It's better than sleeping out and getting raped by someone you don't know who could do anything to you. ... There's always someone who will take advantage of you. When you're a kid, it's

hard to say no to an adult who says they want to help you and offers you a place to stay 'cos what other choice do you have?'

Young people describe how adults recognised that the young person was in a difficult situation with nowhere to go and targeted them for sexual exploitation. Some young people, who were thrown out of home by a parent or carer, found themselves being offered a place to stay by an adult who then demands that the young person carries out sexual acts with them:

When Fay was 12, her mother started throwing her out of the house and sometimes Fay had nowhere to spend the night. One evening, with nowhere to go, Fay sat on a swing in the local park worrying what she was going to do. A man who lived in the local area sat on the swing next to Fay:

'He asked me if I was alright. He could tell I was unhappy and asked me what was wrong. ... I told him me mum had said I couldn't go home that night and that I didn't know where to go. ... He knew all the right things to say: he said that he knew me brother [who was in prison] and that he [Fay's brother] wouldn't like to see me with nowhere to stay. He said he knew what it was like to be chucked out of home 'cos his dad used to do it to him and that I could stay at his house. ... I now know I was stupid to go to his house but, at the time, he seemed really nice and like he understood how I was feeling. I thought 'cos he said he was a friend of me brother's, it would be alright [to go to his house].'

The man made Fay some food and then told her that he needed something from her and forced her to have oral sex:

'Looking back on it, I didn't feel right about it but I didn't know anything [about sex] then.'

Fay continued to stay with this man when she had nowhere to stay:

'He basically told me that nothing is for nothing and that I had to pay my way in some way.'

Adult perpetrators of CSE can also befriend young people before they start to run away and

either offer the young person somewhere to stay once they start to run away or are thrown out of home or encourage them to run away from home, and stay with them.

3.1.5 **Running away to seek attention and care**

Many young people who run away to seek attention and care do so because they feel uncared for and not listened to:

'I ran away because I felt unwanted and I wanted attention.'

A young person's need to feel cared for and receive attention can lead to them being vulnerable to sexual exploitation:

'At the time, the attention made me feel good and feel like I was worth something.'

'Cos you feel like you're on your own [when feeling uncared for] so you just want somebody else there for you ... Pretty much anyone would do at that time when you feel low.'

3.1.6 **Running away and spending time with friends involved in sexual exploitation**

When a young person runs away, they may find themselves spending time with other young people involved in sexual exploitation. Spending time with these friends can, in turn, lead the young person to become sexually exploited:

'They [the friends that the young person spent time with when she ran away] like to meet them [adult males who were perpetrators of CSE] in the park or on the streets and they'd [the adult males] ask for my number and my friends would give it to them. ... My friends would then invite me to parties. ... They'd say "oh, there's this party. We're gonna have a drink and there'll be a few people there. Do you wanna come?" So

I'd go with them. ... They [the adult males] gave us alcohol and cannabis so that they could do what they wanted to us.'

3.1.7 **Running away to attend parties and be with older men**

After running away and becoming sexually exploited, young people can then start to run away with the sole purpose of attending parties with older adults, or to be with adults who are sexually exploiting them.

3.2 **Running away following CSE**

Some young people are involved in sexual exploitation before starting to run away. In these instances, the relationship between running away and CSE can take the following forms:

3.2.1 **Perpetrators of CSE encouraging young people to run away to be with them**

Professionals believe that encouraging a young person to run away can form part of the grooming process:

'It's part of the grooming process because what they [perpetrators of CSE] need to do is make that young person dependent upon them so they need to convince that young person that it's good to run away because the people who are caring for them ... don't have their [the child or young person's interest] at heart.'

Some perpetrators of CSE are aware that if a young person is missing for more than a few hours, they may be reported as missing to the police. Therefore, perpetrators may encourage the young person to run away to be with them but ensure that the young person is returned home after a few hours.

3.2.2 Running away to be with an older boyfriend or girlfriend

Some young people run away because they want to be with an adult whom they consider to be a boyfriend or girlfriend:

After running away to remove himself from his stepfather's violence, Jordon met an older male who became Jordon's boyfriend and sexually exploited him. This male used to text Jordon while he was at school and encourage him to run away so that Jordon could be with him. Jordon would run out of school and travel the 30 mile distance to the city where this older male lived. Jordon usually stayed with the older male for a couple of days, but sometimes stayed for a couple of weeks and, on one occasion, for a month.

3.2.3 Running away to meet adults for sex because of the young person's desire to have sex

Some young people run away because their experience of having sex with an older adult was very powerful and something that they wanted more of. Young males in our study said:

'When I started [having sex with older men] I was like "this is the best thing I've ever done!"'

'All my friends were just talking about it and I was doing it! It was like the best thing ever and I just wanted more and more of it.'

'When I was 14 and having sex with X [the older female], it was like nothing else I'd ever done. I just wanted to do it [have sex] all the time. None of me mates were having sex and there was I getting laid by this gorgeous girl; it was great.'

Some young males described how they actively sought sex with older men by using the Internet to meet them. After arranging to meet a man, they sometimes ran away because they wanted to have sex and enjoyed the feeling of being wanted sexually:

'I felt like just wanted in a way that I had never felt wanted before: like more of a lust than love. ... And then when I was with a guy, I felt like I was being loved in a way that I hadn't been loved by my parents and stuff. ... Like a different kind of love than what my parents gave me. ... I liked those feelings of being wanted and the sex and how it made me feel and I wanted those feelings.'

Young females also described enjoying sex with perpetrators of CSE but often this enjoyment stopped when they were coerced into doing sexual acts they did not want to do, were forced to have sex with men they did not want to have sex with and/or were hurt during sex:

'At first I did like the sex; I really liked it and I would run away to do it but then it changed and he made me do things I didn't want to do and sometimes I was hurt.'

3.2.4 Running away to escape CSE

Some young people who are sexually exploited run away to avoid further sexual exploitation because they cannot see any other way of escaping the sexual exploitation:

Shan's father internally trafficked Shan and his siblings for sexual exploitation. Shan started to exhibit problems at school and now realises that this was because of the abuse he was experiencing. He began to fight other children and generally cause problems at school. He was excluded when he was 13 and no alternative educational provision was set in place. Now that Shan was not at school, he started to spend a lot of time on the streets during the day. He met older males who were part of a gang and started to hang around with them. One of the older males said that Shan could start to make some money by doing a bit of drug running. Shan agreed.

Shan's father intensified his violence towards Shan because he didn't like Shan being out of the home so often. One day Shan overheard his father on the phone making arrangements to take Shan and his sisters somewhere and presumed this was to be sexually exploited.

Shan felt that he could bear it no longer and decided to run away. Shan did not tell anyone why he had run away or that he was being sexually exploited but said that there were problems at home. Shan was offered somewhere to stay by one of the gang members. After a week, Shan returned home. Shan's father was furious that Shan had run away. Shan thinks that this was because he had lost face with, and money, from the men who were expecting to have sex with Shan. Shan's father hit Shan across the back with a metal bar and Shan ran out of the back door never to return home again. He was 14.

Jimmy, a gay young male from the traveller community, also ran away from his family and community to escape CSE:

When Jimmy was 13, he realised he was sexually attracted to men. This troubled him as he knew that being gay would not be accepted by his family and community and that he would be expected to marry a woman and have children.

When Jimmy was 14 he got to know an older male in his mid-twenties who was the son of another traveller family on site. This man invited Jimmy to his caravan where they drank alcohol and smoked cannabis. One night the man asked Jimmy if he had ever had sex with a girl. The man made a joke about Jimmy preferring boys and then said there was nothing wrong with that. The man's response stunned Jimmy as he had not thought that there was anyone who thought that being into boys was okay. Jimmy and the older male embarked upon a sexual relationship. Jimmy was aware that he was taking great risks. At first he enjoyed the sex but then the older male's demands changed and he became violent and angry if Jimmy did not do what he wanted.

The older male took Jimmy to meet other men, outside of the traveller community, in a hotel who were expecting to have sex with Jimmy and a couple of other boys that they had brought along with them. Jimmy did not want to have sex with these men and said so. The man he had thought of as his boyfriend took Jimmy into the bathroom and said that if

Jimmy did not do what he was told, he would show his father photographs of Jimmy on his phone. The man then calmed down and told Jimmy while stroking his hair that he owed these men money and that they would harm him if Jimmy did not do what they wanted.

After being forced to have sex with a number of men, Jimmy changed. He started to get into a lot of fights and generally cause a lot of problems at home with his family. Jimmy wanted to tell someone what was going on and what was being done to him but felt trapped and that there was no one he could go to as being gay was considered to be so unacceptable. He started to have a lot of arguments with his father and his father started to be violent towards Jimmy to teach him respect. Jimmy continued to meet the man in his caravan because he was too frightened to stop doing so.

One day the man exploiting Jimmy said to Jimmy's father that he had some work that he wanted Jimmy to help him with and that Jimmy would get paid. Jimmy had a feeling what 'the work' would involve and told his father he did not want to go. His father told him not to be so stupid and to go. Jimmy could not face being forced to have sex with a number of men again and jumped out the car when they were driving through the city centre. Jimmy then did not know what to do. He was too frightened to return back home to his family and site but also knew that it would be hard to return to his community if he stayed away for too long.

Nicole's life changed when an older male relative started to sexually abuse her and invited his friends to do the same.

Nicole became very depressed and started to self harm. Nicole's relative went on a family holiday for two weeks and Nicole ran away just before he returned, as she dreaded the exploitation resuming:

'After two weeks of having a break from him, I felt like I couldn't bear it all starting again. It was the beginning of the summer holidays so I was off school and I knew he [her relative] would be round when me mam and dad were at work so the day before he came back from

holiday, I ran away. ... I planned it all out. I took some stuff with me – clothes and that – and some money that I'd saved up and I went to me friend's'.

Nicole was reported missing to the police. She returned home and, the following day, a police officer came to see her:

'The police came to speak with me and asked me why I was running away. Like I could really say "my [relative]'s making me suck his dick and his mate's dick". It just wasn't going to happen.'

Nicole continued to run away, sometimes staying with friends and sometimes staying out all night on her own or with other young people:

'I ran away so me [relative] couldn't find me and couldn't make me do all that stuff. ... There was no one to help me with it all so all I could think to do was run away and be somewhere where he [Nicole's relative] couldn't find me.'

3.2.5 Running away as a consequence of how a young person's disclosure of sexual exploitation is responded to

Young people who experience CSE can run away as a consequence of how their disclosure of sexual exploitation is responded to by professionals, parents and carers:

Lucy disclosed to the head teacher of her school that she had experienced sexual exploitation and sexual abuse from a number of males. The head teacher responded in a positive manner to Lucy but also made it clear that social care and the police had to be informed of her disclosure. When the social worker and a police officer arrived:

'The police woman acted like she had already made her judgement before she had already met me so I stood up and said "I've had enough of this" and that was the first time I ran away.'

Lucy ran away on subsequent occasions because of how her family reacted to her disclosure.

When Lauren told the policewoman about the sexual exploitation she had experienced, the policewoman responded sympathetically and said that she would have to tell Lauren's parents. Lauren was particularly worried about her father's response. While Lauren's parents did not mention to her what had happened, they did accompany her to the police station to make a statement. Lauren's perception was that her parents did not want charges pressed against the adult male who had exploited her:

'They wanted to sweep it all under the carpet and pretend it never happened.'

Lauren thinks that she became depressed after this happened and spent most of the time at home in her bedroom. She felt even more detached from her family. Her school attendance decreased as she often felt too depressed to go to school and her school grades dropped. She also felt isolated from the few friends she had. Lauren's relationship with her parents deteriorated even further:

'My dad barely looked at me never mind spoke to me. ... My mum tried to make an effort with me but I could tell she didn't know what to say or do.'

Lauren met a new group of young people who stayed out overnight and eventually ran away to be with them and escape her home situation:

'I couldn't bear being somewhere where I felt like I wasn't wanted and didn't fit. At least with these friends I felt like they wanted to talk to me and wanted to be with me.'

3.2.6 Running away because of the pressure of being part of a police operation into CSE

The stress of being part of police investigation into CSE, taking part in police interviews and fear of the court process can lead a young person to run away:

'It was just all so stressful. Being asked time and time again about the men [who had sexually exploited Tom], worrying what the court hearing was going to be like

and feeling frustrated because sometimes nothing was done about some of the men who had groomed me and could be doing the same thing to other kids. ... [When Tom ran away] I just had to get away from it so when X [name of a man Tom met online] said he would come and get me and take me to his house for the weekend, I couldn't wait to get away.'

'It was all the questions that did it [led the young person to run away during the police investigation into the CSE she had experienced]. ... Having men [male police officers] ask me all that personal stuff was really difficult. I much preferred it when it was a woman [police officer]. You don't wanna discuss stuff like that with a man when you're a girl. Some days I just couldn't take any more and I ran away to have a break from it.'

A young person can also run away after a perpetrator of CSE is released on bail:

'Just knowing he was out there and could come up to me at any minute really frightened me. ... He used to come up to me in the street and threaten me if I didn't withdraw my statement. He used to shout at me, asking me why I was making up lies about him. ... He used to get these other girls to come up to me at college and say they were going to hit me and why was I telling lies about him. ... It just all did my head in and sometimes I ran away to get away from it all.'

'I couldn't sleep thinking that I might bump into him when I was out in town or with me friends or summat so I used to run [away].'

3.3 Other factors that play a part in the relationship between running away and CSE

There are a range of other factors that can play a part in forming the relationship between running away and CSE:

3.3.1 Drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol can play an important part in the relationship between running away and CSE as substances can be used by perpetrators to entice young people to be with them and to do what they want to do with young people. Young people's need for drugs and/or alcohol can also be behind their running away and involvement in sexual exploitation:

'I didn't go for the fun or to see those people; I went for the drink and drugs ... to take like all my feelings away. ... I felt like not good enough ... and I felt depressed sometimes ... and then I started drinking more and taking more drugs.'

A young person's drug and/or alcohol use can also exacerbate the risks they face when they run away because of the danger of exchanging drugs and/or alcohol for sex.

Drugs and alcohol can of course also be used by young people to self-medicate to cope with what is happening to them. For example, when realising that they are going to be forced to have sex, the only way that young people can manage what is about to happen to them is to take a lot of alcohol and drugs.

3.3.2 The Internet

The Internet can play a significant role in the experiences of young people who experience running away and CSE. Many of the young people who participated in the research described how they met perpetrators of CSE online through Facebook, gay web chat sites and sites for those who are vulnerable due to bereavement. Perpetrators of CSE groom young people online and encourage them to run away so that the sexual exploitation can take place.

Perpetrators of CSE can be known to young people prior to online contact but can also be previously unknown to the young person.

Young people who feel isolated can use the Internet to reach out to others to alleviate their loneliness. Perpetrators of CSE can respond to

the young person and encourage them to run away to be with them:

Lucy's father moved abroad when she was a young child and Lucy did not see him often or have much contact with him. As Father's Day approached, Lucy felt sadder and sadder about her father and went on to Facebook to seek some company. She had been talking to an older male on Facebook for some time and told him how sad she felt about missing her father and about Father's Day. This male said that Lucy could spend Father's Day with him and arranged to meet her. He collected her in his car and drove her to his house where he locked her in a room and raped her before driving her home.

Gay boys and young men can use the Internet to seek potential boyfriends and find themselves groomed and encouraged to run away:

Liam is a young male with Dyspraxia who feels isolated because he is gay and does not know any other gay people and wants to have a boyfriend. Liam has used Facebook to contact men, ran away to meet them and found himself being forced to commit sexual acts he did not want to. While Liam is not allowed out on his own and has limited access to the Internet because of the risky situations he finds himself in, Liam disclosed that there was a 39-year-old male who wants to meet Liam so that he can have sex with him and watch Liam have sex with the man's friends. Liam does not understand why he is at risk from this man and thinks that he should meet him in case he can become Liam's boyfriend.

3.3.3 Parents' role in young people's running away and involvement in sexual exploitation

In some circumstances, young people's parents play a part in their child's running away and sexual exploitation. Some parents are aware of their child's intention to run away to be with an adult who is sexually exploiting them and do not do anything to prevent this from happening. Parents may also attend parties with their child to gain access to the alcohol and/or drugs available. In some

cases, it is the parent who is organising their child's sexual exploitation and they encourage their child to run away to be with the parent so that they can arrange the child's sexual exploitation in return for money.

While not having an explicit role in their child's running away and involvement in CSE, a small number of the young people's mothers sold sex which possibly led to the normalisation of exchanging sex for something. Where a young person's mother sold sex, their children also sold sex as a survival strategy:

'When I ran away when I was young, I got sexually abused [through selling sex] because my real mum, she was doing prostitution so I thought "oh, if me mam does, it must be okay" because it's normal to take after your mum, isn't it?'

3.3.4 Trust and the relationship between running away and CSE

Young people can run away because they want to find someone they can trust. Perpetrators of CSE work to make young people feel like they can trust them and use this trust to exploit the young person:

'You run away 'cos you want to trust someone and find someone to trust and then you think you've found someone to trust so you trust them and then you realise that they made you trust them so they could exploit you.'

3.3.5 The need to escape

The relationship between running away and CSE can be about the young person's need to escape:

Lucy identified that at the heart of her running away is a need to escape her daily life and all the difficulties it holds. There is a shared link with CSE, as the men Lucy is presently at risk of sexual exploitation from also offer her a means of escape as they have cars they can drive her away in and provide

her with the alcohol she so desperately craves to escape how she feels.

3.3.6 Feeling isolated

Feeling isolated can be a route into a young person's running away and CSE. For some boys and young men who are gay, the isolation they feel in relation to their sexuality can play a part:

Tom recognised that he felt isolated because he did not know anyone else who was gay and that this led to him seeking other gay males online which, in turn, was the route into being sexually exploited and running away to be with the men he met online. While his sexuality had not caused any problems with his family and some of his friends, Tom wanted to be part of a gay community:

'Because I could have talked to them about it [being gay] because the first thing I did when I was on the Internet was to talk to someone about how I felt. So if I hadn't done that, I wouldn't have got into the whole sex [ual exploitation] and running away thing. ... It escalates.'

A young person can feel isolated because of how their family responds to their disclosure of CSE:

Nicole now runs away because she cannot bear to be at home with her family because of how they responded to her sexual exploitation. Nicole feels isolated:

'I can't talk to me mam and dad about it. I've lost all me good friends so can't talk to them. There's me mates here [Nicole gestures to the street in the town centre] but I don't talk to them about this stuff [being sexually exploited]. I run away here [to the streets] to get away from it.'

3.3.7 Experiencing running away and CSE and becoming a sex worker

The link between running away, experiencing CSE and becoming a sex worker was identified by both professionals and young people.

Alongside young people who exchange sex for money and are abused by adults in this way while they were still children, some young people who experienced both running away and CSE while under the age of 16 self-identified as becoming a 'sex worker' aged 16 or older. One young man said:

'If you've done it [had sex] for somewhere to stay, you might as well do it for money – it's the same thing really as you're having sex so that you can survive.'

A professional working with young people explained:

'Some of these young people [those who experience running away and CSE] ... as they get older are moving towards that [becoming a sex worker]. It's a very short distance to travel really from having a gift, mobile phones, food to actually charging. ... The other issues are around the alcohol and substance misuse which is the other common factor between sexual exploitation and sex working.'

The uncertainty of a young person's life when they have run away can lead them to sell sex:

'It's also the uncertainty of "where's my next meal coming from; where am I sleeping?" and all those questions. They're not a worry when you've got a handful of cash; those things are not an issue. If you don't have cash there, all of these things are an issue and they are obstacles that you need to overcome. Now the quickest way to get money ... is to sell sex.'

3.3.8 Young people experiencing a shift in their experiences of running away and CSE

For some young people, the relationship between running away and CSE can change and while running away and CSE is constantly present, they experience a shift in this relationship:

Scarlett started to run away from home when she was 13. Through running away Scarlett began to spend time with older adults with whom she stayed in contact throughout her adolescence. Her first experience of sexual exploitation was not linked to an incidence of running away. However, Scarlett did start to run away to spend time with the older male who was exploiting her. After being taken into care, Scarlett ran away from the majority of her foster placements. On one occasion of running away to go on a camping trip with a group of adults, an older adult male forced her to have sex with another adult male so he could recoup some money that had been stolen from him. Through an older woman who Scarlett describes as 'a sort of pimp', Scarlett met an older male and started to run away to be with him.

Some young people experience CSE as a consequence of running away but then run away because of having been sexually exploited:

Joe started to run away because he did not get on with his father's girlfriend and did not feel welcome at home. He often stayed out overnight with friends of his own age. One cold night, Joe did not have anywhere to stay and was facing a night out on the streets on his own. A friend told him about a flat he could go to where there was always alcohol and cannabis. Joe was welcomed at the flat and was given vodka and cannabis and also told he was welcome back any time he needed a place to stay. On one occasion, Joe was raped by the man who owned the flat. Joe did not tell anyone what had happened to him but he feels that everything changed because of being raped. He also felt that he could not see his friend who had introduced him to the man who raped him and that, therefore, he had to self-exclude from his group of friends. From this point Joe's running away changed and he started to leave the local area and stay away for longer periods of time.

3.4 No direct link between running away and CSE but both being indicative of a young person's issues

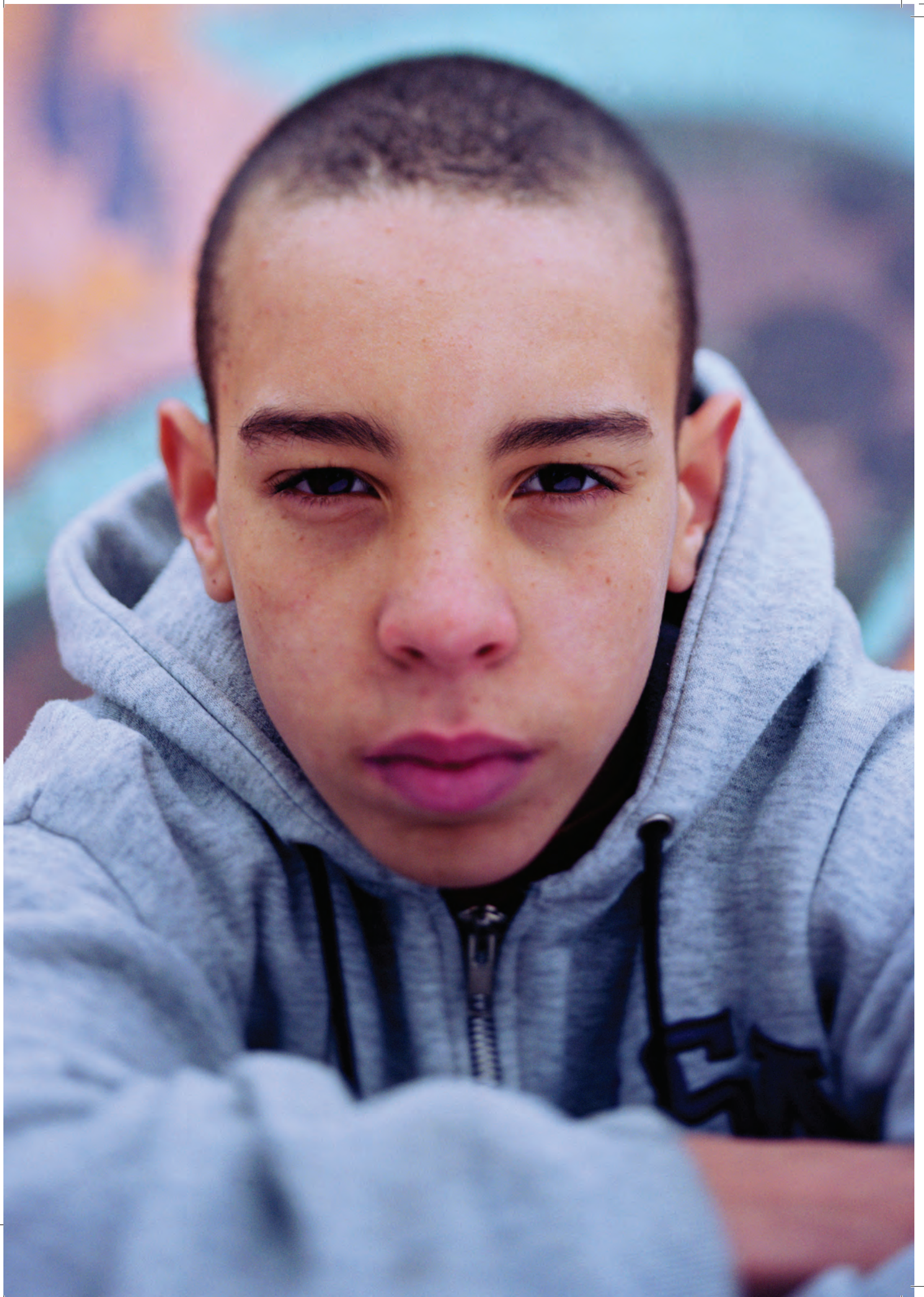
It is possible that a young person can experience both running away and CSE but that they are not interlinked but are indicative that a young person has a number of difficult issues or experiences in their life:

Tina's sexual exploitation took the form of a number of relationships with older males. Her experiences of running away were not directly linked to this exploitation. However, Tina has had a number of experiences that she has found difficult and which coincided with her starting puberty and experiencing a lot of hormonal change. Her parents split up when she was young and at first her father visited Tina and her brother regularly but then ceased all contact with no warning or explanation. A couple of months after Tina's father disappeared from her life, Tina's nan was diagnosed with cancer. Tina's nan died when Tina was 12 and this bereavement hit Tina very hard as she was very close to her nan. Tina's mother and brother were also experiencing anger and grief about the death of their mother/nan and both started to physically abuse Tina. Tina was also getting bullied at school and everything that she was experiencing led her to start self-harming. Tina has made a suicide attempt and had an abortion when she was 14.

3.5

Issues for practitioners to consider in relation to their own practice

1. What are the links between running away and CSE that you have witnessed in your practice?
2. Is there flexibility within your own practice to ensure that you are able to respond to individual young people's circumstances relating to running away and CSE and meet their needs?
3. If you identify that your practice does not presently allow for this degree of flexibility, what would have to change for you to be able to implement a more flexible approach to meet the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE?



4. Diversity and running away and CSE

The research produced findings relating to young people's gender, ethnicity, sexuality and learning difficulties or disabilities. These additional characteristics often play a part in young people's experiences of running away and CSE; and also affect young people's ability or willingness to recognise risk and/or disclose their exploitation.

It is important to ensure that responses to young people both incorporate recognition that they are first and foremost a young person at risk of harm and in need of support and that responses are able to meet the needs of young people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

4.1 Working with boys and young men

There is evidence that projects working with young people who experience both running away and CSE find it harder to reach and work with boys and young men. Reasons for this include the fact that few boys and young men come to the attention of professionals and there is a general lack of awareness among professionals from a range of agencies about boys and young men experiencing running away and CSE. While a reluctance to disclose CSE can be applied to many young people who experience both running away and CSE, the additional reluctance of boys and young men to disclose CSE is also identified as part of the reason for the lack of work taking place with boys and young men.

Boys and young men can come to the attention of professionals through experiencing other forms of exploitation such as being exploited to carry out drug running. Professionals identified how boys and young men who experience running away and CSE are often criminalised and engaging in antisocial

behaviour. While being exploited in other ways can mask a boy or young man's running away and sexual exploitation, it is important that professionals consider the possibility that the boy or young man may be running away and experiencing CSE.

To identify boys and young men who experience both running away and CSE it is necessary to actively look for them rather than rely upon referrals from other agencies or self-referral. One way to identify boys and young men is to undertake outreach work that targets spaces such as public toilets, parks and nightclubs.

There is a particular need to adopt a long-term approach to working with boys and young men who experience both running away and CSE. For example, it can take years of working with and supporting boys and young men who run away before they disclose CSE:

When Lee was younger, he was repeatedly reported to the police for running away from care and was referred to a specialist runaways' project. After years of working with the project, Lee told his project worker that there were only so many nights he could sleep by the canal or in a car he has broken into, and that when he feels desperate:

'There's a flat. If I go there I get booze, get drugs and get somewhere to sleep but I need to take it up the bum to pay for it.'

In recognition that there are some differences in how boys and young men engage in comparison with girls and young women, it is recommended that professionals consider what is effective with girls and young women and adapt it to work with boys and young men in a context that focuses upon the individual boys or young men. So, for example, there may be a need to base interventions around activities rather than upon opportunities 'to chat' and to build into practice the possibility

that boys and young men may not attend regularly but on a more ad hoc basis.

4.2 Black minority ethnic (BME) young people

As with boys and young men, relatively few young people from BME backgrounds are referred to specialist projects working with young people who experience running away and CSE. BME young people who experience both running away and CSE are believed to be particularly hidden which, as with boys and young men, requires consideration of how to identify them.

Professionals working with BME young people who experience both running away and CSE have highlighted the possibility that patterns of CSE differ between different cultural environments. Cultural factors are recognised as playing a part in BME young people's experiences of running away and CSE. For example, when young people stay with distant friends or relatives with the wider community, there is often an assumption that they are safe. While this may often be the case, staying away provides an opportunity for young people to be exploited:

'I'm thinking of a girl who was away for six weeks. ... She's Black Caribbean ... and all of her friends are BME. ... They do talk about their absconding ... "being away" is what they call it ... and they are just staying with friends of friends of friends of family so the connections are very loose in terms of whom they are staying with and still really really risky. ... Those girls have all been sexually exploited [by the distant family friends they stay with when running away] but there's a sense that it is just the norm for those girls in that community [to stay

with friends of friends of friends of family]. ... How they view it, all they did was to get on a train and stay with a family friend for a few weeks. What they actually failed to assess was that a gang member in X [home city] had communicated to a gang member in London and facilitated that movement [of girls from the home city to London] and had concealed them.

'We've got another young girl who is clearly being groomed by somebody at the local temple. And that's really difficult ... because it actually [means] saying to the family "well, actually, the temple is the risk" – a place where they [the family] think the young person is safe.'

It is suggested that it is not appropriate to use a 'rule book' of indicators of CSE across different BME communities but that, rather than taking one approach, it should be acknowledged that there are different patterns of running away and CSE and some indicators can be inappropriate or culturally insensitive.

There are additional risks of disclosure of CSE by BME young people. These can include being rejected by the young person's family and community, the young person being sent back to the country of origin, being married early or being forced into marriage outside the UK:

'[He is] a young man, identified as gay from the Asian culture but not expressing his ... sexuality despite lots of periods away from home. [He was] being befriended by other males who then abused him ... and passed him around. He eventually moved out of the area completely because when the family finally found out he was gay, they wanted to get him an arranged marriage.'

While under-reporting by parents and carers of young people as missing to the police when

they run away is common in general,⁵ there is some evidence that there is a particularly high level of resistance to report young people to the police as missing among parents and carers of BME young people. Possible reasons to explain this include: the hope that the issue can be addressed either within the family or local community; to avoid police involvement because of distrust or embarrassment; pride relating to the young person being out of control; and the stigma and loss of credibility for being perceived as not being able to take care of their child.

It is important to work with BME communities as part of the preventative and responsive measures to address running away and CSE in the local community. However, there can be a tension between recognising the importance of working with BME communities to raise awareness of safeguarding issues relating to running away and CSE and the resource constraints that prevent work with BME communities from taking place. A professional said:

'We would hypothesise that there are vulnerable BME groups in our communities that are wrongly assessed or overlooked in relation to running away and CSE ... [but] we haven't got any capacity to really go out there and raise awareness and target.'

There is an identified need to improve professionals' assessment of risk of young people from BME backgrounds. To support this and improve professionals' awareness of the issues and cultures relating to BME young people who experience both running away and CSE, training is often required to inform knowledge and practice. Work with BME communities can mean working outside professionals' cultural norms and requires extra effort so it is important to ensure professionals are supported to achieve this.

When working with BME young people who experience both running away and CSE, it is important to ensure appropriate consideration of issues relating to race, culture and ethnicity. It is also necessary to consider that the risks of disclosing running away and CSE can be too high for BME young people:

'I do think there is that hidden group of young people for whom it's almost impossible for them to disclose without catastrophic consequences.'

Access issues also need to be considered for BME young people to ensure that the means of access do not actively prevent or discourage young people from receiving a project's services.

Ensuring BME workers from local communities are included on the staff team brings a number of benefits. As well as supporting direct practice with young people from the shared BME background, this can also help gain access to local BME communities.

4.2.1 Young people from Polish backgrounds

Professionals have reported an increase in work with young people from the Polish community who have experienced both running away and CSE. While this work is in its early stages, patterns have been identified that tentatively suggest that young people's running away and involvement in CSE is linked to rebellion against parental expectations and wanting to fit in with their peers:

'What seems to be coming out is the shift from a very strict upbringing that is largely based around Catholicism in Poland and the family's culture around, you know, very strict rules about beliefs, about how young people should be young people and not mini adults, so to speak, balanced against their needs to fit into probably the more liberal culture here. ... The initial stuff seems to be around that kind of confusion around

5 Rees, G; Lee, J (2005) *Still Running 2*. The Children's Society, London and Smeaton, E and Rees, G (2005) *Running Away in South Yorkshire*. The Children's Society, London.

young people wanting to fit in with their peers somehow and struggling with where they've been.

'I think a lot of it is the culture which they came from where parental authority or strictness is very high and then they come to England and kick against that. This causes a lot of tension and friction within the family.'

4.2.2

Young people from Traveller communities

Despite some specialised running away and/or CSE projects being based within an area which includes Traveller communities, and professionals being aware of the need to work with young people from Traveller communities, there is very little work with young people from Traveller backgrounds. While recognising the importance of working with this group, professionals cited a general difficulty in making contact with these young people as there is a common perception that this is a closed community where girls and young women, in particular, are inaccessible. The difficulties of providing support for Traveller young people were also highlighted by a young person:

Sean stressed how difficult it is for young people in the Traveller communities who are gay and/or experience CSE. As Traveller communities are such closed communities to non-travellers and Traveller children's attendance at school is often sporadic, the only option left to young people within Traveller communities who are being sexually exploited is to hope that they have a very close friend whom they can trust and talk to:

'Try and let a close friend [within the Traveller community] know [what is happening] who you can 100 per cent trust. If you're gay and want to tell someone, hope you can have a Traveller friend you can trust 100 per cent.'

Sean also acknowledged that it is very difficult for girls and young women who experience CSE to tell anyone what has happened to them and receive support because of the Traveller

communities' expectation that girls and young women are expected to remain virgins and not engage in any sexual activity until they are married:

'If you went down the aisle in a white dress when you weren't a virgin and you were found out, you could get murdered for it.'

Sean also described how running away from Traveller communities was a particularly weighty decision as there was often no option to return:

'If you want to leave [the Traveller community], then you've got to be certain.'

There is a need for training that focuses upon working with Traveller communities, as professionals recognise that they often do not have the knowledge or understanding to effectively support young people from Traveller backgrounds.

4.3

Young people with learning disabilities and difficulties

Young people with learning disabilities or difficulties are particularly vulnerable to experiencing both running away and CSE. Brian's experiences reflect this:

Brian has Asperger's Syndrome. The police and school raised concerns about Brian and he was referred to a specialist runaways' project. Brian is often used by other boys to go into shops to steal and is then left behind by the other boys. The specialised runaways' project has a worker with particular expertise in supporting children and young people with Asperger's Syndrome. This worker was able to help Brian understand how to keep himself safe and to understand that sometimes people are not who they initially seem to be. As a result of this work, Brian made a disclosure of serial rape. Via Facebook, a perpetrator gave Brian instructions to follow so that he could meet with Brian. The perpetrator would rape Brian and then send him home. The perpetrator would repeat this process a month or so later and Brian did not know how to stop it.

Young people with learning disabilities/difficulties who have parents or carers who also have learning difficulties/disabilities are particularly at risk:

‘Children with learning needs can be incredibly vulnerable and targeted by exploitative adults. And where their parents have learning difficulties as well, the families can be at risk. Risky adults gravitate towards vulnerable families who are not always able to recognise the level of risk.’

It can be difficult for practitioners to fully understand the nature of the learning disability/difficulty of young people they support to address their needs in relation to running away and CSE. Sometimes it is hard to know if a young person has a learning disability or difficulty or if their development is delayed because of being subjected to abuse:

‘I worked with one young person and her learning disability wasn’t diagnosed until she was 15. She was being sexually abused from a very young age but she went to school every day so everything appeared to be okay. The young person is now 16, nearly 17. She’s never been stated but we know she has an attachment disorder and is possibly autistic. But how do you distinguish what it [the learning disability] is? It is very difficult. ... We just know that the early trauma has had a massive impact on the young person.’

Given the proportion of young people who experience both running away and CSE who have a learning difficulty/disability, this research suggests ensuring these young people receive specialist support from professionals with expertise in learning difficulties/disabilities.

4.4 Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people

Issues relating to a young person’s sexuality can play a part in their experiences of running away and CSE, especially the difficulty in meeting other gay or lesbian young people:

‘It’s quite difficult if you’re a young gay man to actually meet a like-minded young person so a lot of young gay men will often try and meet other young people online and so they get into difficulty that way.’

As well as acknowledging a general need to improve awareness to all communities about running away and CSE, professionals also reported a need for work to take place with some of the gay community:

‘There is almost this acceptability. You hear them talking about “fresh meat”.’

It is also important that all professionals working with young people do not confuse young people’s sexual exploitation with them exploring their sexuality and recognise that irrespective of gender or sexuality, people cannot consent to their own abuse and that they are being sexually exploited.

There is limited evidence of lesbian girls and young women experiencing both running away and CSE. This can take the form of girls and young women being passed around for sex by groups of older women or girls and young women running away to be with an older woman. While there is a need to address this gap in knowledge at a national level, practitioners should consider the experiences and needs of gay young women where appropriate.

4.5

Issues for practitioners to consider in relation to their own practice

1. What are the diversity issues that relate to your local area, project and practice?
2. What communities does your project serve?
3. Is your practice easily accessed by a diverse range of young people?
4. Do you undertake outreach work to reach those young people not known to your service or, in some cases, other services?
5. Is your project and practice able to work in a manner that meets the needs of boys and young men who experience both running away and CSE?
6. Is your project and practice able to meet the needs of BME young people?
7. What work takes place with BME communities within the local area to both raise awareness of running away and CSE and gain an understanding of the cultural issues that impact upon young people's experiences of running away and CSE?
8. Does your workforce reflect the local community?
9. If your workforce does not reflect the local communities, what partnerships could you develop that would allow you to work with representatives from the communities in your local area?
10. How does your project and practice incorporate meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities or difficulties?
11. Is there scope for your project to develop partnership work with agencies or professionals with expertise in working with young people with learning disabilities or difficulties?
12. How does your project and practice work to meet the needs of LGBT young people?



5. Issues to consider to support positive outcomes with young people who experience both running away and CSE

There are a number of issues that are broader than the direct work that takes place with young people but require consideration by practitioners to ensure they are meeting the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE.

5.1 Multi-agency working

A multi-agency response is crucial to address the needs of young people who experience running away and CSE and their families.

5.1.1 Working in partnership with other local voluntary sector agencies

Working in partnership with other local voluntary agencies can have a number of benefits including reaching more young people than an agency can reach on their own. Forming multi-voluntary sector agency forums can improve awareness of both potential perpetrators of CSE and young people who are identified as being at risk.

5.1.2 Strong relationships with the police

Strong relationships with the police are key to meeting the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE. Building robust links between running away and/or CSE projects and the police's missing person's co-ordinator, the child abuse investigations unit and the police's lead on CSE, or local equivalents, means that information and knowledge can be shared and rapid responses to young people be set in place.

5.1.3 Effective working relationships with educational establishments

Given the important role that educational establishments play in providing an environment to deliver both preventative and responsive measures to address both running away and CSE, there is a need for projects carrying out direct work with young people to build close links with educational establishments.

Educational providers play a significant part in picking up on those young people who are not reported as missing to the police when they run away. It is also beneficial for specialised projects working with young people who experience running away and/or CSE to support educational providers to recognise the signs that a young person may be experiencing difficulties in their life including running away and CSE. It may be possible for practitioners to meet with young people identified as being at risk on the educational provider's premises when it is not possible to meet with the young person at home. Educational providers are also able to contact specialised projects when a young person has returned from an episode of running away and arrange for work to take place.

Practitioners working to address running away and/or CSE should ensure that awareness-raising and preventative work that takes place in both state and private schools, residential schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and other educational establishments should address: the risks involved in running away and CSE; how to seek support; developing healthy relationships including same-sex relationships; internet safety; and drug and alcohol use.

5.1.4 Good relationships with individual social workers

Establishing good relationships with individual social workers can support work with young people who experience both running away and CSE:

‘Social workers are not specialists in CSE and need to look at the wider picture where we [specialist practitioners working to address running away and CSE] can provide all the support around CSE. And it’s the same with running away: we can focus upon trying to reduce the running away episodes while social care try to address the bigger picture.’

5.1.5 Working with health professionals

There are a number of benefits of specialised projects working to meet the needs of young people who experience running away and CSE having links with health professionals. Some health professionals, such as those working in sexual health clinics and accident and emergency departments are likely to come into contact with young people who experience both running away and CSE who do not come into contact with other agencies. Other health professionals such as school nurses and looked after children (LAC) nurses come into contact with other groups of young people. It is therefore crucial that health professionals are aware of the indicators of running away and CSE and the steps to follow when they have concerns that a young person is involved in both running away and CSE. By forming close links with health professionals, specialised projects can support them to develop their awareness and knowledge of running away and CSE. Specialised projects can also support health professionals to understand the difference between safeguarding and confidentiality and facilitate the development of confidentiality policies that allow sexual health clinics, for example, to

pass on concerns to the police about a young person’s safety and wellbeing.

Accident and emergency departments are able to play an important part in providing information about young people who run away and experience CSE. One professional said:

‘They [accident and emergency health professionals] deal with the young people who [unintentionally and intentionally] overdose and they need to know what CSE looks like ... and they could give information to the police like what address they pick the girls up from.’

There are benefits to having health workers from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and sexual health clinics based in projects working with young people who experience running away and/or CSE as this enables young people’s sexual and mental health needs to be met seamlessly in an environment that young people are often more comfortable with; and assist health professionals to develop a substantial understanding of running away and CSE.

Projects and professionals working to address running away and CSE should take advantage of the opportunities presented by local arrangements for prioritising health services. For example, local Healthwatch forums provide a context where organisations and individuals can assess and hold to account health services in the local area and encourage health providers to consider particular health issues. Local agencies should also engage with Health and Wellbeing Boards to make them aware of the role that health can play in meeting the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE and influence commissioning of health services.

5.1.6 Contributing to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)

Practitioners who work directly with young people who experience both running away and CSE can often provide an important

contribution to MARACs addressing, for example, sexual violence and perpetrators of sexual violence.

5.1.7

Developing mutual understanding of the strengths of different sectors and agencies

To further enhance multi-agency working, non-statutory agencies need to ensure they have informed knowledge about how statutory services operate and statutory services should ensure they acknowledge and integrate the value added the voluntary sector can bring to address running away and CSE. Through accomplishing this, it will be possible to utilise the strengths of statutory and non-statutory agencies, achieve more effective partnership working and improve responses to young people who experience both running away and CSE.

5.2

Collating and sharing data and information

Collating and sharing data and information about running away and CSE in the local area and across areas is an important part of meeting the needs of young people. To improve knowledge of the prevalence of running away and CSE and gain a more accurate understanding of the extent of young people experiencing both running away and CSE in the local area, specialised projects working with young runaways should ensure that consideration of CSE is part of routine risk assessments and that information is collected about CSE. Similarly, projects working with young people who experience, or are at risk of, CSE should ensure that consideration of running away is part of routine risk assessments and that information is collected about running away.

Projects working with young people who experience both running away and CSE should give consideration about how information is

shared between agencies to ensure effective safeguarding of young people. Pooling local knowledge that different agencies hold about running away and CSE and undertaking multi-agency mapping exercises will also support the process of building knowledge of local patterns. Voluntary and statutory sector agencies should work together to improve voluntary sector professionals' knowledge of how to present information to statutory agencies so that it fits seamlessly with the statutory sectors' processes and can be used for maximum impact.

While recognising that many young people who experience both running away and CSE are not reported to the police as missing when they run away, specialised projects can benefit from receiving missing person (MISPER) reports on a regular basis to identify young people who have been reported as missing and may be in need of support to address running away and CSE.

Specialised projects working to address running away and/or CSE should liaise with the police to utilise learning from previous police operations so that projects are able to present information to the police so that it can be turned into intelligence and used in police investigations.

5.3

Ensuring professionals have an appropriate level of knowledge about running away and CSE

Practitioners who work with young people who experience both running away and CSE may have to work to inform other professionals' knowledge as there is presently still some misunderstanding about running away and CSE. So, for example, practitioners may have to raise other professionals' awareness of the difference between a consensual sexual relationship and sexual exploitation. Practitioners may also have to dispel beliefs that running away and involvement in CSE is a lifestyle choice and

explain the concept of ‘constrained choice’ and that, despite the young person’s actions, where sexual exploitation takes place there is an adult or adults who are choosing to abuse young people. Other professionals can lack understanding that young people’s ‘difficult to manage behaviours’, such as being aggressive or provocative, are a consequence of the abuse and trauma they encounter. These behaviours often shroud vulnerability and need.

Some professionals are not familiar with the complexities of running away and CSE and that it is often necessary to work with a young person for a lengthy period of time to address their issues and meet their needs. Practitioners may therefore have to support other professionals to improve their understanding of the risks and complexities associated with running away and CSE.

5.4 Use of law, policy and guidance

Knowledgeable and effective use of law, policy and guidance relating to running away and CSE at both strategic and operational levels can improve outcomes for young people:

‘It’s about using policy and law to support our work. We’ve got the Working Together supplementary guidance which makes it clear that child sexual exploitation is a child protection issue and that 16 to 18-year-olds can be sexually exploited. Sometimes we [use] that ammunition when people say that they [young people who are sexually exploited] are 16 and choosing to go there [to where their perpetrators are] and we need to be able to refer to that guidance, that evidence and that law as often we have to be an advocate for that young person at a time when resources are tight. We’ve got to make sure we’re using the law and policy to [the] best advantage. The Sexual Offences Act equally makes issues around CSE really clear so that’s also really important.’

5.5 Use of language and definitions

While it is acknowledged that further work needs to take place to consider definitions of running away and CSE, it is important that practitioners who carry out direct work with young people who experience both running away and CSE are clear about the language and terms they use. For example, while the terms ‘going missing’ and ‘running away’ are sometimes used interchangeably, responses to running away often differ to other forms of going missing. Similarly, practitioners should give thought to the language they use with young people to enable some shared understanding as, while young people do not always use the term running away, the terms sometimes used by young people such as ‘stopping out’ and ‘staying away without permission’ are included in the definition of running away. There is also a need for consideration of language used between different agencies:

‘There is something about agencies working together and communicating better and understanding the issues and definitely recognising the indicators from the off. One of the blocks we have is ... the police and children’s services ... work on evidence. ... They’ll be looking at evidence and we’ll be talking about indicators and there needs to be somewhere in between instead of cases getting “no further action” because of “lack of evidence”.’

5.6 Working with parents, carers and the police to increase reporting of young people to the police as missing when they run away

As previously highlighted, the majority of young people are not reported as missing

to the police when they run away which increases their vulnerability. It is therefore crucial that practitioners work with parents and carers to reinforce the importance of reporting their child as missing to the police when their child has run away, has not returned at a time that has been agreed and reasonable steps have been taken to establish the young person's whereabouts.

Practitioners may also have to work with the police to ensure the police are responding appropriately when a young person is reported as missing.

5.7 Meeting the diverse needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE

Practitioners working with young people who experience both running away and CSE should recognise that the links between running away and CSE can take a number of different forms and ensure that practice responses are flexible so that young people's individual needs can be responded to.

To address the 'hidden' nature of running away and CSE and ensure we are reaching all young people who experience them, services should ensure that a range of approaches are used to meet the needs of young people. Service delivery organisations should ensure that practitioners can incorporate good practice and learning from research and practice into their work with young people.

5.8 Supporting young people to stay safe on Facebook

In recognition that anyone can report concerns about a young person's or an

adult's activity on Facebook to Facebook, practitioners working with young people should make young people aware that practitioners are able to undertake 'social reporting' if a young person does not feel able to self-report their or anyone else's activity on Facebook. So, for example, if a young person informs a practitioner that they or another young person is being groomed for sexual exploitation and encouraged to run away via Facebook, the practitioner is able to report this activity to Facebook on the young person's behalf.

5.9 Supporting parents and carers

In recognition of the impact that working with parents and carers of young people who experience both running away and CSE can have in achieving positive outcomes for young people, projects should incorporate working with parents and carers into service delivery by providing a support worker for parents and carers who does not carry out work with young people but works alongside young people's support workers.

5.10 Ensuring practitioners receive support

While often rewarding, work to meet the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE can often be challenging and it is very important that practitioners are provided with appropriate support, time to reflect upon their practice and clinical supervision. In addition, staff and team professional groups can also address and minimise the impact of challenging work and ensure practitioners are effectively supported.

5.11

Issues for practitioners to consider in relation to their own practice with young people who experience both running away and CSE

1. What opportunities does your project have in the local area to influence preventative and responsive measures to meet the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE?
2. Is there a need to improve a multi-agency approach in your local area to meet the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE?
3. What opportunities are available to your project to play a part in a multi-agency response?
4. Do you and/or your project engage, as appropriate, with other voluntary sector agencies, the police, education, social care and health?
5. What processes exist for agencies in the local area to share data and information and is there scope to improve the collection and collation of data and information?
6. Is there scope for your project to receive information about missing person (MISPER) reports?
7. Does your project work with the police to develop understanding of how to present information to the police so that it can be turned into police intelligence?
8. What opportunities exist for you and your project to inform other professionals about: running away and CSE; the needs of young people who experience both running away and CSE; and what an appropriate response to these young people should include?
9. Can your knowledge of law, policy and guidance be improved in any way and effectively applied to your practice?
10. After reflection upon your understanding of definitions and use of language, can any changes be made to improve communication with young people and professionals from other agencies?
11. Does your, or your project's, practice include work with parents and carers to highlight the importance of reporting young people as missing to the police when they run away?
12. Is there a need to work with the police in your local area to improve responses when young people are reported as missing?
13. Does your practice include work with young people on online safety?
14. Are parents and carers of young people who experience both running away and CSE provided with support? If not, how are their needs met and how can support to parents and carers be improved?
15. Does the level of support you receive from colleagues and the wider organisation meet your needs and are you provided with opportunities to reflect upon your practice? If not, what would ensure that you receive appropriate support to effectively carry out your practice?



6. Direct practice with young people who experience both running away and CSE

Evidence-based learning has identified some factors that play a part in achieving positive outcomes with young people who experience both running away and CSE:

6.1 Ensuring young people are able to access services

How young people access services is vital to how a service works to support young people. Young people should be able to self-refer by self-presenting at a service. Self-referral is identified as supporting strong engagement and retention rates. However, it is acknowledged that many young people who experience running away and CSE do not self-refer. It is possible that when work takes place with individual young people, 'piggy back referrals' can be made to other young people who are also at risk.

6.2 Providing outreach work

As previously touched upon, outreach work can be effective in engaging and meeting the needs of young people who are not referred by other professionals or through MISPER reports.

6.3 Ensuring young people who experience running away and CSE are provided with practical support and have their basic needs met

Before carrying out structured therapeutic support with young people who experience both running away and CSE, it is necessary to meet their basic needs. So, for example, if a young person has recently returned from a running away episode, they may need to have a shower and wash their hair, be provided with clean underwear, clean their teeth and eat some food.

Linked to the above point, when working with young people who are engaged in survival sexual exploitation after running away from home or care, it is necessary to give thought to alternative survival strategies for young people other than selling/exchanging sex. Until alternatives are set in place, it will not be possible for the young person to consider withdrawing themselves from those situations where they are sexually exploited.

6.4 Providing support in a warm and caring environment

Work with young people who run away and experience CSE should take place in a warm and friendly environment which operates in a young person friendly manner to facilitate positive engagement. Presenting support to young people in a caring and non-judgemental manner which includes active listening is

recognised as contributing to what constitutes a warm and friendly environment. Care can also be shown by asking young people about their experiences and feelings.

6.5

Providing a flexible approach to work with young people who experience running away and CSE

Having a flexible approach is crucial when working with young people who run away and experience CSE so that work can be tailored to individual young people. This can affect the form the intervention takes and how often practitioners are able to meet with young people.

It is very important to deliver work at a pace that fits with the individual young person and build in time to get to know them, consider their lives holistically and incorporate engagement and assessment work through spending time with the young person and getting to know them.

Running away and sexual exploitation does not necessarily stop when a young person turns 18 and neither do the risk or impacts. There is a need to have flexibility about when work with a young person ceases rather than an assumption that work stops when a young person reaches 18, although having the funding available to do so can be a challenge.

6.6

Factors relating to how professionals work with young people

Young people who run away and experience CSE require a worker who works with them consistently for the long term and with whom they build trusting relationships. Having a 'good' and trusting relationship with a professional is paramount in work with young people who experience both running away and CSE. It is also important for professionals to work in an approachable, open and warm manner.

To ensure positive relationships with young people who have often been let down by adults, there is need for professionals to do everything they tell the young people they will do. Where this takes place, there can often be improvements in young people's engagement with other agencies and professionals. Young people are often realistic that sometimes it is not possible for a professional to do that which they hoped they were able to in support of the young person. However, it is important that professionals explain why they cannot do what they said they would so young people are able to understand this and are not left to feel that they have been let down again by an adult in their lives.

Emphasis should be given to rewarding young people when they do something 'right' as young people who experience both running away and CSE are often given negative labels and require support to reinforce positive behaviours and attitudes.

6.7 Working to meet young people's needs while actively involved in running away and CSE

When a young person is embroiled in running away and being sexually exploited, it may not be possible to prevent them from running away and experiencing CSE. It can also be very difficult to do any structured work to address the running away and CSE until the young person realises that they are at risk and/or being harmed. However, in the interests of meeting the young person's needs in the long term, it is vital that support services remain involved with a young person. This ensures there is contact with an appropriate adult who listens to the young person and shows that they care about them; and, that when a young person expresses an interest in changing what is happening to them, there is an established relationship between the project and the young person.

Where possible, projects should try to maintain contact with a young person during an episode of running away and, even if there is not any form of direct intervention with a young person, act to ensure that other agencies are working to address the young person's needs.

6.8 Providing young people with a range of support

Young people who have experienced both running away and CSE often require a whole range of support to meet their needs in different areas of their lives to achieve positive outcomes. For example, a young person may require support to address their living circumstances, educational needs, physical and mental health needs, substance misuse issues and work to keep themselves safe.

While some young people like to talk about their experiences of running away and CSE

and how they feel, other children and young people find talking difficult and prefer creative outlets to express how they feel.

Gay boys and young men outlined how it is helpful to become part of a LGBT group and attend sessions with the group as this reduces the young person's isolation, enables them to meet other gay young people and receive support.

It is necessary to ensure that responses to young people who have experienced both running away and CSE focus upon the young person's future as well as what has happened to them in the past.

6.9 Involving young people with previous experience of running away and CSE

It can be effective for young people involved in both running away and CSE to talk with other young people who have moved on from running away and involvement in sexual exploitation and who can offer retrospective reflections.

Young people with previous experience of running away and CSE can also play an important role in preventative work to address running away and CSE.

6.10 Issues for practitioners to consider in relation to their own practice with young people who experience both running away and CSE

1. Where appropriate, does your work include the above factors?
2. If your work does not include some of the factors recognised as supporting positive outcomes with young people who

experience both running away and CSE, how can you incorporate these factors into your practice?

3. Are there any other factors that you are aware of that play a part in achieving positive outcomes with young people who experience both running away and CSE?
4. What opportunities are there for you and your project to share your knowledge and learning with other professionals and agencies?



7. Resources and links to helpful websites and organisations

Websites providing information and resources

There are a number of resources from organisations working to address running away and CSE:

Barnardo's

Barnardo's provides a significant number of services that work with children and young people who are at risk from, or involved in, going missing and/or sexual exploitation. Details of Barnardo's work and the services it provides can be found at: www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_projects/sexual_exploitation.htm

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

CEOP is part of UK policing and works to eradicate the sexual abuse of children by working in partnership with professionals from the wider child protection community and industry by building intelligence and developing programmes addressing law enforcement, child protection and education. CEOP is also the national law enforcement lead for missing children. Further details about CEOP can be found at: www.ceop.police.uk/

End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT)

ECPAT is a leading children's rights organisation campaigning against the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the UK and on its international aspects with a particular focus on the protection of trafficked children, children exploited in tourism and the prevention of such crimes. Details of ECPAT and its work can be found at: www.ecpat.org.uk

International Centre for the Study of Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Young People, University of Bedfordshire

The International Centre for the Study of Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Young People focuses exclusively upon sexually exploited and trafficked children and young people. Its website, www.beds.ac.uk/research/iasr/centres/incent, provides a range of resources for academics, practitioners and policymakers.

Missing People

Missing People is able to offer support when a child or young person runs away: www.missingpeople.org.uk

The Children's Society

The Children's Society provides services for children and young people who experience running away and/or CSE. The Children's Society's website address is: www.childrenssociety.org.uk

The National Working Group (NWG) Network

The NWG is a charity and UK-wide network of practitioners, policymakers and researchers working with children and young people who are at risk of, or experience, sexual exploitation. The aim of the NWG is to offer support and advice to those working with children and young people affected by child sexual exploitation. Details of the NWG and its resources can be found at: www.nationalworkinggroup.org/

Blast

Blast works with boys and young men who have been, are being, or are at risk of sexual exploitation. As well as delivering services to boys and young men, Blast carries out training with professionals and has a range of resources on its website: www.mesmac.co.uk/blast

Policy and guidance documents

Council of Europe (2007) *Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*. www.coe.int

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation: supplementary guidance to working together to safeguard children*. DCSF, London. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190252/00689-2009BKT-EN.pdf

Department for Education (2011) *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: Action Plan*. DfE, London. www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/healthandwellbeing/safeguardingchildren/a00200288/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation-action-plan

HM Government (2011) *Safeguarding children and young people who may have been trafficked*. DCSF, London. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/177033/DFE-00084-2011.pdf

HMSO (2007) *Cross Government action plan on sexual violence and abuse*. HMSO, London.

Reports addressing running away and/or CSE

A number of reports are available on-line and are free to download:

Barnardo's (2013) *The tangled web: how child sexual exploitation is becoming more complex*. Barnardo's, Barking. www.barnardos.org.uk/the_tangled_web.pdf

Barnardo's (2012) *Tackling child sexual exploitation: helping local authorities to develop effective responses*. Barnardo's, Barking. www.barnardos.org.uk/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation.pdf

Barnardo's (2012) *Cutting them free: How is the UK progressing in protecting its children from sexual exploitation?* Barnardo's, Barking. www.barnardos.org.uk/cuttingthemfree.pdf

Barnardo's (2011) *Puppet on a string: The urgent need to cut children free from sexual exploitation*. Barnardo's, Barking. www.barnardos.org.uk/ctf_puppetonastring_report_final.pdf

Blazey, L (2011) *Reducing the risk, cutting the cost: An assessment of the potential savings on Barnardo's interventions for young people who have been sexually exploited*. Barnardo's, Barking. www.barnardos.org.uk/reducing_the_risk_cutting_the_cost_final.pdf

Brodie, I; Melrose, C; Pearce, J; Warrington, C (2011) *Providing safe and supported accommodation for young people who are in the care system and who are at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation or trafficking for sexual exploitation*. University of Bedfordshire, Luton. www.beds.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/120788/SafeAccommodationreport_finalOct2011IB_1.pdf

CEOP (2011) *Out of Mind, Out of Sight*. CEOP, London. http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/ceop_thematic_assessment_executive_summary.pdf

Children's Rights Director for England (2012) *Running away: young people's views on running away from care*. www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/running-away-2012

Jago, S with Arocha, L; Brodie, I; Melrose, M et al (2011) *What's going on to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation? How local partnerships respond to child sexual exploitation*. University of Bedfordshire, Luton. www.beds.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/121873/wgoreport2011-121011.pdf

Jago, S; Pearce, J (2008) *Gathering evidence of the sexual exploitation of children and young people: a scoping exercise*. The University of Bedfordshire, Luton. www.beds.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/40824/Gathering_evidence_final_report_June_08.pdf

Berelowitz, S; Firmin, C; Edwards, G; Gulyurtly, S (2012) *'I thought I was the only one in the world' The Office of the Children's Commissioner's inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups interim report*. www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Pearce, J; Pitts, J (2011) *A scoping exercise for The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England*. Office of the Children's Commissioner, London. www.beds.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/127371/OCC_Uni-of-Beds-Literature-Review_FINAL.pdf

Rees, G (2011) *Still running 3*. The Children's Society, London. www.makerunawayssafe.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/u24/Still-Running-3_Full-Report_FINAL.pdf

Rees, G; Franks, M; Medforth, R; Wade, J (2009) *Commissioning, delivery and perceptions of emergency accommodation for young runaways*. The Children's Society, London. www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/research_docs/Commissioning%2C%20delivery%20and%20perceptions%20of%20emergency%20accommodation%20for%20young%20runaways.pdf

Report from the joint inquiry into children who go missing from care (2012) *The all-party parliamentary group (APPG) for runaway and missing children and adults and the APPG for looked after children and care leavers*. www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/u32/joint_appg_inquiry_-_report...pdf

Smeaton, E (2009) *Off the radar: children and young people living on the streets in the UK*. Railway Children, Sandbach. www.railwaychildren.org.uk/media/26592/off_the_radar_full_report.pdf

Smeaton, E; Franks, M (2011) *Best practice in the commissioning and delivery of emergency accommodation for children and young people who run away in Scotland*. The Scottish Government, Edinburgh. www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/01/28091200/13

Other resources

The Children's Society has provided a guide for parents and carers of action to take when a child or young person goes missing: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/runaways_parents_guide_2013_final_six-page.pdf

The Department for Education has produced a guide for practitioners outlining *What to do if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited*

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/step%20by%20step%20guide.pdf>

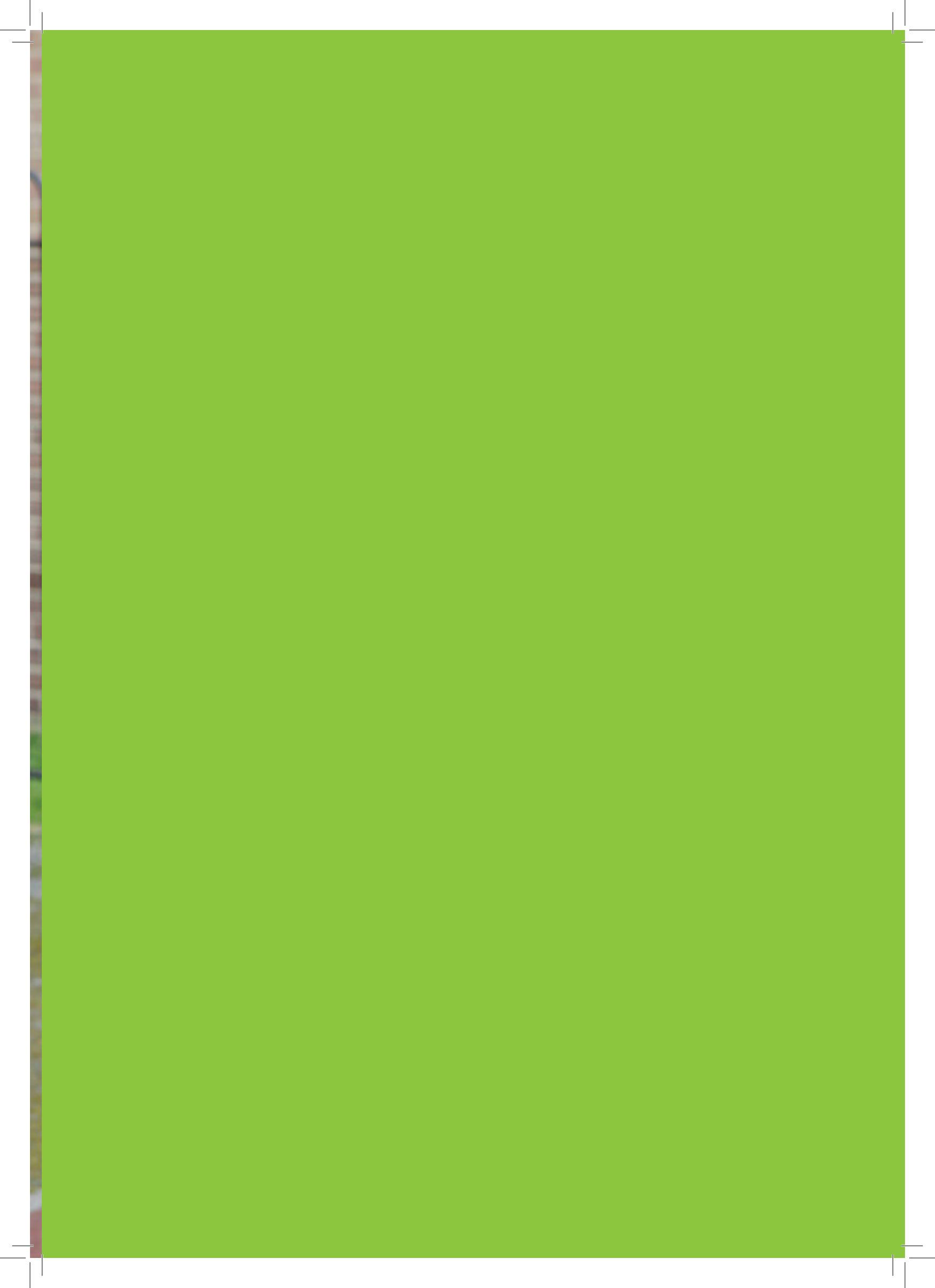
Where there are concerns that a child or young person has been trafficked, either into the UK or internally within the UK, professionals should contact the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) and consider pursuing National Referral Mechanism (NRM) status for the child or young person. NRM referrals can help services to focus their approach to ensure an appropriate response for the child or young person by ensuring all available information is gathered and shared quickly between organisations to ensure risks are identified and the child or young person's needs are met. Referrals to the NRM also contribute to building up evidence about trafficking, providing a national picture, and will inform policy decisions and practice actions to tackle trafficking. Information about the NRM can be found at: www.soca.gov.uk/about-soca/about-the-ukhtc/national-referral-mechanism

The University of Bedfordshire has developed a child sexual exploitation data monitoring tool to provide assistance for local authorities in recording cases where there are concerns about child sexual exploitation. The data monitoring tool can be found at:

www.beds.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/162209/final-version-Updated-data-monitoring-tool-new-Dec-11.pdf

The University of Bedfordshire has also developed a self-assessment tool to support local authorities to assess progress in protecting children from sexual exploitation. This can be found at: www.beds.ac.uk





Working with children and young people who experience running away and child sexual exploitation:

**An evidence-based guide
for practitioners**

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