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Children's Rights in Practice

young people's perspectives of working with professionals in the context of safeguarding and supporting children who have experienced sexual exploitation

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Children's Rights in Practice: young people's perspectives of working with professionals in the context of safeguarding and supporting children who have experienced sexual exploitation.

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PhD

October 2019

Children's Rights in Practice: young people's perspectives of working with professionals in the context of safeguarding and supporting children who have experienced sexual exploitation.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the University's requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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I hope this thesis does justice to the words of those who participated in my research and shared their stories, wisdom and reflections.

Glossary of Terms

The terms used within this thesis and their definitions are listed below.

Term/Phrase	Definition
Agency	Having the capacity and freedom to make choices (Showden 2011).
Child and young person	A child is defined as individual below the age of 18 (United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child 1989). However, the Young Person's Project Board (YPPB) (see chapter 5) found the word to be disrespectful and dismissive. > If talking to someone, no one likes to be called a child, as a young person, no one wants to, I would prefer to be called a young person than a child (YPPB, 2016) > When you are treated with respect, I would take that as disrespectful if someone called me like a kid, just a kid (YPPB, 2016) > [Child] very dismissive word (YPPB, 2016) It is clear from the YPPB that describing them as a child creates a barrier to engagement. The preferred term was young person. In Louise Casey's speech at the 2016 conference Coming Out of the Darkness, she made the argument for calling those below 18 years children within professional arenas. The justification for this was that using the term child would remind practitioners that they are corporate parents

	and have a responsibility to safeguard these individuals (Casey, 2016). When this rational for using the term child was discussed, the YPPB suggested that different terms could be used according to the situation, for example using child in professional meetings and young person when delivering direct work. However, given that the current UK safeguarding system aims to be child-centred, using a term that young people are uncomfortable with is compromising. Consideration needs to be given to whether the term 'child' should be used to refer to those who identify as young people and not children. The argument that using the term 'child' reminds practitioners of their legal duties, highlights a practice issue that could be addressed using other strategies (e.g. training) to shift the onus from the young person to the practitioner. In these circumstances, it would need to be made clear to everyone working with a young person when they are under 18 years to ensure they are afforded their legal rights as a child (ECPAT, 2016). Given that this thesis aims to be child-centred, the phrase that will be adopted is child and young person. This phrase will be used to describe those below 18 years of age as well as those between 18 and 24 years. When the age of the individual has a bearing on the issue being discussed, the individual's age will be made explicit.
Child and/or young person affected by/ subjected to/ who has experienced child sexual exploitation (CSE)	The terms victim and/ or survivor are often used to describe a young person who has been sexually abused. Although accurate as a legal definition, the term victim has been associated with powerlessness and passivity (Dunn, 2005). In response to these labels, the term survivor has been adopted to convey strength, power and resilience

	(Hunter, 2010). However, both these terms link the identity of the individual with the abuse they have been subjected to (Hunter, 2010). ECPAT (2016) recognise the nuances associated with the term victim but states that it is critical to use the term victim in a legal sense and to ensure blame is not placed on the young person. However, ECPAT (2016) states that the term victim should not be used to label an individual as weak and/ or helpless, characteristics that have been attached to the term (ECPAT, 2016). In line with this, ECPAT (2016) makes it clear that no individual should be labelled as either a victim or a survivor unless it is a term, they themselves identify with. Hunter (2010) researched the victim-survivor paradigm and found that half of the participants rejected both the term victim and survivor. Participants felt these terms were stigmatising and linked their identity to the abuse they had been subjected to (Hunter, 2010). The YPPB also found the term victim problematic. Although, the YPPB identified the term victim as being a formal term that is easy to understand and communicates what an individual has gone through, they also felt the term implied powerlessness: ‘If say not a victim then you are implying that it is their fault whereas you are disempowering them by calling them victims’ (YPPB, 2016) The YPPB felt the term used, should separate the young person from child sexual exploitation. The YPPB suggested using phrases such as a young person affected

	by/ subject to/ who has experienced child sexual exploitation to make a clear distinction between the individual and the abuse. 'They are not defined by child sexual exploitation, they are a person who coincidentally had this horrible thing happen to them' (YPPB, 2016) ECPAT (2016) stated in its guidance on terminology that these phrases avoid labelling the young person or blaming them for their abuse thus separating the young person from the abuse they have been subjected to. The ideal circumstance would be for individuals to be able to self-define; however, there needs to be consistency between the terms used to promote understanding and avoid confusion. As such the terms that will be used in this thesis are children and/or young person affected by/ subjected to/ who has experienced child sexual exploitation. However, where literature has used the term victim, this will be used to ensure the authors meaning is not distorted.
Child Sexual Abuse	'A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities.' (NSPCC 2019a: n.p)
Child in Need	'A child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled' (Department for Education 2015: 18)
Child Protection	'Ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent him or her from suffering further harm; promote the child's health and

	development; and support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided it is in the best interests of the child.' (Department for Education 2015: 45)
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	Exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities' (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009: 9).
Consent	'If he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice' (Sexual Offences Act 2003 s. 74).
Contact Crime	**'**Contact abuse involves activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. It includes: • sexual touching of any part of the body, whether the child is wearing clothes or not • forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity • making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else's genitals or masturbate • rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus.' (NSPCC 2019a: n.p.)
Grooming	The definition of grooming according to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 is 'a person aged 18 or over meeting or communicating with a child under the age of 16 once, then meeting or travelling to meet the child with intention to engage them in sexual activity' (s.15). This offence only applies to adults and therefore does not address peer-to-peer exploitation. In addition, the offence only applies to children under 16 years and fails to offer any protection to those aged 16 or 17 (Children's Society, 2016). As a

	result, this definition of grooming is unhelpful. Organisations have developed their own definitions of grooming. The NSPCC use the following definition: 'grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking' (2017, n.p.). Whereas Blast (previously the UK's leading male only sexual exploitation service) explains grooming as 'grooming is when someone convinces you or your family/ carers that they are a safe and trustworthy person so they can sexually exploit you' (Blast, 2015: no pagination). Given that the statutory definition of grooming is not comprehensive and there is yet to be a consensus from those working in the field, this thesis will use the definition from The National Crime Agencies website ThinkYouKnow: 'grooming is a process used by people with a sexual interest in children to prepare a child for sexual abuse' (ThinkYouKnow, 2015: n.p.). This definition can be applied to all types of child sexual exploitation and to cases where grooming has involved threats and violence rather than befriending.
Moral Panic	Instance of public anxiety or alarm in response to a problem that is regarded as being a threat to the moral standards of society (Critcher 2006).
Non-Contact Crime	'Non-contact abuse involves activities where there is no physical contact. It includes: • flashing at a child • encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts • not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others • persuading a child to make, view or distribute child

	abuse images (such as performing sexual acts over the internet, sexting or showing pornography to a child) • making, viewing or distributing child abuse images • allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images • meeting a child following grooming with the intent of abusing them (even if abuse did not take place) • sexually exploiting a child for money, power or status (child sexual exploitation).' (NSPCC 2019a: n.p)
Perpetrator	ECPAT (2016) found that perpetrator and offender were the two terms most commonly used to describe the criminals involved in child sexual exploitation. However, the YPPB felt these terms sanitise the crimes committed and fail to convey the harm inflicted: 'Perpetrators makes it sound like it is not just one topic whereas exploiters is really linked, specific, very to the point rather than perpetrators, you can have a perpetrator in knife crime, exploiters really shows that these are the people that specific crimes rather than a whole chain' (YPPB, 2016) 'Offenders makes it seem less severe than what they have actually done e.g. youth offenders, it just doesn't feel severe enough' (YPPB, 2016) There was one exception to this, and that is where multiple individuals are being referred to. In this incidence, it was deemed acceptable to use the term perpetrator: 'If [talking about a] group then can use perpetrators to avoid having to list everyone who has committed

	a crime' (YPPB, 2016) Once the YPPB had discussed various options available (perpetrator, exploiter, rapist, offender) to describe those who committed a crime in relation to child sexual exploitation, the YPPB came to the consensus that they should be referred to by the crime they committed, e.g. rapist or sex offender. The YPPB was adamant that individuals were given full responsibility for their conduct by defining them solely in terms of their crime: 'Should be specific about whose done what, if exploiter use exploiter, raping use rapist, it is essentially what it is, with a topic like this you cannot beat around the bush, you cannot say that they didn't know what they were doing, what they have done is not right is any shape or form' (YPPB, 2016) 'Link term to the crime they have committed, linked with the law, thief if you've stolen, why any different between an abuser and a rapist' (YPPB, 2016) 'Should not use euphemism for things, exploiter/ perpetrator not specific, this person is rapist, label for their crime' (YPPB, 2016) This suggestion is consistent with Leary (2016) who stated that the terms used to describe the perpetrator of a crime should 'convey both the nature of the crime and the appropriate level of social condemnation to it' (p. 155). For example, the term rapist communicates both the nature of the crime, as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003,

	and the harm it inflicts. In the same vein, if other individuals are involved in facilitating the exploitation of a young person, they will be referred to as a groomers and/ or trafficker. ECPAT (2016) suggest that terms such as perpetrator of crimes against children or child sex offender can be used without stigmatising or harming young people. Unlike other discussions during this consultation, there was no consideration of the identity of the individual beyond the crime that they had committed. This raised an issue with regards to how to describe young people who had been subject to child sexual exploitation and went on to become groomers themselves. The YPPB suggested that in this situation the individual should be referred to as a coerced groomer to make it clear their actions are the result of being abused. ECPAT (2016) address this issue but do not provide an alternative term for young people who are groomed into grooming, suggesting that all those involved in facilitating sexual crimes against children are called facilitators. In this research, the specific crimes of those that abused children and young people through sexual exploitation were not known. As a result, the term perpetrator is used.
Practitioner/ Professional	Generic term for people working with those affected by child sexual exploitation. This term includes, but is not exclusive to, teachers, social workers, police officers, youth workers and foster carers.
Serious Case Review	A Serious Case Review (SCR) is a locally conducted multi-agency review in circumstances where a child has been abused or neglected, resulting in serious harm or death and there is cause for concern as to the way in

	which the relevant authority or persons have worked together to safeguard the child (Crown Prosecution Service n.d).
Significant Harm	Ill-treatment or impairment of health or development (Children Act 1989).
Trafficking	'The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs' (United Nations 2000: 2).

Acronyms

The acronyms used within this thesis and their meaning are listed below.

Acronyms	Meaning
ACPC	Area Child Protection Committee
AMSH	The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene
BPD	Borderline Personality Disorder
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CEOP	Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre
CPS	Crime Prosecution Service
DCSF	UK Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	UK Department for Education
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism
HO	UK Home Office
ISVA	Independent Sexual Violence Advocate
LNA	Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Disease Acts
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
SIBS	Sexually Inappropriate Behaviour Service
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UKHTC	UK Human Trafficking Centre
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
YPPB	Young Person Project Board

Abstract

The aim of this study was to critically analyse the perspectives of children and young people in relation to their experiences of professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation, using a children's rights lens.

Using a children's rights approach and child-centered methods, including consultation with a Young Person's Project Board, this thesis drew on the voices of nine young people living in England who had been subject to child sexual exploitation. Their experiences were analysed alongside serious case reviews, government policies and society's changing attitudes towards children and childhood.

This research's key findings are that: dominant discourses from the Victorian era continue to be drawn upon by professionals in practice; in some situations, children and young people were disempowered by professionals, who were, in turn, disempowered by the structures and systems they work within; existing safeguarding policies and procedures struggle to address child sexual exploitation; and children's rights are not consistently respected in practice. The thesis also highlights the benefits of taking an integrated approach to research where a children's rights approach is supported by other theoretical frameworks to analyse the research participants' experiences.

The thesis concludes with evidence-based recommendations aimed at improving professional practice and the experiences of those affected by child sexual exploitation. These include implementing contextual safeguarding and trauma-informed practice.

Key words: child sexual exploitation, children's rights approach, children's voices, professional dilemmas, power dynamics, child centered terminology

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2010, British society was shocked by the conviction of five men for crimes associated with the organised sexual exploitation of girls as young as 12 years of age (BBC 2010). These convictions lead to an independent inquiry chaired by Professor Alexis Jay which provided a conservative estimate of the number of young people sexually exploited between 1997 and 2013 in Rotherham at 1400 (Jay 2014). This criminal case shone a light on child sexual exploitation and over the following years numerous cases of child sexual exploitation came to public attention.

In 2013, the Office of the Children's Commissioner published its enquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups, entitled '*If only someone had listened*' (Berelowitz et al. 2013). This report estimated that 16,500 children in England had been at risk from child sexual exploitation between April 2010 and March 2011 (Berelowitz et al. 2013). The recent rediscovery of child sexual exploitation has challenged existing child protection procedures and society's view of childhood.

However, child sexual exploitation is not a new phenomenon; indeed, it has been a feature of society throughout history although one that has remained hidden. Child sexual exploitation has been concealed by society's attitudes towards victims of this abuse. With increasing knowledge and awareness of this topic, there has been a shift from viewing girls as precocious temptresses to them being victims of child sexual exploitation (Walkowitz 1980). Boys, despite being victims themselves, have largely been absent from these discussions (Barnardo's 2014). This shift has been accompanied by a change in the dominant professional terminology from 'child prostitute' to a 'child involved in prostitution' to 'a victim of child sexual exploitation'. Changes in policy and legislation have reflected the changing narrative of child sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse more generally (Department of Health 2000 and Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009).

This thesis builds on existing academic knowledge and takes account of the political and practical developments that have taken place since the research was initiated. Over the five years since the research was started, there have been significant changes in the area; a new government definition of child sexual exploitation has been introduced, new professional dilemmas are being grappled with and new debates have taken place.

The thesis aims to bring new insights to the topic. Firstly, by using children's rights as the conceptual framework through which the experience of those subject to child sexual exploitation is explored, and secondly, because the author has been a children's social worker since 2009 and has worked directly with those children and young people affected by sexual exploitation, by bringing a unique lens through which the data was interpreted. This research was undertaken during a period of rapid change as a result of some very high-profile cases. As such, this research has been uniquely placed to observe and comment on the lived experiences of research participants during this period of change.

Research Question

How do children and young people perceive their interaction with professionals in the context of safeguarding and supporting children and young people who have experienced sexual exploitation?

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study was to critically analyse the perspectives of children and young people in relation to their experiences of professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation.

The research objectives were as follows:

1. To examine the changing narratives of child sexual exploitation.
2. To critically analyse the contemporary voices of victims of child sexual exploitation in relation to their experience of working with professionals.

3. To discuss how victims of child sexual exploitation perceive they are viewed by professionals and the perceived impact of these attitudes.
4. To promote children's rights by using a participatory narrative approach and child-centred methods.

Approach

This thesis was committed to hearing and presenting the voices of children and young people who had experienced child sexual exploitation. To keep the voices of children and young people at the centre, the thesis was underpinned by a children's rights approach. In line with children's rights, a participatory narrative approach was adopted as the methodological approach and child-centred methods were used.

Outline of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Changing narratives of child sexual exploitation

The first of three literature review chapters provides the historical context for this research. The chapter traces the changing narrative of child sexual exploitation from the Victorian era to the beginning of the new millennium. The chapter follows the gradual change from those affected by child sexual exploitation being viewed as deviants in the Victorian era, to the growing recognition towards the end of the 20th Century that these children were subject to abuse. The chapter also documents the development of the sociology of childhood and children's rights. The chapter concludes by identifying two persistent dichotomies: innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion.

Chapter 3: Rediscovery of child sexual exploitation

This literature review chapter reviews the legislative and policy changes that have occurred since 2009 when the term child sexual exploitation was adopted by the government (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009). It considers whether these changes have been effective in practice by reviewing serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation. Where professional practice has not effectively safeguarded children and young people, the chapter suggests reasons for this, including professionals lack of understanding of

grooming and exploitation and the impact of these on power, agency and consent.

Chapter 4: Agency, power and consent

Agency, power and consent are concepts in child sexual exploitation that have often been misunderstood. These misunderstandings have contributed to the persistent dichotomies of innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion. The chapter explains how grooming and exploitation can affect a child or young person's agency, power and consent. The chapter also considers the power dynamics between professionals and children and young people and the impact of this on children's rights.

Chapter 5: Seeking children's voices

This chapter outlines the philosophical and technical foundations of the research. The chapter explains the researcher's positionality and how this, alongside a review of the literature, led to children's rights being chosen as the conceptual framework for this study. This is followed by an explanation of the methodological approach; a participatory narrative approach. The chapter then discusses how these approaches were translated into child-centred methods and how the data was analysed. Given the sensitivity of this project, ethical considerations are discussed in detail before limitations of the study are presented.

Chapter 6: What's in a word: the power of terminology

As chapters 2 and 3 explore, the terminology of child sexual exploitation has changed alongside the developing understanding of the problem. However, as chapter 2 demonstrates, this developing understanding has not been universal amongst practitioners as evidenced by serious case reviews, which have criticised the terminology used by some professionals. This chapter explores children and young people's perception of the terms used by professionals and the potential impact of their use.

Chapter 7: Children and young people's experience of service provision

This is the first of two results chapters. The chapter presents the research participants experience of service provision. The chapter covers the following themes: labelling, voicelessness, service provision, professional's characteristics and organisations structures. The chapter discusses how these factors have contributed to children's rights not being respected.

Chapter 8: Power dynamics

This results chapter presents the research participant's perception of power dynamics in relation to working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. The chapter considers the themes of relational and structural power and the impact of these on children and young people who have experienced child sexual exploitation. It also explores how research participants have tried to gain power in situations where they have felt powerless.

Chapter 9: Rhetoric versus reality

The chapter explores the key findings from the study:

1. Dominant discourses from the Victorian era continue to be drawn on heavily by practitioners in the context of child sexual exploitation.
2. Practitioners need to develop a hypersensitivity as to how they wield their positions of power, given how central abuses of power are within child sexual exploitation.
3. Existing safeguarding policies and procedures struggle to address situations of child sexual exploitation and effectively protect children and young people from abuse.
4. The bureaucratic nature of some corporate parent arrangements can result in a more dehumanised relationship between the professional and the child or young person.
5. Neoliberalism and managerialism have hindered professionals' ability to respond effectively to child sexual exploitation.
6. Despite the UK's longstanding international commitment to children's rights, and the rights-based approach being firmly embedded in legislation and policy, research accounts suggested the rights of children

and young people subject to child sexual exploitation were frequently undermined.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Chapter 10 revisits the choice of topic, aims and objectives and the conceptual framework of the study. It pulls together the key findings to demonstrate how different layers of disempowerment impact on children and young people. The chapter outlines the study's contribution to knowledge and its implications for practice. The chapter concludes by identifying areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Changing Narratives of Child Sexual Exploitation

This chapter explores the changing narratives of a form of child sexual abuse that is now referred to as 'child sexual exploitation' from the Victorian era to the new millennium. Given that the phrase child sexual exploitation has only recently been adopted, historical accounts of this form of abuse have been sought out using the most commonly used term to describe it: 'prostitution'. The term prostitution is used as a lens through which historical accounts of child sexual exploitation are explored. However, it must be recognised that using prostitution as a lens could be problematic given the spectrum of theories associated with the phenomenon (Sanders, O'Neill & Pitcher 2009).

This chapter outlines the shifts in thinking that have occurred since the Victorian era to reach the point where, in 2009, the UK Government adopted the following definition of child sexual exploitation:

> 'The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.
>
> Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.'
>
> (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009: 9)

The Age of Innocence

Figure 1: ‘Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle’
(Williams 1848)

The Victorian era (1837 – 1901) was a time of great social upheaval due to rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. As a result of the increases in productivity and the subsequent increase in profitability, a new entrepreneurial middle class emerged; which Marx referred to as the bourgeoisie (Cowden & Pullen-Sansfaçon 2013). Members of the Victorian middle and upper classes adopted a romantic notion of childhood, viewing children as asexual innocents in need of protection (Cunningham 2005, James & Prout 2015, and Foucault 1981). The view that the innocence of childhood should be protected was promoted by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert; Figure 1 shows the couple providing their children with toys and sweets at Christmas. These presents demonstrate the distinction that had been drawn between adults and children. The foundations of this interpretation of childhood originated from the work of Rousseau and his seminal book, *Emile*, ‘let childhood mature in the child. Whatever lesson becomes necessary, make sure you do not give it today if you

can without danger put it off until tomorrow' (Rousseau 1762: 94). Although the middle and upper classes saw childhood as a period of innocence there was no legal definition of a child. At the beginning of the era, the age of female sexual consent was 12 years, as this was the age at which a female could be legally married, which provides an indication of the age at which a child was viewed as becoming an adult - 6 years younger than the United Nation's current definition of a child which is anyone under 18 years old (Bates 2015, and United Nations 1989).

However, the middle- and upper-class notion and experience of childhood varied considerably to that of the working class. Children of working-class families lived in poverty and worked to bring in additional income to the household and 'without employment opportunities, children were often abandoned' (Goldson 1997: 5). As such, child prostitution was one form of survival in the face of poverty and unemployment (Walkowitz 1980). In Victorian Britain there was no differentiation between adult and child prostitution. A common prostitute was defined as a woman i.e. a female over the age of 12 (the age of consent) who solicited men in public thoroughfares (Walkowitz 1980). Although it is likely that males were also prostitutes, homosexuality was illegal and therefore the practice was hidden for fear of prosecution (Buggery Act 1533 and Walkowitz 1980).

Figure 2: The Great Social Evil
(Leech 1857: 114)

Note: in the Victorian era the term 'gay' was used to indicate someone who was involved in prostitution.

Although prostitution, including what we would now consider to be child sexual exploitation, was a part of Victorian society it was largely hidden from public view. This is illustrated in the literature of the time, for example, in Charles Dickens's 1837 novel *Oliver Twist*, it is inferred rather than stated that Nancy is a prostitute, 'being remarkable free and agreeable in their manners' (Dickens 2001: 94). In the preface of the 1941 edition, it is confirmed that Nancy is indeed a prostitute, 'the boys are pickpockets and the girl is a prostitute' (Dickens 1941 cited in Wolff 1996: 227). Dickens uses inference to suggest that Nancy was recruited by Fagin as a child into the trade or service of prostitution (Wolff 1996). Dickens and his fellow social commentators were constrained by social norms in relation to the language they used and hid social ills in euphemisms and inference. This is illustrated in Figure 2, where the cartoon refers to prostitution as 'the great social evil' and uses the term 'gay' to infer that Fanny is a prostitute. In addition to insinuations in literature and other forms of social commentary, there is clear evidence of child prostitution in Victorian

Britain from the number of children hospitalised as a result of venereal disease (sexually transmitted infections). In 1848, it is claimed that in London approximately 2,700 girls between the ages of 11 and 16 years were hospitalised as a result of venereal disease (Sparks 2000).

One of the reasons prostitution was perceived as a threat to Victorian society was because of the incidence of venereal disease amongst men enlisted in the armed services. This concern resulted in the passing of the Contagious Disease Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869 (Walkowitz 1980). The Contagious Disease Acts only applied to female prostitution (Walkowitz 1980). The middle and upper classes had two concerns relating to venereal disease: firstly that it would have a negative impact on the health of those defending the realm for whom the use of prostitutes was considered an accepted way to address their sexual urges and; secondly, that they themselves may become contaminated with venereal disease as a result of visiting a prostitute and risk infecting their wives (Walkowitz 1980).

Prostitutes were viewed as a danger to public health, as transmitters of venereal disease, without any recognition of the role that purchasers of sexual services had in transmission (Sanders, O'Neil and Pitcher 2009). Under the Contagious Disease Acts, any woman who was identified as a common prostitute was subjected to fortnightly internal examinations to check for venereal disease (Walkowitz 1980). As there was no differentiation between adult and child prostitution, any girl over the age of consent and criminal responsibility (between 12 and 14 years depending on their understanding of right and wrong) could be labelled a common prostitute and subjected to invasive internal examinations and treatment (Walkowitz 1980). If a woman was found to be infected with a venereal disease she would be sent to a 'lock' hospital (a hospital containing venereal wards) to be treated for the disease (Walkowitz 1980). Those opposed to the Contagious Disease Acts argued that they degraded women and sanctioned male vice in a double standard of morality (Walkowitz 1980 and Laite 2008). Campaign groups petitioned for the Acts to be repealed due to the unfair treatment of women and the double standard of morality, and in 1886 they succeeded in removing the Contagious

Disease Acts from the Statute Book (Sanders, O'Neil and Pitcher 2009 and Jeffreys 1997).

The plight of child prostitutes started to become the focus of campaigning by a number of groups that developed out of middle- and upper-class philanthropy. Towards the end of the 19th century, the Social Purity movement evolved out of the debates around sexual morality (Cox 1996). The Social Purity movement was opposed to deviant sexual practices and advocated chastity (Joyce 2008). In their view, deviancy included: homosexuality; prostitution; and masturbation (Cox 1996). This movement capitalised on society's fear of the dangerous underclasses who exhibited deviant behaviour and threatened the social and political order of the country (Walkowitz 1980). The Social Purity movement's view of the child was consistent with the romantic view of children as innocents in need of protection (Egan and Hawkes 2007). However, the movement also considered children as potentially deviant and in need of control to mitigate the threat they posed to society (Egan and Hawkes 2007). Children were viewed as both being 'at risk' and being 'a risk'.

The Social Purity movement advocated for the abolition or eradication of prostitution, the great social evil (Egan and Hawkes 2007). In line with this ideology, the Social Purity movement advocated for the age of consent to be raised to 16 years to reduce the number of children and young people involved in prostitution (Walkowitz 1980). The Social Purity movement was joined in the campaign to raise the age of consent by feminists, liberal lawyers, socialists and Anglican Bishops (Cox 1996). These allies did not necessarily agree with the Social Purity's ideologies but were in support of raising the age of consent to protect 'helpless children' (Cox 1996: 152). The campaign was also supported by the development of a number of charitable organisations by philanthropic members of the middle class (Cowden & Pullen-Sansfaçon 2013). In 1867, Thomas Barnardo set up his ragged school where poor children could get an education and in 1884, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) was founded (Barnardo's 2015, and NSPCC 2015). These organisations aimed to maintain the moral and social order which, prior to

urbanisation, had been controlled by the Church and the local community (Corby et al. 2012).

Despite the support for raising the age of consent, there was significant resistance in Parliament, and this was believed to be because a significant number of MPs themselves were engaged in sexual activities with children less than 16 years (Walkowitz 1980). In the face of this resistance, Benjamin Waugh (founder of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) and Josephine Butler (an evangelical, feminist, and environmentalist) appealed to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, W. T. Stead, for support (Cox 1996). The *Pall Mall Gazette* was an innovative evening paper which focused on matters of public concern (Conboy 2010). Stead himself was considered a 'pioneer of investigative journalism being pursued for moral ends' (Conboy 2010:12). In response to the request, Stead undertook an investigation into 'child prostitution' in London and the trafficking of 'white slaves' to brothels on the continent (Pearce 2009 and Brown 2004). The term white slave was used to refer to innocent youths who were abducted and violated by foreigners (Brown 2004).

In the week of the 4th July 1885, the *Pall Mall Gazette* published a series of articles exposing the incidence and experience of child prostitutes (Stead 1885). See Box 1 for details of the *Pall Mall Gazette* articles.

Box 1: Extracts from The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon

The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon

'All those who are squeamish, and all those who are prudish, and all those who would prefer to live in a fool's paradise of imaginary innocence and purity, selfishly oblivious to the horrible realities which torment those whose lives are passed in the London inferno, will do well not to read the Pall Mall Gazette of Monday and the three following days'. (Stead 1885: 1)

In 1885, child prostitution hit the headlines in a series of articles entitled, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (Walkowitz 1980). The articles were written in response to the opposition in Parliament to raising the age of sexual consent to 16 years old (Cox 1996). In these articles, the author, William T. Stead, described young people being kidnapped, raped and forced into prostitution both in London and on the continent (Hollington 2013).

One case that drew considerable attention was that of Eliza Armstrong. Stead arranged the purchase of 13-year-old Eliza, with the aid of Josephine Butler and Rebecca Jarrett, a former prostitute, to prove that virgins were being forced into prostitution (Cox 1996). Eliza was bought for £5 from her mother (Cox 1996). She was examined to ensure her virginity, before being drugged with chloroform and placed in a brothel where Stead, posing as a client, attended (Cox 1996). This incident allowed Stead to prove that virgins were being bought and forced into prostitution. Eliza was rescued by the group and taken to France where she was taken care of by a Salvationist family (Cox 1996)

Such was the public interest in this series of articles that vendors rioted outside the *Pall Mall Gazette* to get extra copies (Bingham and Settle 2015). Sales of the paper were boosted by 10,000 (Conboy 2010). Reprints of the articles spread across London and travelled to Europe and the United States (Bingham and Settle 2015).

As a result of the investigation involving Eliza, Stead was convicted of abduction and aiding and abetting indecent assault (Cox 1996). Stead was subsequently imprisoned for three months in Holloway Prison (Bingham and Settle 2015). During his incarceration, Stead persuaded the prison governor to allow him to keep his prison uniform which he wore annually on the anniversary of his conviction keeping the issue alive (Cox 1996).

Figure 2: W T Stead 10th November 1885
(The W. T. Stead Resource Site 2012)

Following the publication of the Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon, child prostitution became a public issue and created moral panic within the middle and upper classes. Moral panic reflects social anxieties and concerns about behaviour that is seen as some sort of moral threat (Critcher 2006). The concerns are exaggerated, in regard to both scale and frequency, symbolised in terms of them being a threat to traditional values, and emphasized by groups of 'moral entrepreneurs' who re-frame the particular problem in terms of the solutions that they favour' (Marsh and Melville 2011: 18). As child prostitution did not fit with their romantic notion of childhood, the middle and upper classes joined the campaign to raise the age of consent without any recognition of the structural or socio-economic factors, such as poverty and unemployment that contributed to child prostitution (Cox 1996). In response to the articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 250,000 people marched to Trafalgar Square demanding that the age of sexual consent be raised to 16 years (Sparks 2000). In 1885, the government gave in to public pressure and the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed raising the age of sexual consent to 16 (Pearce 2009). The age of consent became an important symbol of the end of childhood and the transition from innocence to adulthood (Cox 1996).

During this period, the response to victims of child prostitution was to rescue them from an ‘amoral life’ using the Industrial Schools Amendment Act of 1880 and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, which enabled police to remove children from brothels and place them in industrial schools (Pearce 2009 and Walkowitz 1980). Being rescued resulted in children being incarcerated in reformatory or industrial schools where attempts would be made to return them to what was considered ‘normal behaviour’ for a child, through socialisation and moral correction (Cox 1996 and Goldson 2004). In these schools, there was no recognition that the child may be distressed and/or traumatised by their experiences. This quote is an example of how a victim of child sexual abuse was viewed in the Victorian era,

> ‘someone called her ‘the Demon Child,’ and it was an apt name for her. Offended, she would scream as if she was being murdered if no one touched her; only a look from some would set her off: no one seemed able to pacify her; if possible she would get away from everybody and lie down close to a large bed of mignonette, and put her head amongst it and become calm, ‘Just an excuse for idleness and wickedness,’ some would say …..’
>
> (Stead 1885: 11).

This child’s behaviour can be viewed as a symptom of the trauma she had experienced, rather than something she was choosing to do (Herman 2015). As Table 1 identifies, the signs and symptoms of trauma are wide ranging.

Table 1 Common Signs and Symptoms After Exposure to a Traumatic Event			
Physical	**Cognitive/Mental**	**Emotional**	**Behavioral**
• Chills • Difficulty breathing • Dizziness • Elevated blood pressure • Fainting • Fatigue • Grinding teeth • Headaches • Muscle tremors • Nausea • Pain • Profuse sweating • Rapid heart rate • Twitches • Weakness	• Blaming others • Change in alertness • Confusion • Hypervigilance • Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings • Intrusive images • Memory problems • Nightmares • Poor abstract thinking • Poor attention • Poor concentration • Poor decision making • Poor problem solving	• Agitation • Anxiety • Apprehension • Denial • Depression • Emotional shock • Fear • Feeling overwhelmed • Grief • Guilt • Inappropriate emotional response • Irritability • Loss of emotional control	• Increased alcohol consumption • Antisocial acts • Change in activity • Change in communication • Change in sexual functioning • Change in speech pattern • Emotional outbursts • Inability to rest • Change in appetite • Pacing • Startle reflex intensified • Suspiciousness • Social withdrawal

(Walter 2012: 32)

In addition to the support provided by the state, national charities such as The Children's Society, the NSPCC and Dr Barnardo's had entered the field. These organisations aimed to rescue children from moral danger, including prostitution, and protect society from the threat posed by abused children and their lack of innocence (Sparks 2000, and Brown 2004). In the classified pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, charity organisations advertised their services which were to address child delinquency and prostitution (Joyce 2008 and Brown 2004). These organisations mirrored society's view that prostitution was an individual, rather than a societal problem, and therefore, also, failed to acknowledge the structural factors that lead to prostitution (Joyce 2008). In Engels' study *The Conditions of the Working Class* he quotes a witness who would rather allow his daughter to beg than work in a factory, 'they are perfect gates of hell; that most of the prostitutes of the town had their employment in the mills to thank for their present situation' (2009: 170). Poor working conditions, poverty and limited choices of employment all contributed to children becoming involved in prostitution but were not considered by those attempting to address the problem (Sanders, O'Neil and Pitcher 2009).

Indeed, child prostitution did not fit with the dominant Victorian notion of childhood being a time of innocence. Children involved in prostitution were viewed as deviants, who needed to be rescued and re-educated so that their

behaviour fitted with the expectations of the morally righteous middle classes. Society was concerned that if this was not achieved, these deviant children would threaten the moral fabric of society. Rescuing a child took no account of either scientific explanations for the behaviours of children who had been sexually exploited (trauma), or the structural factors that contributed to them becoming involved in prostitution.

Scientising Children

Measures put in place during the Victorian era did not erase child prostitution and it continued to be widespread during the Edwardian era (1901 – 1910) (Cox 1996). The view that children involved in prostitution were impure and immoral persisted within society and, more worryingly, within the very organisations set up to support them (Brown 2004). The following quote comes from records kept by The Children's Society in relation to a case in 1906 involving a 10-year-old girl,

> 'in a very immoral manner she pulled up her clothes for boys to see her private parts and asked the other girls to do the same she also took boys to the bedroom to have sexual communication with her them to pay her a penny a time'
>
> (Brown 2004: 248)

The view of child prostitution being a threat to society was strengthened with the advance of child psychology, psychiatry, anthropology and criminology. Although psychiatrists began to accept that children could be sexual beings, these children were viewed as abnormal because they did not fit with the persistent concept of normal children as asexual innocents (Cunningham 2005). Science reinforced rather than challenged the dominant discourse on childhood. As more was learnt about the child's mind, scientists believed that the mind of an abused child, in addition to their body, was a threat to society and this strengthened the idea that these children jeopardised the social order (Hendrick 1994). As a result of the fear society had of deviant children, juvenile delinquency, including prostitution, became a topic for investigation (Cunningham 2005 and Brown 2004).

Scientisation, taking a scientific approach, continued in the footsteps of the Victorian middle and upper classes by defining what a normal child was and emphasising that every family should be supported to achieve, ‘a childhood for everyone, even if it meant squeezing some of them into the mould’ (Hendrick 1994: 11). Behavioural norms were promoted within schools, youth groups, welfare provision and the justice system and were firmly established by the end of the First World War (Hendrick 1994). Children who did not fit with the norm, including child prostitutes, were referred to Child Guidance Clinics. Child Guidance Clinics were staffed by psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers and the aim of treatment being ‘normalisation’ of these children (Stewart 2011 and Cunningham 2005). One of the dominant motivations for the introduction of Child Guidance Clinics was to reduce the threat posed by children who did not fit behavioural norms, and/or had not been taught the morals and values expected by society (Stewart 2011). The outcome of this was that victims of abuse, including children involved in transactional sex continued to be viewed as delinquent and potentially disruptive citizens (Hendrick 1994). But now there was a new set of ‘tools’ to fix them.

With increasing interest in children and childhood, child rearing manuals became popular (Egan and Hawkes 2007). Parents were encouraged to intervene in the sexual activity of their children to mitigate the threat, ‘this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers’ (Foucault 1981: 104). Elizabeth Blackwell, a physician from the United States and member of the Social Purity movement, published a book entitled *Counsel to Parents on the Moral Education of their Children in Relation to Sex* in 1885 (Egan and Hawkes 2007). This book warned parents that if they neglected to teach their children self-control in relation to sexual activities (masturbation) then corruption and vice would be the result (Egan and Hawkes 2007). Vice is a term applied to behaviours that are considered by the majority to be immoral or depraved (Huggins 2016: viii). The term ‘vice’ was commonly used to refer to prostitution. Blackwell also advised parents to prevent their children from associating with a knowing child who would corrupt others with their sexual knowledge (Egan and Hawkes 2007). These views were endorsed by other

commentators on childhood sexuality at the time, including Henry Varley, a British evangelist who became famous as the author of *The Curse of Manhood* (the curse was sex and masturbation), and John Kellogg, whose book *Plain Facts about the Sexual Life* became one of the best known sexual education books in 19th century United States, warning against excessive sexual activity and masturbation (Egan and Hawkes 2007, Watts 2015 and Wilson 2014).

Legislation followed; The Children Act 1908 recognised children as a distinct group within society and offered them greater protection against cruelty and abuse (Goldson 1997). A child was defined as someone under the age of 14 years, a young person was someone between 14 and 16 years (Children Act 1908: s.131). The Act was informed by the developing fields of child psychology, psychiatry, anthropology and criminology, and addressed society's anxiety about childhood and child welfare (Bradley, Logan and Shaw 2009). The Children Act 1908 responded to the belief that sexual immorality, including prostitution, could be influenced by immoral associates by preventing children frequenting 'the company of any common or reputed prostitute' (Brown 2004: 347). Under the Act, abused children and those who had committed crimes were both dealt with by the Juvenile Court, joining together the concepts of depravity and deprivation (Hendrick 1994). The result being that girls were brought before the Court for behaviour associated with prostitution, such as being beyond control, or living in circumstances likely to cause corruption, again placing responsibility on the child and failing to recognise child prostitution as abuse, and a product of the wider structural conditions (Cox 1996). The 1908 Act also brought reform and industrial schools under one administration, indicating that both the delinquent (criminal) and the depraved (abused) child needed the same intervention to avoid moral degradation (McGillivray 2004). The lines between criminal and victim were blurred, and both were seen as a risk to society.

In addition to measures put in place in the 1908 Children Act to protect children, the Punishment of Incest Act 1908 was passed in the same year. For the first time there was acknowledgement in law of intra-familial child sexual abuse, with incest becoming a criminal offence (Corby, Shemmings, & Wilkins 2012).

However, other forms of sexual abuse, including child prostitution, were not recognised in the Punishment of Incest Act 1908 and therefore the Act itself afforded child prostitutes no protection.

As the century progressed, alternative views about child prostitution were developed. In 1915 the feminist group, The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (AMSH) was established through the merging together of the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (LNA) and the International Abolitionist Federation (Laite 2008). AMSH advocated for the abolition of state regulation of prostitution (the state regulated prostitution by making certain practices associated with prostitution illegal, for example, soliciting and loitering) alongside campaigning for increased protection for women and children in the criminal law (Jeffreys 1997, and Laite 2008). This organisation reconstructed the commonly held notion of the child involved in prostitution as being a precocious temptress, and instead emphasised the role of the purchaser, as one of a predatory abuser (Brown 2004). This view drew support from other organisations, *The Shield* quoted from a report published by the Children's Branch of the Home Office,

> 'Of the girls of 15 to 17 years the offences are mostly theft and prostitution. Quite a large number of these girls have become infected with venereal disease and this fact should be born in mind when so much stress is laid by some of our judges on the 'wickedness' of girls under 16 in seducing men twice as old as themselves! Very little comment is made of the venereal disease passed to girls and yet many under 16 have been already infected by men.'
>
> (*The Shield* 1938 cited in Brown 2004: 249).

However, this view of purchasers being responsible for the abuse of children, through prostitution, failed to change existing opinions. World War 1 saw an increase in the number of young women involved in prostitution and the blame for this was placed with them as demonstrated in this quote taken from *The Englishwoman's* 'Problems of the Day' section in November 1916,

> ‘headstrong, impressionable, undisciplined girls, hardly more than children, have made themselves a nuisance by running after soldiers without any thought of more than silly or perhaps vulgar flirtation, and, by turn tempters and tempted, have often ended by entangling themselves and their soldier friends in actually vicious conduct.’
>
> (*The Englishwoman* 1916 cited in Woollacott, 1994: p 331)

In response, the Sexual Offences Act (1918 and 1920) stipulated that ‘any woman under the age of eighteen convicted of a soliciting offence could be incarcerated in a ‘rescue home’ until her nineteenth birthday’ (Laite 2008: 212). Criminalising women who were under the age of eighteen for soliciting, places the responsibility on those that today’s society would consider to be children for an offence associated with prostitution, rather than with the adult purchasers or facilitators. Equally, no consideration is given to the factors that may have led to a child becoming involved in prostitution or the abuse they suffered as a result.

The Social Purity movement continued to promote the idea that child prostitution was the result of contagion, it was considered that children caught the deviancy of prostitution by associating with others of questionable morals, without any consideration of structural issues (Egan & Hawkes 2007). Discussions in relation to the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1922 demonstrated there was no movement within Parliament in relation to child prostitution, as once again children were depicted as seducers of innocent middle- and upper-class men (Brown 2004). These views were echoed in the Court of Law as demonstrated in the following judge’s statement on a case related to child abuse in 1925,

> ‘that it did seem rather regrettable, and a place where the law rather failed, that nothing could ever be done in the case of little girls under sixteen with whom offences were committed and who often, of course, were guilty themselves. Sometimes they were as guilty as the male’
>
> (*Devon and Exeter Gazette* 1925: 5 quoted in Bingham and Settle 2015: 4)

The press continued to promote the view that children were complicit in their abuse and failed to support alternative views such as those advocated by the AMSH. Consequently, the view that abused children, including those abused through prostitution, were a threat to the social order remained widespread (Hendrick 1994).

Little changed as the century progressed; in 1933 The Children and Young Person's Act was passed which completely removed any distinction between the care of neglected and delinquent children (Dingwall, Eekelaar and Murray 1984). As a result, neglected and abused children were 'locked into a legal framework which is constructed around the organisational threat from delinquency' (Dingwall, Eekelaar and Murray 1984: 224). The report that informed the content of the Act stated,

> 'There is little or no difference in the character and needs between the neglected and delinquent child. It is often a mere accident whether he is brought before the court because he is wandering or beyond control or because he has committed some offence. Neglect leads to delinquency.' (Departmental Committee on Young Offenders 1927 cited in Dingwall, Eekelaar and Murray 1984: 216)

Child victims of neglect were placed in the same category as offenders and dealt with in the same way as both were considered to be the result of a lack of control and moral education (Dingwall, Eekelaar & Murray 1984). In this piece of legislation, the concern for the victims of abuse and neglect came secondary to the threat they posed to society (Hendrick 1994).

Certainly, in the first half of the 20th century, the dominant view of the abused child, including child prostitutes, as being dangerous and a threat to society persisted. Abused children were seen in the same light as juvenile delinquents and received the same punishments. As in the Victorian era, no consideration was given to the role structural factors played in the prevalence of child prostitution. However, an alternative view had started to emerge, that of children being the victims of abusive perpetrators. These opposing views created

ambiguity and resulted in ambivalence both within society and Parliament (Moran-Ellis 2010). As a result, combined with the impact of rebuilding society after the World War 1, little focus was given to the issue of child prostitution during the inter-war years.

Welfare State

World War 2 highlighted the vulnerability of children and brought into question whether the concept of childhood as a period of innocence could be preserved whilst considering children the future of society (Cunningham 2005). The evacuation of 826,959 unaccompanied English and Welsh children during World War 2, uncovered the extent of child poverty and poor childhood mental and physical health (Hendrick 1997). Thousands of children arrived at reception areas dirty, inadequately clothed and in poor health (Hendrick 1997). Evacuation made the previously invisible urban poor visible and brought to light the stark contrast between the middle- and working-class experiences of childhood (Hendrick 1997). But, these issues, uncovered as a result of evacuation, were once again, considered by society as children posing a threat to productivity, societal mental and physical health and post-war democracy (Hendrick 2015).

To address these and other public health concerns that had developed during World War 2, the Beveridge Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services was set up in 1941 to ‘survey existing national schemes of social insurance and allied services, including workmen's compensation, and to make recommendations’ (Great Britain & Beveridge 1942: 5). In 1942, the Commission published its report and, following its recommendations, legislation was passed to provide British citizens with free social and health care to address the five ‘evils’ of the modern world as identified by Beveridge: Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness (Cowden & Pullen-Sansfaçon 2013). This was done through the Education Act (1944), the Family Allowances Act (1945), the National Health Service Act (1946), the National Insurance Act (1946) and the National Assistance Act (1948) (Hendrick, 2015).

The Children Act 1948 sat alongside these pieces of legislation, establishing Local Authority Children's Departments and professionalising social work by making its provision a duty of local authorities (Dingwall, Eekelaar & Murray 1984). Enshrined in this Act was the view that welfare legislation should operate in the best interest of the child, that children had individual needs and that children had rights, in particular the right to a family life (Hendrick, 1997, and Dunbabin 2011). Troubled children, including those involved in prostitution, were seen in the same light, and there was a move away from the belief that troubled children should be cared for by state-run institutions (Hendrick 1997). This change in the treatment of troubled children was the result of childcare practitioners observing the trauma inflicted on children as a result of being removed from their parents during the mass evacuations during World War 2 (Hendrick 1997). The promotion, within this legislation, of children being raised by their families, rather than being removed and placed in institutions 'reflected the concerns that family breakdown would lead to juvenile crime' (Dunbabin 2011: 8). Again, the threat of juvenile crime, including child prostitution, led to changes in childcare practice.

In the 1950s youth subcultures began to emerge which fed into concerns about juvenile crime (Hendrick 1994). The first of these were the 'Teddy Boys' (Osgerby 2014). Teddy Boys were working class youths who appropriated the dress of the Edwardian upper-class; see Figure 3 (Hebdige 2003 & Osgerby 2014). They were viewed as disrespectful of, and a challenge to, authority (Hendrick 1994). Teddy Boys were seen as rule-breakers and therefore as deviant (Cohen 1973).

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Figure 3: Gang Boy to Die for Murder on Common
(The Daily Mirror 1953: 6)

Teddy Boys became associated with crime and brutality (Hendrick 1994). Teddy Boys, and subsequent 'deviant' youth subcultures, were constructed as folk devils threatening the moral fibre of society and by the media as a representation of the nation's moral decline (Critcher 2006 & Osgerby 2014). This led to the first of many moral panics associated with newly emerging post war youth cultures (Cohen 1973). The emergence of these 'deviant' youth sub-cultures allowed for an increasing distinction to be made between the 'innocent' child and the 'deviant' youth.

Prostitution, and in turn child prostitution, returned to the spotlight in 1957 with the publication of the Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, commonly referred to as the *Wolfenden Report* (Walkowitz 1980). The focus of the report was on removing the immorality of prostitution and homosexuality from public view; it was not considered the state's job to intervene in private morality (Brooks-Gordon 2006). The recommendations of the report included referring prostitutes to moral welfare workers, increasing the penalties associated with street offences and providing courts with the powers

to remand prostitutes in custody in order to obtain social/medical reports (Wolfenden 1957). These recommendations were translated into legislation (Street Offences Act 1959), making soliciting and loitering in a public place for the purpose of prostitution a criminal offence thus 'championing the rights of 'respectable' citizens to enjoy neighbourhoods free from the blight of street prostitution' (Laite 2009: 5). The burden of the Act fell on prostitutes rather than their punters or pimps, so once again they became the scapegoats of socially undesirable behaviour, whilst their potential abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the impact of structural factors was ignored (Sanders, O'Neil & Pitcher 2009, and Brown 2004). As with the Contagious Disease Acts (1864, 1866, and 1869), this piece of legislation dealt only with female prostitution as homosexuality remained illegal; the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 extended the range of sexual activities homosexuals could be prosecuted for by making gross indecency illegal, interpreted as any homosexual act. Under the Street Offences Act 1959, girls over the age of criminal responsibility - 8 years old - could be prosecuted for offences related to prostitution and labelled a common prostitute. Perversely, a child who was under the age of sexual consent could be charged with the criminal offences of loitering and/or soliciting (Phoenix 2002).

The Children Act 1948, and The Street Offences Act 1959, were at odds with each other in relation to addressing the issue of child prostitution. The Children Act 1948 addressed concerns in relation to the welfare of children and put in place systems to safeguard those children who were at risk of abuse. Counter to this, The Street Offences Act 1959, did not differentiate child prostitutes from adult prostitutes, resulting in legislation that criminalised child prostitutes, or more accurately as we would understand today, victims of child sexual exploitation. The dichotomy of victim versus criminal persisted as a result of these contradictory pieces of legislation and maintained the ambiguity that had developed during the war years. The consequential ambivalence resulted in little focus being placed on child prostitution during this period.

Children's Rights

Ambivalence about child prostitution continued until the mid-1970s, when the issue of child prostitution hit the mainstream media for the first time since the nineteenth century (Brown 2004). Stories emerged of girls in local authority care being engaged in prostitution (Brown 2004). This time however, society was more sympathetic to the children involved than had previously been afforded to children involved in prostitution, and there was some recognition of the perpetrator's role in coercing and manipulating the child (Brown 2004). Nevertheless, the concern that these children presented a threat to society through their immorality persisted as an undercurrent in society's attitudes (Brown 2004). This attitude resulted in children being proportioned blame for the sexual abuse they had been subjected to (Brown 2004). Box 2 summarises two articles from the *Sunday Times*, one that demonstrates that, within some high-profile media sources, young people continued to be blamed for their abuse, and the other reports a shift in understanding with the recognition of grooming and coercion. Grooming is the process whereby a perpetrator of abuse manipulates a child into becoming dependent on them in order to abuse (Pearce 2009).

Box 2: Articles from the Sunday Times

Articles from the *Sunday Times*

4th April 1976:

The *Sunday Times* reported that an independent inquiry had been launched to investigate the case of three female teenagers who, whilst living in care, were coerced into prostitution (Hollington 2013). The view of the Secretary General for the British Association of Social Workers was that it was inevitable that some children in care would make 'undesirable' associations that could lead to entry into prostitution whilst minimising the role of care workers in preventing this from occurring (Hollington 2013).

12th February 1978:

The *Sunday Times* reported that prostitution was increasing amongst schoolgirls, estimating that the number of reported cases had doubled in five years (Hollington 2013). Two methods of entry were identified, first, being groomed by an older male and second, peer pressure (Hollington 2013). The reason for this increase was attributed to 'marital breakdown, family instability and increased sexual activity' (Hollington 2013: 111).

Alongside a shifting understanding of child prostitution, the concept of children's rights in the form of 'child liberation' began to develop (Hendrick, 1997). Liberationists believed children had a right to self-determination and should not be viewed as incompetent because of their age (Hendrick, 1997). In 1991, Gurtrud Lenzer advocated for the new sociology of childhood to become a distinct discipline in sociology, an idea that was advanced in the UK by sociologists such as Alison James and Alan Prout (Clark 2011). The new sociology of childhood was underpinned by the belief that children are social actors in their own right, who are active in the construction and determination of their own lives (James & James 2004). Academics who championed this view of children, advocated for the voice of the child to be integral to research and interpretations about children (Clarke 2011). However, the arguments of the liberationists were challenged by liberal theories under the banner of paternalism (Hendrick 1997). Paternalists adhered to the dominant Victorian view of children as innocents, in need of protection. They acknowledged that children were subject to discrimination as a result of their age but considered children as being in need of protection until they reached an age at which they are competent and fully rational (Hendrick 1997).

At the same time, society began to become disillusioned with the welfare state. Previously held views about society and welfare entitlements started to be challenged by new and re-emerging social movements such as anti-racist movements, feminist movements and trade unionism (Cowden & Singh 2007). This resulted in a change of opinion regarding professional judgement, with less credence being given to the views of professionals and more focus being given

to the voice of service users which tied in with the children's rights agenda (Cowden & Singh 2007). In addition, concerns about Britain's national economic decline raised questions about the efficiency of the British economy, including the cost-effectiveness of the welfare state (Cowden & Singh 2007). In response to society's shifting view about the effectiveness and appropriateness of welfare provision, Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Government (1979 - 1997) promoted the idea that the commodification of welfare was the most efficient way to meet individual need whilst ensuring service users right to self-determination.

In 1979, Thatcher and the Conservatives gained power and introduced a form of political economy referred to as, neo-liberalism, or more poignantly as Oliver James terms 'selfish capitalism' (James 2013: 11). Neo-liberalism is the belief that free markets are the most efficient way of allocating resources (Harvey 2005). To work towards having a free market, the Conservative Government began to reduce the role of the state through privatisation and market economies (Harvey 2005). In relation to the welfare state, the Conservatives argued that a reduction in state intervention would promote personal choice and increase self-determination (Spolander et al. 2015). However, neoliberalism promotes individualism which is favoured over social solidarity, equality, equity and participation (Harvey 2005 and Spolander et al. 2015). The Conservatives rolled back the welfare state and reduced the protections offered to people by the state (Harvey 2005). As a result, social issues, such as child prostitution, disappeared from the political agenda (Harvey 2005).

'Child Prostitutes' to 'Children Involved in Prostitution'

Although the issue of child prostitution had re-emerged during the 1970's, it continued to be ignored in government policies, procedures and guidance. In 1980, the Department of Health and Social Security produced a circular, *Child Abuse: Central Register System*, which outlined four categories of child abuse: physical injury, physical neglect, failure to thrive incorporated with emotional abuse, and living in the same household as a Schedule 1 offender (Corby, Shemmings & Wilkins 2012). A Schedule 1 offender was someone who had been convicted of an offence against a child listed which was listed in Schedule

One of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933; for example, someone who had committed an act of murder, manslaughter, assault, cruelty and a range of sexual offences. Although there was recognition of Schedule 1 offenders, child sexual abuse (the category within which child sexual exploitation should sit) was not yet identified as a category of child abuse (Corby, Shemmings & Wilkins 2012).

Two opposing child protection perspectives developed in relation to child abuse during this period: firstly, children should be raised within the family without government intervention and; secondly, the government should act in the best interests of the child, even if this overrides parental rights (Cunningham 2006). Over the course of the 1980s there were a number of child deaths and child abuse cases that highlighted failings in the child protection system. The review of the Cleveland sexual abuse scandal (1987) alongside three child death inquiries (Jasmine Beckford (1985), Tyra Henry (1987) and Kimberley Carlile (1987)) illustrated the consequences of adhering too stringently to either of these perspectives and informed the content of the 1989 Children Act. See Box 3 for more details.

Box 3: Details of Child Protection Cases

Child Protection Cases

Cleveland Inquiry

A reflex anal dilation test was developed which, it was claimed, could provide evidence of sexual abuse (Corby, Shemmings & Wilkins 2012). During a 5-month period, 125 children from Cleveland were placed in local authority care as a result of suspected sexual abuse within the home, on the recommendation of two paediatricians, Dr Higgs and Dr Wyatt (Butler-Sloss 1988). In this case, the wishes of the parents were overridden as a result of child protection concerns, and the belief by professionals that they were acting in the best interest of the child. Concerns about the validity of the recommendations made by Dr Higgs and Dr Wyatt and the subsequent response by the agencies

involved in child protection, resulted in an inquiry led by Lord Justice Butler-Sloss and the return of 98 children to the care of their parents (1988).

Jasmine Beckford

In 1981, Jasmine and her sister were placed in local authority care as a result of non-accidental injuries (Dale 1986). Despite, her stepfather being convicted of assaulting Jasmine's sister Louise, Jasmine and Louise were returned to his and their mother's care in 1982 (Dale 1986). On 5th July 1984, Jasmine was battered to death by her stepfather (Dale 1986).

Tyra Henry

On 29th August 1984, 21-month-old Tyra was battered to death by her father (*Guardian* 2003). Social workers were involved with the family, but they were deemed to be too trusting because the family were black (*Guardian* 2003).

Kimberley Carlile

On 8th June 1986, Kimberley, who was four years old, was beaten to death by her stepfather who had obstructed investigation by social workers and health visitors (Valentine 1994 and *Guardian* 2003).

All of these cases demonstrated failings by professionals in relation to keeping children safe. As a result, society's disillusionment with the role professionals had to play in child protection increased and their expertise in this field was questioned further. There was a desire for a welfare state, including a child protection system that was more accountable and less dominated by professionals (Cowden & Singh 2007). In response the Conservative Government introduced the 1989 Children Act which provided the foundation for children's social care and extended childhood to 18 years. The Act aimed to consolidate all previous childcare legislation and address new concerns, such as those raised by the Cleveland Inquiry.

The Act introduced the concept of parental responsibility, child in need (section 17) and child protection (section 47) categories, partnership working and

listening to the voice of the child (Children Act 1989). The Act placed a duty on local authorities to support young people who were considered to be either a child in need or one who suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (Children Act 1989). Children and young people involved in prostitution were not specifically referred to in the Act, but arguably are subjected to significant harm and as such the Act gave local authorities a duty to safeguard them, provide services/resources to promote their welfare and challenge their criminalisation (Phoenix 2002).

The Act defined a child as someone under the age of 18 years but did not raise the age of sexual consent from 16 years. This resulted in the creation of a grey area between the ages of 16 and 18 years with regards to whether or not a young person had consented to sex. This grey area has become particularly problematic in relation to child sexual exploitation.

Although the Children Act (1989) demonstrated a commitment to protecting children from abuse, under the Street Offences Act 1959 a child, someone under 18 years, could continue to be prosecuted for soliciting and/or loitering (Sanders, O'Neil, & Pitcher 2009). Consequently, instead of getting the protection they were entitled to, children continued to be criminalised as a result of the abuse they suffered (Adams et al. 1997). Aitchinson and O'Brian (1997) found there were 2380 cautions and 1730 convictions against young people under the age of 18 years for offences relating to prostitution between 1989 and 1995. Table 2 provides details of the cautions and convictions for soliciting and/or loitering against females between the ages of 10 and 17 in England and Wales between 1989 and 1995.

Table 2: Number of females cautioned or convicted for soliciting and loitering according to age between 1989 and 1995.

Year	Age	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
1989	Cautioned	0	0	0	3	9	32	60	268	372
	Convicted	0	0	0	0	0	5	24	361	390
1990	Cautioned	0	0	2	3	13	19	99	292	428
	Convicted	0	0	0	0	1	2	22	346	371
1991	Cautioned	0	0	1	5	10	34	111	200	361
	Convicted	0	0	3	0	0	5	35	278	321
1992	Cautioned	1	0	1	1	6	41	62	189	301
	Convicted	0	0	1	0	0	7	25	215	248
1993	Cautioned	0	0	0	5	32	32	82	145	296
	Convicted	0	0	0	0	0	7	25	73	105
1994	Cautioned	0	0	1	5	19	25	96	157	303
	Convicted	0	0	0	1	3	13	35	90	142
1995	Cautioned	0	0	2	4	11	27	63	156	263
	Convicted	0	0	0	0	0	4	25	72	101
Total	Cautioned	1	0	7	26	100	210	573	1407	2324
	Convicted	0	0	4	1	4	43	191	1435	1678

(Aitchinson & O'Brian 1997: 171)

Table 2 shows females under the age of 16 years were being cautioned for soliciting and loitering despite being below the age of sexual consent. The caution and conviction rates for males were significantly lower with the youngest males being 14 years when convicted and/or charged (Aitchinson & O'Brian 1997). This suggests that either young men were being largely ignored, or that young women were seen as blameworthy (Aitchinson & O'Brian 1997). Being charged for soliciting or loitering offences often resulted in the young person being fined, and for many of these young people their only source of income to pay the fine was prostitution (Adams et al. 1997).

The Children Act 1989 enshrined, in child protection legislation, the developing agenda of children's rights and participation (Buckingham 2000). The Act required welfare agencies and government departments to take into consideration the wishes of children when making decisions about their lives (Buckingham 2000). Although the Children Act 1989 promoted listening to the voice of the child, it struggled to balance participation and protectionism. This created conflict in cases where what professionals considered being in the best interest of a child did not align with the wishes of the child (Buckingham 2000). This conflict can often be seen in cases of child sexual exploitation where a child believes that they are in a loving relationship with a perpetrator, but the professionals involved view the situation as abusive. It is also important to note that children were not involved in the development of this piece of legislation, creating a significant gap between rhetoric and reality (Buckingham 2000).

In 1989 the United Nations published its *Convention on the Rights of the Child;* see Appendix 1 (United Nations 1989). Although children's rights had been referenced in previous international agreements, this was the first-time signatories were legally bound to incorporate the rights of children into domestic policy and legislation. The aim of the Convention was to create a global standard of childhood that could be used to protect and advocate for children across the globe (Boyden 2015). The Convention adopted and formalised the emerging view promoted by liberationists, that children were social agents who should be involved in shaping their own lives, rather than being passive objects in need of protection (Holzscheiter 2012, and Clarke 2011). Underpinning the Convention are four general principles; non-discrimination (article 2); best interest of the child (article 3); right to life, survival and development (article 6); right to be heard (article 12) (United Nations, 1989). These articles provide the framework and foundation for children's human rights and dignity to be respected in domestic law (Abebe & Bessell, 2014).

It must be noted that the concept of childhood underpinning the Convention was largely a western one. Indeed, the Convention ignores the idea that childhood is socially constructed and therefore influenced by cultural values (James & Prout 2015 and Boyden 2015). An example of this is the differing ages of sexual

consent between countries, for example, in Britain it is 16 years whereas in Nigeria it is 11 years and in South Korea it is 20 years (Age of Consent 2018). Different cultural norms are in some circumstances, at odds with the Convention. For example, the Convention states that children have a right to education and should be protected from dangerous or exploitative labour. However, in some countries children are the principle breadwinners and/or the heads of households and if they did not work, the family would have no income (Boyden 2015). Failure to consider the cultural norms and economic circumstances that impact on childhood has led to criticism and ambivalence from some countries toward the convention (Boyden 2015).

In 1991, the UK ratified the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and in 1992 these rights started to be incorporated into UK legislation and policy (UNICEF n.d b). The UK did not incorporate these rights directly into domestic law but instead committed to incorporating the rights and obligations of the Rights of the Child into existing legislation and policies in order to comply with the requirements of the treaty (Department of Education 2010). For example, children's rights were incorporated into the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) guidance, *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children*, which cites the rights of children and young people as one of the seven principles that underpin the guidance. The other six are: child centred approach; proactive approach; parenting, family life, and services; responsibility for criminal acts; integrated approach; shared responsibility (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009).

In relation to child sexual exploitation, the following *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* articles are particularly relevant:

- Article 3: Best interest of the child – this must be prioritised in all decisions made about a child
- Article 12: Respect of the views of every child – children's wishes and feelings must be considered and taken seriously

- Article 13: Freedom of expression – children must have access to relevant information (e.g. information about their rights and entitlements)
- Article 19: Protection from violence abuse and neglect – the government must do everything in its power to protect children
- Article 34: Protection from sexual exploitation – see below
- Article 39: Recovery from trauma and reintegration – children who have been abused or neglected must be provided with specialist support to help them recover

(United Nations 1989)

In relation to child sexual exploitation specifically, Article 34 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* states that children (those less than 18 years) should be protected from:

- 'The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity
- The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials, abduction, sale or trafficking for any purpose or in any form'

(United Nations 1989: 10).

And, 'states parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child'.

(United Nations 1989: 11)

Unlawful sexual activity, prostitution and pornography were all referenced as examples of sexual exploitation. The language used in this Convention made it clear that child prostitution is sexual exploitation (Arocha 2013). By signing up to

this Convention and ratifying it, the UK Government accepted the re-conceptualisation of children involved in prostitution as victims of child sexual exploitation; however, this was not immediately reflected in UK policy and legislation. The 1990's did see a move away from the term 'child prostitute' towards the use of the phrase 'involved in prostitution' but did not make the final step to adopting the term 'child sexual exploitation'.

In 2015 the Children's Commissioner published the report of the *UK Children's Commissioners UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Examination of the Fifth Periodic Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. This report found the implementation of article 12 of the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child*, namely the right to be heard, was extremely variable in UK law and practice. The findings of the report demonstrated the UK was failing to adhere to article 12, despite having had over two decades to develop and implement the measures required to achieve this (Children's Commissioner, 2015). In relation specifically to child sexual exploitation, the Children's Commissioner's (2015) found that children were not being enabled to participate in the design and development of local measures to protect them from exploitation. The report recommended that 'children's views and experiences should be heard and taken into account in development of all measures to combat child sexual abuse including child sexual exploitation' (Children's Commissioner 2015: 17).

Alongside the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, national children's charities including Barnardo's and The Children's Society started to recognise that children involved in prostitution were victims of abuse and began campaigning on the issue (Melrose 2013). In 1995, The Children's Society published a report entitled *The Game's Up: Redefining Child Prostitution* (Lee & O'Brien 1995). The Children's Society advocated for the decriminalisation of children involved in prostitution; recognition of structural factors that contribute to a child entering prostitution; consideration of the links between local authority care and prostitution; and the use of child protection procedures in situations of child prostitution (Pearce 2009, and Sanders, O'Neill & Pitcher 2009). The report also identified the wide-ranging risks to young people involved in

prostitution including physical harm, psychological harm and poor educational attainment (Sanders, O'Neill & Pitcher 2009). It was clear from this document that The Children's Society viewed children involved in prostitution as victims and not criminals (Lee & O'Brien 1995).

The Game's Up was complimented by Barnardo's *Splintered Lives: Sexual exploitation of children in the context of children's rights and child protection* report which was published in the same year (Kelly, et al. 1995). This report also promoted the idea that children involved in prostitution were sexually exploited and that this was a form of child abuse. This view was consistent with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Kelly et al. 1995). *Splintered Lives* made numerous recommendations, including identifying structural factors, such as poverty, education and housing that needed to be addressed to reduce the vulnerability of young people to child sexual exploitation (Kelly, et al. 1995).

Increased recognition of child sexual exploitation resulted in the 1st World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children being held in 1996. It was attended by representatives from 121 countries, including the UK (World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children 1996). The outcome of the conference was a declaration and agenda for action, encompassed in a set of ten commitments aimed at eradicating child sexual exploitation in line with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children 1996). The ten commitments covered: coordination of actions; preventative measures; protection of children caught up in the sex trade; recovery and reintegration of children into society; and child participation (World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children 1996).

Despite a clear shift in understanding within the UN and voluntary sector agencies, the view that children chose to engage in prostitution prevailed in the UK. Box 4 discusses the case of Aliyah Ismal, who died following a life of abuse, sexual exploitation and drug use despite social service involvement.

This case illustrates how professionals in the late 1990s failed to embrace the new understanding of child sexual exploitation.

Box 4: Details of Aliyah Ismal's Death

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Figure 4: Aliyah Ismal 1984 - 1998
(BBC, 1999)

Aliyah Ismal was 13 years old when she died of 'self-induced methadone poisoning' following a life of abuse and sexual exploitation (Harrow Children's Services and Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC) 1999: 1). At the time of her death she was homeless, having run away from local authority care, and was working as a prostitute in the red-light area of King's Cross, London (Kossoff 1999).

Dr Stephen Chan, Coroner summarised the case, 'It is sad to hear such a sorry tale of a very short life – a child's really – so tragically flawed and self-destructive… She was clearly spiralling down the dark alley of drugs and vice' (Kossoff 1999: 1). Phrases such as 'a child's really', 'tragically flawed' and 'self-destructive' demonstrates a lack of understanding of the impact of historical abuse/sexual exploitation and the symptoms of trauma; see Table 1. Dr Stephen Chan was not alone in his interpretation of Aliyah, social worker case notes included descriptions such as: 'abusing drugs and sexual promiscuity' and a teacher reported her, at the age of 8, as being 'aggressive and sexually precocious' (Kossoff 1999: 1).

The serious case review emphasised that Aliyah was 'a victim of coercion and not a criminal' and made the recommendations that 'all ACPCs should continue to acknowledge that the child who is abused through prostitution is a victim of coercion' (Harrow ACPC 1999: 10). Recommendations also included the need to listen to children, to consider the impact of emotional abuse on a child, to recognise the impact of living in a home where there is family history of mental health issues and/or domestic abuse and to develop suitable strategies for managing children who are beyond control (Harrow ACPC 1999).

By the end of the 20th century, there was a shift in understanding in relation to children and child prostitution within some sectors of UK society. Children were recognised as separate entities to adults within UK legislation and voluntary sector organisations started to re-frame child prostitution as child sexual exploitation. Children involved in prostitution started to be viewed as victims of abuse rather than criminals. However, the shift in understanding was not complete; the view that children who were sexually exploited were promiscuous and/or prostitutes persisted despite increasing evidence to the contrary.

Childhood in Crisis

In 2000, the Government began to address the issue of children abused through prostitution with the publication of *Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution: supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children* (Department of Health 2000). The report provided a protocol for the protection of children involved in prostitution. The guidance adopted the position proposed by Barnardo's and the Children's Society that children involved in prostitution were victims of abuse and not offenders, 'children involved in prostitution should be treated primarily as the victims of abuse' (Department of Health 2000: 3). The guidance made it clear that Children's Services and Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC) had a responsibility to protect children from exploitation (Pearce 2009). Guidance was given to all agencies working with children and young people in order to:

- Provide an integrated approach in order to both recognise the problem and provide solutions;
- Treat young people, primarily, as victims of abuse;
- Safeguard children and promote their welfare;
- Work together and provide children and young people with 'exit strategies' in order that they might leave prostitution; and,
- Investigate and prosecute those who coerce, exploit and abuse young people in the course of their involvement in prostitution.

(Department of Health 2000)

Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution promoted the use of existing child protection legislation to address the needs of young people involved in prostitution (Phoenix 2002). For example, the guidance stated that professionals

> '…should treat such children as children in need, who may be suffering, or may be likely to suffer, significant harm' placing a duty, under the Children Act 1989, on agencies to intervene in cases where children are 'involved in prostitution'
>
> (Department of Health 2000: 9)

Although differentiating between children and adults involved in prostitution was a step forward, the guidance did not adopt the terminology of 'child sexual exploitation'. It left the door open for young people to be convicted for crimes associated with prostitution, despite acknowledging that children are abused through prostitution and may be under 'very strong pressure to remain in prostitution' (Department of Health 2000: 22). Disappointingly, the guidance stated,

> '…it would be wrong to say that a boy or girl under 18 never freely chooses to continue to solicit, loiter or importune in a public place for the purpose of prostitution, and does not knowingly and willingly break the

> law…. The criminal justice process should only be considered if the child persistently and voluntarily continues to solicit, loiter or importune in a public place for the purposes of prostitution.'
>
> (Department of Health 2000: 27-28)

In 2004, there were still three young people under the age of 18 prosecuted for loitering or soliciting (Ministry of Justice, 2006). On one hand the guidance promoted a supportive response to children involved in prostitution and on the other, when a child appeared to have the capacity to choose to be exploited, it promoted criminalisation.

The guidance largely overlooked the structural factors that contribute to child sexual exploitation such as education, health, poverty and housing, citing abusive coercers as the predominant force behind child sexual exploitation (Melrose 2013, and Department of Health 2000). There was little recognition that social and material conditions could be significant push factors towards exploitation despite these being raised as significant contributing factors to child sexual exploitation in *Splintered Lives* (Phoenix 2002, and Kelly, et al. 1995). Phoenix (2000) states that against a backdrop of problems such as homelessness, poverty and poor education, prostitution becomes a survival strategy. Largely ignoring the impact of structural factors in the guidance, resulted in interventions that failed to address one of the key factors that contributed to a young person's vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

The guidance reiterated the importance of listening to children and stated,

> Children may be at a particularly important turning point in their lives and will need to be 'enabled to express their wishes and feelings; make sense of their circumstances and contribute to the decisions that affect them' (NSPCC et al., 1997). 'The creation of a successful exit strategy and reintegration into life free from abuse through prostitution are dependent on working with the child to construct a plan that she or he can agree to.'
>
> (Department of Health 2000: 21)

However, a child may not realise that they are subject to abuse, if this is not recognised by them or the professionals involved and they admitted to a soliciting and loitering offence, they were open to prosecution, 'if the individual has previously received a reprimand, she or he cannot be given a further reprimand and must be given a final warning or be charged' (Department Of Health 2000: 29). On one hand, the guidance promoted the importance of listening to a child and on the other criminalised them for this if they did not fit the accepted victim profile by disclosing abuse.

In line with the developing understanding of child exploitation, in 2003 the Sexual Offences Act was passed, creating a legal demarcation between adult prostitution and child sexual exploitation (Sanders, O'Neill & Pitcher 2009). The Act introduced new legislation to combat child sexual exploitation and trafficking. For the first time, recognition was given to the exploitation of boys as well as girls as the legislation was gender neutral. Included were a range of new offences including 'paying for the sexual services of a child, causing or inciting child prostitution, arranging or otherwise facilitating child prostitution and controlling a child prostitute' (Corby, Shemmings & Wilkins 2012: 101). The ideology underpinning this Act was that of an abolitionist approach, which strives to eradicate child sexual exploitation, believing that children under the age of 18 should be protected (Sanders, O'Neill & Pitcher 2009). However, the Act failed to decriminalise behaviours related to prostitution such as soliciting or loitering for those less than 18 years of age (Brooks-Gordon 2006).

Child sexual exploitation was viewed largely as a contact crime (one where there is physical contact between the victim and the perpetrator) until a new threat emerged at the turn of the millennium, that of 'cyber sexploitation'; the online sexual exploitation of children (O'Connell 2003: 2). The development of communication technologies opened up new access points and greater opportunities for perpetrators to sexually exploit young people (O'Connell 2003). In response to this developing threat, the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP) was created.

In 2006, CEOP published a report entitled, *Understanding Online Social Network Services and Risks to Youth*. This report identified a number of ways in which developing technologies created new opportunities for abuse, and increased communication amongst perpetrators to share interests and facilitate abuse whilst removing the physical barriers to abuse (e.g. parental supervision, geographical constraints) and the exposure to sexual material (e.g. pornography) (CEOP 2006).

In addition to putting in place measures to tackle online exploitation, the government created the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) to address human trafficking, a practice which is often associated with child sexual exploitation (Pearce 2006). The UKHTC focused on the prevention and prosecution of both internal and external trafficking with the aim to 'protect the public, target the traffickers and reduce the harm caused by human trafficking', using a human rights, victim-centred approach (National Crime Agency n.d: n.p). In 2009, the UKHTC became responsible for the newly developed National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate support (National Crime Agency n.d b). In 2013 the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group assessed the effectiveness of the NRM and produced the report *Hidden in Plain Sight* which raised a number of concerns including: first responders failing to identify trafficking victims; delays in decision making; judgements appearing to be influenced by the immigration status of the victim; the lack of an appeal procedure; and a failure to provide comprehensive assistance to trafficked victims (Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group 2013). The Home Office carried out their own review of the NMR in 2014 and found a lack of awareness of human trafficking amongst professionals, problems with information sharing and challenges facing support providers in moving people on due to a lack of appropriate follow on services (Home Office 2014). This research suggested the NRM, a tool that could be used to support those subject to child sexual exploitation, was underused and the extent of trafficking associated with child sexual exploitation was under-reported.

Summary

Child sexual exploitation is not a new phenomenon. This chapter traces its existence back to the Victorian era. What kept it hidden from view during the 20th Century was society's ambivalence towards those affected. The dominant view in the Victorian era was that children, who we now understand to have been sexually exploited, were common prostitutes responsible for their own deviant behaviour. Although terminology changed to a child involved in prostitution by the end of the 20th Century, the view of children being responsible for their actions prevailed. Throughout the Century, two dichotomies plagued the response to child sexual exploitation; innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion.

The new millennium saw a renewed focus on child sexual exploitation which led to investigations by voluntary sector organisations and a worldwide recognition of the issue. Developments internationally, alongside reports produced by the UK voluntary sector, began to influence UK policy. The government started to recognise children were coerced into prostitution, they were victims of abuse, and they had a valuable contribution to make in their own care planning.

Another key development during this period was the emergence of the sociology of childhood; the view of children as autonomous social actors. The notion of children as agents challenged the historical representations of children as passive, incomplete and incomplete. The view of children as active agents attracted growing support and was incorporated in national and international legislation; The Children Act 1989 and *United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child* (UNCRC) 1989. The sociology of childhood and in particular, children's rights have provided the foundation for this research; see chapter 5.

The following chapter provides an overview of current policy and practice in relation to child sexual exploitation and explores whether the two dichotomies identified above persisted into the new millennium.

Chapter 3: Rediscovery of Child Sexual Exploitation

The previous chapter outlined the changing narratives of child sexual exploitation since the Victorian era. Other than cases of white slavery publicised by W. T. Stead, child sexual exploitation victims were generally framed as 'child prostitutes' at the beginning of the 20th Century and 'children involved in prostitution' at the end of the 20th Century. The change in terminology reflected the increasing recognition that children involved in selling sex or sexual activities were subject to abuse. Despite, the increasing recognition of children as victims of abuse, attitudes that considered children to have agency within these abusive relationships and located the problem with the individual child's choices persisted.

This chapter explores child sexual exploitation from 2009 onwards. The starting point for this discussion will be the publication: *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Child Sexual Exploitation: supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children,* which used the terminology 'child sexual exploitation' for the first time in government guidance (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009, and Pearce 2014). This guidance, along with other government policies and legislation, will be reviewed. The chapter will then consider how these tools have translated in practice and will consider their effectiveness in relation to safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation.

Adoption of the Term 'Child Sexual Exploitation'

The UK Government adopted the term 'child sexual exploitation' in 2009 with the publication of *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Child Sexual Exploitation: supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children* and incorporated it in their safeguarding agenda (Department for Children, Schools and Family, 2009 and Pearce, 2014). Within this guidance, the UK Government adopted the following definition of child sexual exploitation, which was created by members of the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People:

> ‘Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.’ (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009: 9).

The document ‘sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people from sexual exploitation’ (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009: 5). To achieve this, the guidance provides information on prevention; identification of victims and perpetrators; safeguarding and promoting the welfare of victims; professionals’ roles and responsibilities; and prosecuting perpetrators (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). With regards to managing cases of child sexual exploitation, the guidance makes it clear that Local Safeguarding Children Board’s procedures for safeguarding children must be followed by professionals working with children (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). These procedures, founded in the Children Act 1989, are the ones that should be followed where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area.

To enable successful management of a case of child sexual exploitation, the guidance states that professionals must be alert to the signs that a child is being

sexually exploited (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). This means they must understand that challenging and complex behaviour can often be a sign of abuse and recognise that those over the age of sexual consent continue to have a right to support and protection (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). The guidance says professionals must realise that some children will not recognise their abuse or be ready to disclose (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). Furthermore, professionals are advised to consider whether the child has been trafficked (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). In all cases professionals must work with the child, family and other agencies (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). In the section of the guidance that discusses the legal age of consent to sex, it does not make it explicit that although 16 years is the legal age of sexual consent, consent can be fundamentally undermined by the process of sexual exploitation (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009: 46). This has contributed to confusion around sexual consent in relation to 16 to 18-year olds and has resulted in young people being considered to have consented to their abuse.

Underpinning the guidance is a set of key principles, to promote effective practice:

- Child-centred approach – focus on the wishes, feelings and the individual needs of the child.
- Proactive approach – with regards prevention, protection and prosecution.
- Consideration of family circumstances - recognise the challenges families face in situations of child sexual exploitation and provide comprehensive support services.
- Promoting children's rights – children are entitled to be safeguarded from abuse.
- Responsibility for criminal acts - child sexual exploitation is child sexual abuse and victims should not be viewed as criminals.

- Integrated approach – assessment of need should be holistic and all unmet need should be addressed.
- Shared responsibility – joint working between agencies and professionals

(Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009: 6)

These key principles can be seen to address the two dichotomies identified at the end of the previous chapter: innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion (these dichotomies are explored in chapter 4). Undertaking a holistic assessment of a child's needs provides the opportunity for both structural and individual factors to be explored and addressed. Stating that children who are sexually exploited are not criminals and are subject to child abuse, identifies these children as innocent victims coerced into sexual activity rather than deviants. However, although the guidance, acknowledges the impact of poverty and homelessness on child sexual exploitation, it neglects to identify how structural factors could be addressed on a national scale.

In 2011 two separate reports were published which raised concerns and called into question the implementation of the 2009 guidance. Barnardo's (2011) *Puppet on a String* report highlighted the prevalence of child sexual exploitation and the University of Bedfordshire's (Jago et al. 2011) report *What's Going On* found that only a quarter of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards had implemented the guidance effectively. In response, the Department of Education published a *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: Action Plan* (2011). The plan assigned actions to the Government, local agencies and voluntary and community partners splitting the actions into four themes: growing independence – managing risks; getting out of and combatting child sexual exploitation; getting justice for victims; getting help to deal with what has happened and looking to the future (Department of Education 2011). A progress report was published in 2012 by the Department of Education which described encouraging progress but acknowledged 'there are still areas where the existence of child sexual exploitation is not properly acknowledged or addressed' (3).

This was confirmed by a piece of investigative journalism undertaken by Andrew Norfolk at *The Times* (2011). Andrew Norfolk reported on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham and highlighted the failure of statutory agencies to protect those subjected to sexual abuse; these articles are discussed in more detail in the following subsection (*The Times* 2011). Following the publication of the articles in *The Times*, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council commissioned an independent review into child sexual exploitation in the borough; the Jay report (2014). In response to the Jay report, the Government carried out an inspection of Rotherham and its response to child sexual exploitation; the Casey report (2015). Both reports found statutory services had failed to protect those subject to child sexual exploitation (Jay 2014 and Casey 2015). The Jay and Casey reports are discussed in more detail in the subsection; child sexual exploitation hits the headlines.

In response to Jay (2014) and Casey's (2015) reports into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, the Government updated *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation* (2015). This report outlined a range of actions the Government would take to address the issue, including:

- A whistleblowing national portal for child abuse related reports;
- A new national taskforce and a centre of expertise;
- Eradication of the culture of denial;
- Categorising child sexual abuse as a national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement so that this is prioritised by every police force; and,
- Provide additional funding for organisations supporting those who have experienced sexual abuse.

(HM Government 2015)

Since the publication of this action plan, the majority of aims have been achieved (HM Government 2017). In 2016 the NSPCC added a whistle blowing helpline to the range of services it provides (NSPCC 2019b). In 2016 the NWG Child Sexual Exploitation Response Unit was launched and in 2017 the Centre

for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse was founded. Child Sexual Exploitation has become the sixth national threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement and there has been a reported increase in funding for support services (HM Government 2017a).

Eliminating a culture of denial is more complicated to achieve as it involves attitudinal change by professionals and society as a whole. However, in the Government's T*ackling Child Sexual Exploitation: Progress Report,* it states that this has been achieved:

- We have tackled the culture of denial;
- We have increased accountability;
- We have increased the support available to victims and survivors of sexual abuse; and,
- We have sharpened the law enforcement response and brought more offenders to justice.

(HM Government 2017)

The Government made the following claim:

> 'We have tackled the culture of denial within professions about the scale and nature of this crime. More victims and survivors of abuse are now being identified and are getting the protection and support that they need. Cultural attitudes have shifted so that victims are no longer being blamed for their abuse.'
>
> (HM Government 2017: 3)

However, in the same document, they make the following contradictory statement:

> ‘We know that victims, and potential victims, of child sexual exploitation struggle to successfully access the safeguarding support available from the range of statutory and non-statutory services because they are not well-placed to accept or seek the help on offer.’
>
> (HM Government 2017: 32)

This statement places responsibility on victims and potential victims for not being able to access support. There is no consideration of whether the services provided are accessible and responsive to need. In addition, there is no acknowledgement of the impact of austerity on the range, availability and accessibility of support. For example, despite acknowledging the importance of children having regular and sustained contact with a trusted adult, the Government cuts in funding to local authorities have resulted in unprecedented reductions in youth service provision and significant reductions in social care budgets (Pope 2016). These contradictions call into question the extent to which the Government has achieved what it claims and the extent of the political commitment to tackling child sexual exploitation.

In 2017, the Department for Education updated their guidance on child sexual exploitation and introduced a new definition:

> ‘Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.’
>
> (Department for Education 2017: 5)

This definition positions child sexual exploitation as sexual abuse. However, the definition is less clear about consent. The sentence, ‘the victim may have been

sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual' is somewhat ambiguous when it is largely accepted that consent is eroded in situations of child sexual exploitation (Department for Education 2017: 5). However, the accompanying guidance addresses both the lack of clarity in the 2009 guidance, and the 2017 definition in relation to consent, making it clear that, 'consent is only valid where they make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice.' (Department for Education 2017: 6).

This guidance reiterates the message that child sexual exploitation is not the victim's fault, interventions should be child-centred, and safeguarding is everyone's responsibility (Department for Education 2017). It also highlights the importance of effective information sharing, relationship-based practice and interventions being underpinned by knowledge and understanding of the complexities of child sexual exploitation (Department for Education 2017).

There is a debate concerning whether an individual definition of child sexual exploitation is needed given that the 2017 definition clearly identifies it as child sexual abuse (Research in Practice 2017). Beckett and Walker (2018) recognise the contribution that the definition of child sexual exploitation has made; for example, increasing professionals' understanding of extra-familial abuse, abuse of adolescents, and that exchange does not negate abuse. However, they argue that sub-categorising child abuse is problematic, because it creates a hierarchy of abuse which has resulted in an imbalance of funding and service provision (Beckett and Walker 2018). Beckett and Walker (2018) advocate instead for a model of child sexual abuse that recognises, but does not rank, the different ways it is experienced and focuses on need rather than categorisation.

Legislation: Protection and Prosecution

As discussed in the previous chapter, the responses of services and practitioners to child sexual exploitation are underpinned by the Children Act 1989 and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). This section considers other key pieces of UK legislation that are in place today and can be used to protect children from sexual exploitation.

Children Act 1989

In addition to providing the foundations for today's safeguarding system, the Children Act 1989 gave professionals powers which can be used to disrupt child sexual exploitation. Section 49 of the Children's Act (1989) made it an offence for a person to take, keep and/ or assist a child in care to be away from a responsible person. The offence relates to any child in care up to the age of 18 (Children Act 1989 s.49). If the police suspect someone of this offence, they can issue the individual with a harbouring warning (Gladman & Heal 2017). The warning is in the form of a letter sent by the police to a suspected perpetrator (Gladman & Heal 2017). The letter tells the individual that the child they are associating with is underage and the person or organisation with parental responsibility does not consent to them having contact (Gladman & Heal).

For children who are not in care, a harbouring warning is underpinned by the Child Abduction Act 1984. In this case, police can only issue a harbouring warning up until the child is 16 (Child Abduction Act 1984 s.2). If the individual who received the harbouring warning is subsequently found with the named child and the child is under 16, the perpetrator can be arrested for abduction contrary to section 2 of this 1984 Act. If the child is over 16, and in care, the perpetrator can be arrested for an offence contrary to section 49 of the Children Act 1989. Children between 16 and 18 years who do not live in care are not protected.

This disparity between the protection afforded to children in care and those who are not, can also be seen in recovery orders (Children Act 1989 s.50). Section 50 of the Children Act 1989 gives courts the power to issue a recovery order that requires an individual to produce a child and enables professionals to remove the child from that individual (Children Act 1989 S.50). Again, the protection afforded to children is different for those in care. A recovery order can only be made in respect of a child who is subject to a care order, emergency protection order or under police protection. It cannot, therefore, be used in cases where the child is not in local authority care or under police protection.

Children Act 2004

In 2004 the Children Act 1989 was amended. Explanatory notes that accompany the Children Act 2004 explain this amendment came as the result of the Laming Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbie (Department of Education and Skills 2004). In 2000 Victoria died as a result of injuries inflicted by her guardians, despite being linked in with several safeguarding organisations (including social care, health and the police) (Laming 2003). In response to the inquiry undertaken following the death of Victoria, the 2004 Children Act was passed. The Laming Inquiry (2003) raised numerous concerns in relation to how the case was dealt with by professionals, including the fact that not a single professional had effectively engaged with Victoria. In response, the 2004 Children Act amended s.17 and s.47 of the 1989 Children Act by inserting;

> 'For the purposes of making a determination under this section as to the action to be taken with respect to a child, a local authority shall, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare:
>
> a. Ascertain the child's wishes and feelings regarding the action to be taken with respect to him; and
>
> b. Give due consideration (having regard to his age and understanding) to such wishes and feelings of the child as they have been able to ascertain.'
>
> (Children Act 1989 s.17 and s.47)

Thus, strengthening the duty placed on safeguarding professionals and organisations in relation to eliciting and considering the voice of the child.

Sexual Offences Act 2003

The main piece of legislation used to prosecute perpetrators and/or facilitators of the abuse is the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This Act protects children and young people from contact and non-contact sexual exploitation (Sexual

Offences Act 2003). Offences include engaging in non-consensual activity with a child; inciting a child under the age of 16 years to engage in sexual activity; arranging or facilitating a sexual offence against a child (whether or not the offence takes place); meeting a child following sexual grooming (whether or not a contact offence takes place); exploiting a child through prostitution and/or pornography; and internally or externally trafficking a child for the purposes of sexual exploitation (Sexual Offences Act 2003).

One drawback of the Sexual Offences Act is that it does not decriminalise behaviours related to prostitution for those less than 18 years (soliciting and loitering offences), leaving room for children to continue to be criminalised as a result of being sexually exploited (Brooks-Gordon 2006). This creates a disjuncture between the policy, which views children subject to child sexual exploitation as victims of abuse, and the criminal justice system where they could potentially be prosecuted for crimes associated with this abuse (Howard League for Penal Reform 2012).

However, the Act does define the concept of consent. The Act clearly states that ‘a person consents if he agrees by choice, and the freedom and capacity to make that choice’ (Sexual Offences Act 2003: s.74). This definition of consent makes it clear that consent cannot be given in circumstances where an individual (regardless of age) does not have choice or freedom or capacity to do so. This is important because it acknowledges the complexity of the concept of consent. In situations of child sexual exploitation, the ability of a child to consent is eroded in a number of ways. In relation to choose, an individual may be manipulated, coerced or black-mailed. With regards to freedom, an individual may be threatened or trafficked. In respect of capacity, an individual may be intoxicated, experiencing mental health issues, have a learning difficulty or be unconscious. These examples are not exhaustive but illustrate the complexity and depth of the concept of consent.

Modern Slavery Act 2015

Kevin Bales, Professor of Contemporary Slavery, categorises child sexual exploitation as a form of modern day slavery, ‘forced prostitution and sexual

slavery must be firmly located as forms of slavery and not be devalued or obfuscated by virtue of the sexual or gendered nature of the exploitation' (Bales 2005: 67). If child sexual exploitation is viewed as a form of slavery, then it can be prosecuted under the 2015 Modern Slavery Act; The Modern Slavery Act was passed in 2015 and consolidated existing slavery and trafficking legislation. With regards to child sexual exploitation, the Act put in place the following: an increase in the maximum sentence for slavery and human trafficking from 14 years to life imprisonment; slavery and trafficking prevention orders (STPO) and slavery and trafficking risk orders (STRO) to restrict movement or impose restrictions on convicted or suspected traffickers; legal requirements to report all suspected cases of human trafficking to the UKHTC using the NRM; statutory defence for victims who have been compelled to commit an offence as a direct result of their trafficking or slavery situation; and provisions for independent child trafficking advocates to legally represent child victims (Modern Slavery Act 2015).

In 2014, Barnardo's carried out a review of the effectiveness of legislation for child sexual exploitation and trafficking. This review found that if the full range of potential offences in each individual case were considered, justice could be served using existing legislation (Barnardo's 2014). Despite this, a number of amendments to existing legislation were recommended. For example, it was recommended that Child Abduction Warning Notices were extended to all children under 18 years regardless whether they resided with their family or in local authority care; these notices could only be issued in relation to children over 16 years if they were a looked after child (Barnardo's 2014). The review also recommended that training was provided to members of the Criminal Justice System to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and the impact of this abuse on those affected (Barnardo's 2014).

Child Sexual Exploitation Hits the Headlines

The previous section outlined current Government policy and legislation created to address child sexual exploitation. These statutory tools acknowledged the agency of children and young people and firmly locate responsibility for the abuse with the perpetrators. This section, reviews serious case reviews,

newspaper articles and academic literature to consider how policy and legislation has been translated into practice in regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of victims of child sexual exploitation.

In 2011, child sexual exploitation hit the headlines. With the support of information provided by a voluntary sector organisation, *The Times* newspaper published a series of articles exposing child sexual exploitation in Northern England and the Midlands; see Box 5. The voluntary sector organisation shared information with *The Times* because it felt statutory agencies were not responding appropriately to concerns raised about child sexual exploitation in Rotherham (Gladman & Heal 2017 and Jay 2014). Concerns had been raised by the voluntary sector organisation and reports by Adele Gladman in 2002 and Dr Angie Heal in 2003 and 2006 (Gladman & Heal 2017 and Jay 2014). The articles in *The Times* were the beginning of a tidal wave of child sexual exploitation cases to be uncovered and publicised in the national press and raised concerns about the effectiveness of organisations and professionals responsible for protecting children from harm.

Box 5: The Times Newspaper

THE TIMES

The Moon shadow

Revealed: conspiracy of silence on UK sex gangs

Most convicted offenders of Pakistani heritage · Pattern of abuse across North and Midlands

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(*The Times* 2011: 1)

On the 11th January 2011, *The Times* headline read, 'Revealed: conspiracy of silence on UK sex gangs'. Andrew Norfolk, an investigative journalist wrote a series of articles documenting the sexual exploitation of hundreds of British girls by criminal pimping gangs in towns and cities across Northern England and the Midlands (*The Times* 2011). Norfolk reported that this abuse had been under investigation for over 14 years with only 17 court cases between 1997 and 2010 (*The Times* 2011). Out of the 56 people prosecuted, 3 were white and 53 were Asian with 50 of those being Muslims (*The Times* 2011). The disproportionate number of Asian people prosecuted for these crimes was blamed for the lack of attention given to the issue as the police and other safeguarding practitioners feared being branded as racists (*The Times* 2011). Chief Inspector Alan Edwards was quoted 'these girls are being passed around and used as meat. To stop this type of crime you need to start talking about it, but everyone's being too scared to address the ethnicity factor' (*The Times* 2011: 1). This was the conspiracy of silence; statutory sector organisations silence by the fear of negatively impacting race relations (Cockbain 2013).

From 2011 onwards, articles on child sexual exploitation became a common feature in the national press with cases being identified around the UK including Rotherham, Derby, Peterborough, Rochdale, York, Torbay, Telford, Bristol, Coventry and Oxford. As a result, child sexual exploitation has remained in the spotlight putting public pressure on the Government to tackle the issue. The Government has responded by commissioning investigations and research to try and identify the most effective ways of responding to this type of abuse (Brown et al. 2017, Casey 2015 & Department for Education 2017).

In response to the concerns initially raised in *The Times*, Professor Alexis Jay, formerly Scotland's Chief Social Work Adviser, was commissioned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to lead an independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. The initial report published in 2014 conservatively estimated that 1,400 children had been sexually exploited in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013, a devastating example of the impact of

safeguarding failures (Jay 2014). Indeed, Jay found a number of serious flaws in child protection systems had contributed to the extent of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham being kept hidden. These included: the seriousness of the problem was underplayed by senior managers within social care; the police gave no priority to child sexual exploitation; reports highlighting the issue were suppressed and ignored; concerns raised by front line workers were ignored; front line workers were overwhelmed by the number of children affected; Rotherham's Safeguarding Children Board failed to monitor the implementation of child sexual exploitation policies and procedures; there was poor assessment of risk; there were serious gaps in professionals' knowledge regarding child sexual exploitation; in some cases blame for the abuse was placed with the victim; and there was a lack of long-term support services for victims (Jay 2014). Jay stated that 'this abuse is not confined to the past but continues to this day' (2014: 1).

Rotherham Borough Council rejected the findings of the Jay Report and consequently, in 2014 Louise Casey, head of the Government's Troubled Families Unit, was appointed to carry out an inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in relation to how the Council 'exercise of its functions on governance, children and young people, and taxi and private hire licensing' (Casey, 2015: 9). Casey's report was damning, finding the council not fit for purpose, making particular reference to its failure to protect vulnerable children and young people from harm (Casey 2015). Casey (2015) supported the findings of the Jay Report and criticised the council for failing to respond to its recommendations, and for continuing to deny the extent of child sexual exploitation in the city. The Casey Report led to the resignation of the cabinet of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, bringing the council under the control of central government (Pidd & Laville 2015). These findings are not atypical, an overview of some of the other reviews of practice are presented in Box 6.

Box 6: Details of Serious Case Reviews into Child Sexual Exploitation

Serious Case Reviews into Child Sexual Exploitation

2010: Derby

In 2010 Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board published a serious case review following the sexual exploitation of two girls in local authority care. The review found that professionals failed to recognise the children's risk factors (e.g. history of children service involvement, poor self-image, isolation) or the warning signs (e.g. criminal activity, absconding, drug and alcohol misuse) of child sexual exploitation and, therefore, missed numerous opportunities to intervene (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010). Part of the reason for this was children were viewed as rebellious adolescents (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010). Comprehensive assessments of need or risk were not carried out and, therefore, there was no consideration of the children's vulnerabilities, their capacity to consent, their ability to make informed decisions or the impact of abuse on their behaviour (both children were convicted of criminal offences) (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010). Safeguarding procedures were poorly understood, not fit for purpose and were not comprehensively applied (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010). This also led to poor multi-agency working and information sharing resulting in misperceptions and misunderstandings of the situation (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010). As of 2015, nine men had been charged with offences ranging from rape to witness intimidation in relation to this case.

2013: Rochdale

Two serious case reviews were undertaken following the prolonged sexual exploitation of seven young people in Rochdale. The review highlighted failings in a number of areas: policies and procedures were not consistently followed, staff supervision was poor, high caseloads contributed to staff being overwhelmed and services being disorganised, some professionals held 'victim blaming attitudes' and a there was a lack of child-centered working (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013). As seen in both the Rotherham

and Derby cases, young people's behaviour was not considered a symptom of trauma or within the context of child development (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013). In addition, children were expected to understand the complex nature of their situation, Griffiths evidences this with a quote taken from a social work assessment, 'failure to see the seriousness of becoming pregnant at 13 years old' (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013: 69). It must be noted that there were professionals who recognised the problem and advocated on behalf of the young people, but their voices also went largely unheard (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013). In 2012 nine men were jailed and in 2016 another nine were given custodial sentences for crimes associated with child sexual exploitation.

2015: Oxford

In Oxford a serious case review was undertaken following the sexual exploitation of six girls. The girls were groomed, abused by multiple perpetrators and internally trafficked; although six girls were subject of the serious case review it was estimated that up to 373 children were targeted for sex by gangs of men in Oxfordshire over a 16 year period (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). The review found that organisations had a 'weak understanding of government guidance related to the exploitation of children' (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 1). Due to a lack of understanding by professionals of child sexual exploitation, girls were again seen as difficult and making bad choices without considering the root cause of their behaviour (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). Professionals used language that inferred children were at least in part to blame for their abuse, considered them to have consented to the sexual activity and viewed them as adults rather than children (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). For example, it was recorded on the police's missing people database 'she is a streetwise girl who is willful…' and '…it is possible she is prostituting herself' (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 34). Children were not listened to, and there were occasions when disclosures were disbelieved or thought to be exaggerated (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). Practitioners demonstrated a lack of understanding of the notion of consent and normalised the fact that children

were having sex with men (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). Again, child sexual exploitation was not seen as a priority, national guidance was not followed, front line staff were overwhelmed by cases and there was a lack of a coordinated response to the issue (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). As of 2015, seven men had been convicted of 59 offences including rape, trafficking and arranging or facilitating prostitution in relation to this case (BBC 2015).

2016: Bristol

This serious case review was undertaken in response to two separate cases, Brook 1 and Brook 2, where a number of children were subject to child sexual exploitation. The review found that despite professional commitment to the children, there were delays in recognising, and at times a lack of understanding of, child sexual exploitation (Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016). The review also found that there was a lack of support, guidance and training for front line practitioners (Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016). Again, there were incidences where young people were mistakenly deemed to have consented to their exploitation (Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016). The report quotes one parent who said, 'people would say she brought it all on herself' and another parent who had been told by investigating police officers that their daughter, 'was making lifestyle choices' (Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016: 34). In total 15 offenders were convicted of crimes associated with child sexual exploitation (Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016).

Many of the issues raised by serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation were not new. The previous chapter highlighted the issue of children being blamed for their abuse. In the Victorian era the dominant view was that girls who had been sexually abused were deviants, precocious temptresses who lure men into sexual activity. Similar views have been found within the serious case reviews discussed in Box 6, where abused children have been viewed as ‘challenging rebellious adolescents’ who are ‘making bad choices’. Children have been viewed as being complicit in their abuse without considering their capacity to consent in a situation of sexual exploitation (this will be explored

further in chapter 4). In addition, a number of children who were the subject of these reviews were criminalised for behaviours associated with their abuse. These attitudes and actions echo the previously discussed Victorian responses to this issue, and this raises the question of how much the tendency towards the moral judgement of young women, who are clearly victims of abuse, has changed.

Despite the children's rights agenda coming to the fore towards the end of the 20th century and being embedded in government guidance and legislation, these serious case reviews demonstrate that children's rights are not consistently promoted, and a child-centred approach is not always taken (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013, Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015, and Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016). Children have not been safeguarded from abuse, and their voices have not been considered within assessments and care planning. In addition, there have been occasions when disclosures of abuse have been disbelieved or considered to be exaggerated or consensual (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015).

Additionally, on numerous occasions, behavioural responses to trauma and abuse have been viewed as challenging behaviour, non-compliance or rebelliousness without exploration of the cause (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013, Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). Failure to listen to children and investigate the reasons behind the behaviour they displayed has contributed to the failures of professionals and organisations to safeguard them from abuse (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013, Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015, and Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016)

Symptoms such as pre-occupation with danger, risky sexual behaviour and lack of interpersonal boundaries have all resulted in young people being viewed as complicit and/or consenting to their abuse, whereas the root cause of the behaviour is the trauma experienced as the result of being sexually exploited;

see Table 1. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's report into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups found this to be the case, with professionals frequently referring to victims as ''promiscuous', 'liking the glamour', engaging in 'risky behaviour' and being generally 'badly behaved', without these behaviours being considered as signs of trauma (2012: 12). Behaviours including aggressive behaviour, problems relating to others and intolerance have led to victims being labelled as challenging, failing to engage with support and being badly behaved, whereas again these behaviours can be interpreted as symptoms of trauma (Walter 2012). Where victims' behaviours have been misinterpreted, it has led to failures in safeguarding, resulting in their prolonged abuse.

These issues may not have arisen if organisations and professionals had followed the 2009 government guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Child Sexual Exploitation: supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children* (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). As discussed previously, this guidance is underpinned by seven key principles including using a child-centred approach, promoting children's rights and viewing children as victims of abuse who should not be criminalised for behaviours associated with their sexual exploitation (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). Disappointingly, all of the case/practice reviews covered in this section have found that organisations have failed to effectively enact this guidance and, as a result, children have failed to be safeguarded.

Summary

As was the case in the Victorian era, the catalyst for developments in child sexual exploitation was the media. In 1885 it was W. T. Stead for the *Pall Mall Gazette*; in 2011 it was Andrew Norfolk for *The Times*. These investigative journalists publicised the abuse of children and young people which in turn, put public pressure on the Government to address the issue.

In response, the Government introduced guidance and legislation aimed at addressing child sexual exploitation. Underpinning the Government's guidance was a child-centred approach that promoted children's rights and viewed them

as victims, not criminals. However, as the serious case reviews demonstrate, statutory guidance has not consistently been put into practice. In addition, rape myths have persisted, there has been a lack of understanding of the psychological aspect of grooming and sexual exploitation, and the dichotomies of innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion continue to be present. As a result, some professionals and organisations have failed to safeguarding children and young people, have blamed them for their abuse and have not upheld their rights.

To explore the potential reasons for these persistent failures further, the following chapter will consider the complexity of children's agency, power dynamics and the concept of consent in cases of child sexual exploitation.

Chapter 4: Agency, Power and Consent

This chapter focuses on the dichotomies identified in chapter 2 and found in practice in chapter 3; innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion. It is important to explore these dichotomies as they inform dominant discourses relating to child sexual abuse and have contributed to children being blamed for their abuse and to safeguarding failures.

In the Victorian era children that did not fit with the construction of children as passive innocents were labelled as deviant. In Rotherham between 1997 and 2013, children who returned to their perpetrator were considered to have consented to their abuse and therefore were not treated as a victim of a crime (Jay 2014).

These dichotomies fail to recognise the nuances of agency, power and consent. These nuances need to be understood by professionals to understand sexual abuse in the context of grooming and exploitation. This chapter explores the nuances of these concepts in relation to child sexual exploitation.

Agency

Agency can be defined as follows:

> '…a person's or groups ability to make (semi-) autonomous decisions…'
>
> (Green 2015: 104)

The dominant view of childhood that emerged during the Victorian era framed children as incomplete adults, incapable of exerting agency (James & Prout 2015; Pearce 2013). Alongside this, children were expected to be passive, innocent, pure and asexual (Pearce 2013).

In the 1950s, a new socially constructed category emerged that separated a group of children from the Victorian construction of childhood, that of youth (Hendrick 2015 and Prout & James 2015). Unlike the category of the child, youth has not been defined in law (Children Act 1989). However, legislation has

differentiated between those under and over 16 years of age. For example, the Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that 16 is the legal age at which someone can consent to sex, and a 16 year old can get married or form a civil partnership (with parental or third-party consent) (Marriage Act 1949 section 3, as amended, Civil Partnership Act 2004 section 4). Youths are caught between childhood and adulthood (Hallett 2017).

In comparison to the view of children as passive innocents, youths are considered to have agency. Youths throughout history have been framed as being deviant, delinquent and a threat to the moral fabric of society (Hier 2011). Indeed, youths have been the subject of moral panics since the category was created; for example, Mods and Rockers, skinheads, boy-racers and hoodie wearers (Heir 2011 and Prout & James 2015).

As a result of the recognition 'children' can have agency through the category of youth, the paradigm of children as passive began to be challenged towards the end of the last century with the development of the sociology of childhood. The sociology of childhood re-framed children as actors/agents in the social world and challenged the view of them as incompetent and incomplete (James & Prout 2015). This was complimented by the idea that children should participate in decisions made about their lives as promoted by the UNCRC and the Children Act 1989. However, there is a caveat to article 12 of the UNCRC which restricts participation to a child who is 'capable of forming his or her own views', the assessment of which is likely to be undertaken by an adult with an adult-centric view of capability (White & Choudhury 2007). Although, the idea of children as active agents has been widely adopted, Prout and James (2015) guard against complacency, highlighting that the view of children as 'incomplete adults' continues to be a powerful discourse.

Although it is positive that children's agency has started to be recognised, the 16 to 18-year-olds subsection created by legislation has created dilemmas for safeguarding professionals. These professionals have a duty to protect children under the age of 18 from sexual exploitation, but this is complicated by the age of sexual consent being 16 years. Indeed, Gladman & Heal (2017) state that

children between 16 and 18 years have been treated differently to those under 16. They found that children in this subcategory were less likely to be considered as being subject to sexual exploitation and afforded less protection (Gladman & Heal 2017). The quote below is from the Rochdale serious case review into child sexual exploitation:

> The CPS advice was therefore based very considerably on consent by 111 although given that she had also been physically assaulted, sustaining injuries the issue of consent could not have been an issue in relation to this allegation. It was also the case that the issue of consent did not need to be a consideration given her that 1111111 16.
> (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013: 44)

In this example, because the child/ young person was over the legal age of sexual consent, the CPS presumed that she had consented; this is despite there being evidence of physical force. In this case, the CPS made the decision that a criminal investigation against the alleged perpetrators should not be pursued.

In comparison, children under 16 are typically viewed as either passive victims or agents who are in some way to blame for their abuse, mirroring the Victorian discourses of children being either innocent or deviant (Brodie et al. 2016; Kitzinger 2015 and Warrington 2013). Presenting a child or young person as a passive victim buys into the dominant construction of a ‘real’ victim being weak and helpless and therefore in need of support or acknowledgement within the criminal justice system (Melrose 2013; Pearce 2013; Warrington 2013 and Woodiwiss 2014). On the other hand, presenting a child as an active agent could support the mistaken idea that children have consented to sexual exploitation.

These polarised attitudes do not acknowledge the possibility that a child or young person could be both a victim and an agent at the same time. Indeed, children and young people may actively choose to engage in sexual actively albeit in the context of limited choice (Dodsworth 2015 and Pearce 2013). For

example, in situations of poverty, homelessness and/or unemployment, some young people may exercise agency by selling or swapping sex as a survival strategy as illustrated in the following quote:

> ‘If you’ve done it [had sex] for somewhere to stay, you might as well do it for the money – it’s the same thing really as you’re having sex to survive.’
>
> (Barnardo’s 2013: 20).

Recognising agency does not negate the harm caused in these situations but demonstrates how a child or young person can be a victim of child sexual exploitation whilst exercising agency (Dodsworth 2015 and Pearce 2013). What is of paramount importance is that regardless of the actions of the child or young person they are not, in any way, blamed for their abuse.

Warrington (2013) believes that respecting a child and young person’s agency is particularly important in the context of child sexual exploitation which is itself ‘defined by control and domination’ (10). Indeed, failure to promote agency, results in the disempowerment and control exercised by perpetrators over children and young people being replicated by professionals involved in the child protection system; a common issue highlighted in serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation (Brown 2006 and Warrington 2013). Warrington (2013) argues that children and young people's agency should be viewed as a resource and advocates for them to be given opportunities to exercise their ‘power and influence within service provision’ (110). Beckett et al. (2013) asserts that where this is achieved, safeguarding interventions are likely to be more meaningful and effective.

A more nuanced approach to the concept of agency is required where agency exists along a continuum and can co-exist with victimhood. This can be achieved if the nuances of consent and choice are understood. Increased understanding of these concepts would support professionals to navigate dilemmas linked to age, consent and agency.

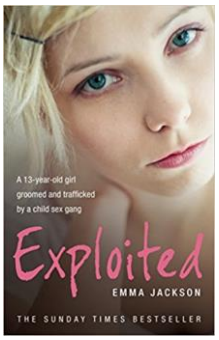
Consent

The tensions and limitations associated with children and young people's agency are illustrated by the way in which sexual consent has been interpreted in the context of child sexual exploitation. Indeed, misunderstandings by professionals in relation to whether children and young people have the agency to consent to sexual activity have been raised in serious case reviews that focus on child sexual exploitation. For example, the serious case review carried out in Derby stated:

> '…there was a failure to understand the impact of coercion by the abusers on their [the victims'] behaviour, and to assess their capacity to make informed choices about whether or not they were truly consenting to go with their abusers.'
>
> (Derby Safeguarding Children Board 2010, 11).

As discussed, in cases of sexual exploitation, regardless of the age of the victim, consent to sexual activity cannot be given. The Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that the age at which an individual can consent to sexual activity is 16 years and a person consents if 'he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice' (s.74). Emma Jackson, a pseudonym of one of the victims in the Rotherham case, documents the many ways that her capacity to consent was eroded in her book *Exploited* (2010); see Box 7.

Box 7: Extracts from *Exploited* by Emma Jackson



Emma Jackson's book *Exploited*, the story of her sexual exploitation from the age of 13 years, provides the following examples of how consent can be eroded by child sexual exploitation:

Drugs and Alcohol: 'From now on, I lived for those times we'd get together, have a drink, a smoke, a few spliffs.' (93).

Manipulation: '…They've [parents] got so used to you being their sweet little girl that they don't realise you're growing up, you're capable of thinking for yourself. You've got your head screwed on, all right. You don't need them fussing and flapping as if you're still ten years old.' (158).

Threats: 'I can hurt you in all sorts of ways, ways that don't show. Cross me and you'll find out' (197).

Blackmail: 'Apart from anything else, I was always worried about the photos, the ones those men took of me when Tarik first raped me.' (203).

Physical and Sexual Abuse: 'I didn't realise it at the time, and it's a horrible thought, but when he raped me those first few times, it must have been to get me used to it, sort of, before lining up other men. It's like breaking me in. Then rape me now and then to remind me who's boss.' (224).

Unfortunately, some professionals do not consider the impact of sexual exploitation on an individual's choice, freedom and capacity. For example, the Jay report (2014) includes this quote from a professional:

> '…the CID representative argued against the category of sexual abuse being used because he thought that Child A had been '100% consensual in every incident'; unbelievably, this comment was made in relation to a 12 year-old who had sexual intercourse with five adults.'
>
> (Jay 2014: 44)

One reason given by professionals for suggesting that children have consented to their abuse is that they have returned to their perpetrator. However, there are many reasons why a child and young person may return to their perpetrator. Perpetrators use violence and intimidation to secure a child's cooperation. Gladman and Heal (2017) presented extracts from Gladman's private practice to illustrate the use of violence and intimidation in the context of child sexual exploitation:

> 'Louisa was telephoned by her abuser, using her sister's mobile phone. He told her that failure to comply with his requests would have immediate and severe consequences for her sister.'
>
> 'Jo was forced to witness a severe and physical and sexual assault on another girl and was told that the same would happen to her if she did not agree to the demands of her abuser.'
>
> 'Kaye had the end of her finger amputated by her abuser while other males held her down. The assault was filmed using a mobile phone and used to intimidate and ensure compliance of other children.'
>
> (Gladman and Heal 2017: 81)

These examples demonstrate the use of threats, intimidation and violence by perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. In Louisa's case the perpetrator threatened her sister and proved he could carry out this threat by using her sister's mobile. In Jo's and Kaye's cases, perpetrators used the assault of one child to intimidate others.

There are other theories in the literature that can explain why a victim may return to their perpetrator. These include trauma bonding, freeze and endure theory and betrayal trauma theory. Trauma bonding, more commonly known as Stockholm syndrome, is where victims form strong emotional attachments to their perpetrator(s) (Dutton & Painter 1993). Trauma bonding occurs when abuse features a power imbalance and intermittent good-abusive treatment on behalf of the abuser. It was first observed in hostage situations and occurs in conditions of high stress where an individual feels that their life is at risk (Strentz 2012). In these circumstances, the individual adapts their behaviour to stay alive (Strentz 2012). The positive bond the child develops for the abuser results in feelings of 'them' versus 'us' (Strentz 2012). At the same time the child develops negative feelings toward family, friends or authorities, which creates isolation from other perspectives and rejection of potential rescuers (e.g. professionals and parents) (PACE 2015). Power imbalances and incidences of good-abusive treatment are typical features of child sexual exploitation and part of the grooming process (Dutton & Painter 1993).

Freeze and endure theory explains that when an individual is in a dangerous situation, primitive survival mechanisms eclipse rational decision making (Lodrick 2010). In these circumstances, a victim may freeze and endure the sexual assault in order to survive (Lodrick 2010). However, this can become an automatic response resulting in the victim enduring on-going abuse (PACE 2015). Betrayal trauma theory explains situations where a victim is, or perceives themselves to be, dependent on the abuser (Foynes et al. 2009). In these cases, the victim's awareness of the abuse may be impaired as a protective coping strategy that allows the child or young person to maintain a relationship with an individual that is abusing them, but on whom they perceive they are dependent (Foynes et al. 2009). Indeed, in child sexual exploitation, the aim of

the grooming process is to develop dependency. The result of trauma bonding, freeze and endure theory, and betrayal trauma theory is that victims often return to their abusers.

Where these theories are not understood, behaviour can be misinterpreted as consensual. For example, Emma Jackson reported in evidence given to the Home Office that 'one of the CID officers who was in charge of the case said to me 'If you go back to these men, we just think that it is little white slappers running around with Asians'' (2013: Questions 743 – 798).

Another reason why children and young people may have been considered to have consented, exaggerated or lied about their abuse is the persistence of rape myths. Rape myths are prejudicial, stereotypical or false beliefs about rape (Burt 1980). In broad terms there are four different categories of rape myth: blaming the victim, disbelieving claims of rape, exoneration of the perpetrator, and believing that only certain types of women are raped (Eyssel & Bohner 2011). Rape myths include the belief that rape must be physically violent - people who do not physically resist are considered complicit in the rape, and viewed as partly responsible for being raped if they have engaged in, what is considered to be, inappropriate or reckless behaviour (e.g. drinking alcohol or flirting) (Weiss 2009). Rape myths are just that, myths. For example, one of the persistent rape myths is that victims should physically resist during the assault. However, the victim of assault may respond in a number of ways to being attacked. Indeed, to date, five different trauma responses have been identified: flight, fight, freeze, flop, and friend (Lodrick 2010). Woodhams, et al. (2012) researched victim behaviours in cases of stranger sex offences and found that 26.7% of victims ran away (flight), 60% of victims struggled (fight), 8% of victims froze (freeze), 1.3% fell asleep (flop) and 33.3% of victims obeyed the wishes of the perpetrator (friend). This piece of research demonstrates the wide and varied range of victim responses to sexual assault and challenges the 'pervasive rape myth of a violent offender and a physically resistant victim' (Woodhams et al. 2012: 415). The Jay report (2014) found that rape myths were present in the historic files read as part of the review into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. Rape myths, such as 'the victim used

alcohol or drugs and was therefore sexually available and the victim didn't scream, fight or protest so they must have been consenting', were provided by the police and crime prosecution service as reasons for not pursuing suspected perpetrators (Jay 2014: 81).

Jenny Pearce, Professor of Young People and Public Policy at the University of Bedfordshire, believes the concept of consent as being wider than the definition provided in the Sexual Offences Act (2003). Pearce (2013) proposes a social model of consent in circumstances of child sexual exploitation. This model of consent identifies four ways in which consent can be abused:

Coerced consent: a child is groomed by a perpetrator and manipulated into sexual activity (Pearce 2013). The Bullfinch trial, the culmination of the investigation into suspected serious sexual offences against children in Oxfordshire, 'described the orchestrated 'incremental steps' by which any wish of the girls was squashed by the men through a progression of gifts and attention, getting physical for sex, pestering, threats, orders and 'doing by force despite protestation – despite physically being incapable through drink, drugs, or despite an unwilling body and fatigued beyond endurance' (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2013: 36).

Normalised consent: the view that abuse and exploitation within relationships is normal (Pearce 2013). A child interviewed as part of the ChildLine Report, *Caught in a Trap,* commented, 'He started talking to me about sexual things which I wasn't too worried about at first. My friends said that it is just what boys did, so I went along with it, I sent photos of me naked' (2012: 12).

Survival consent: a child engages in sexual activity in exchange for money, accommodation or food to alleviate the impact of poverty (Pearce 2013). This is explained by a young person quoted by Barnardo's, '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.' (2013: 20). This quote highlights the impact of structural factors such as poverty and unemployment in creating vulnerabilities to grooming and exploitation.

Condoned consent: professionals fail to recognise child sexual exploitation as abuse, and instead blame the victim for their circumstances and thereby condone the actions of the perpetrator (Pearce 2013). Emma Jackson explained, in evidence to the House of Commons, that the response from police and social care was, 'It was as though I was lying because I had an issue with these people, and as though they had not really done anything that bad to me and I was just complaining and kicking up a fuss for no reason.' (2013: Questions 743 – 798).

These fours forms of abused consent are not mutually exclusive and can operate alongside each other (Pearce 2013). Unfortunately, serious case reviews into sexual exploitation repeatedly identify a lack of understanding by professionals, of the concept of consent which leads to children being viewed as complicit in their abuse; 'there was a failure to recognise that the girls' ability to consent had been eroded by a process of grooming escalating to violent control' (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 116).

Hallett (2017) advocates for a more nuanced understanding of both consent and agency so a child can be considered capable to participate in care planning in the context of child sexual exploitation. Hallett (2017) argues that if this was the case, it would open the door to interventions that rely on children having agency, 'such as harm reduction and work with young people to mitigate harm' (142). Given that professionals are often involved with children and young people whilst they are being exploited, this would provide an avenue to manage risk whilst working towards removing the child or young person from exploitation. It also avoids professionals replicating the oppressive and disempowering dynamics of sexual exploitation.

It must be noted that the erosion of consent does not apply to children and young people solely because of their age. Consent is eroded by abuse and would have a similar impact on an adult in a situation of sexual exploitation, for example by someone forced into prostitution or sexually abused by their partner. However, once an individual reaches 18 years, the safeguarding responsibilities of professionals lessen. Individual's over 18 years (apart from those who are eligible for leaving care services) are no longer protected by the Children Act, Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance or the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).

Power

Power is not finite, nor is it, 'something an individual either has or doesn't have' (Thompson 2006: 4). However, its distribution within society is not equal and is impacted by a wide range of power relationships. As Foucault explains:

> 'Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.'
>
> (Foucault 1981: 94)

An individual's capacity to exercise agency in any given context hinges on their position of power in that context, which is in-turn informed by their relations with those around them. This section explores the adult-child and professional-service user 'nonegalitarian and mobile relations' and their impact on children and young people's ability to exercise agency (Foucault 1981: 94).

<u>Adult – Child Power Relations</u>

> 'Childhood is a state of oppression.'
>
> (Kitzinger 2015: 159)

In the western world, children are often framed as passive and defenceless, dependent on adults to protect them (Kitzinger 2015). Indeed, the 1989 Children

Act gives police and social workers the authority to override the wishes and feelings of children and young people in order to protect them from abuse. This is not an isolated example, there are numerous examples of where the state either allows adults to have power over children or excludes children from accessing resources as a result of their age (Boyden 2015 and James & Prout 2015). The result of this is that children are marginalised within society and lack the power to exert control over their lives (Boyden 2015 and Prout & James 2015). Hendrick (2015) refers to this imbalance of power as 'age-patriarchy', the notion of:

> ‘power, control, and resource manifesting themselves through adult control – expressed as a demand for obedience – over children's space, bodies and time.’
>
> (Hendrick 2015: 50)

Indeed, age limits the power or agency a child has over their own life (James & Prout 2015). In the context of child sexual exploitation, this power imbalance is seen in two ways. First, some perpetrators capitalise on the adult-child power imbalance during the grooming process. Perpetrators have used a young person’s natural desire to be treated as an adult, and to have the same opportunities as adults, to befriend them, as illustrated by the following extract from *Exploited* by Emma Jackson;

> ‘‘I tell you, Emma, you might look like a young girl, but you’re very mature for your age. There’s a lot to you. I feel I can really talk to you.’ Well, I felt ten feet tall.’
>
> (Jackson 2010: 140)

Secondly, the adult-child power imbalance is seen within relationships between professionals and children or young people. Adults decide how to safeguard, are the gatekeepers of services and resources, and control the creation of knowledge about child sexual exploitation. Children can have a voice, but only if it is facilitated by adults.

Professional – Service User Power Relations

There is also an imbalance of power as a result of children being service users and adults being the professionals in control of the service. This imbalance can be explored using the five types of power identified by French and Raven (1959) and Raven (1965):

- Power to determine: the power to make decisions on behalf of others (Maclean & Harrison 2009). This power exists in the context of child sexual exploitation because of the duty professionals have to safeguard children and young people as set out in national and international legislation, for example, the Children Act 1989 and UNCRC.

- Expert power: the power gained by an individual as a result of their training, qualifications and experience (Maclean & Harrison 2009). Many of the professionals involved in safeguarding in the context of child sexual exploitation have completed professional training courses, for example, social workers and police officers. In comparison, children and young people are unlikely to be able to exert power as a result of their skills:

> ‘One social worker was very snobby, and when dad showed her my certificates she looked at me as if to say they were worth nothing. They should be nicer and not stuck up, and politer than they were.’
>
> (young person quoted in Coffey 2014: 29)

- Resource power: the power to facilitate access to resources (Maclean & Harrison 2009). In the context of child sexual exploitation, professionals are the gatekeepers of resources such as safeguarding interventions. The quote below illustrates how professionals have the power to determine who would be provided with resources, and that they made these decisions based on a child or young person making a formal disclosure of abuse:

> ‘The allocation of resources by both the police and social care will depend on the demands and progress of the investigation; the situation

will be monitored. Resources are dependent on the young people giving best evidence interviews.'

(Casey 2015: 43)

- Referent power: the respect given to an individual as a result of their personal attributes or status in society (Maclean & Harrison 2009). This could be, for example, the respect given to a police officer because they are viewed as fair and just. However, a police officer may also command respect because of their power to determine the outcome for others and to apply sanctions, e.g. whether an individual is criminalised for crimes committed as a result of their sexual exploitation. In the context of child sexual exploitation, children and young people often lack referent power due to how they are viewed:

'On paper young people's views have to be taken into account – but in practice, that is not what we find - and we still find really poor attitudes, and a blaming culture – they [young people] are seen as the problem and not seen as part of the solution.'

(Voluntary Sector Project Manager discussing CSE strategy meetings quotes in Warrington 2013: 115)

- Coercive power: the power to apply sanctions (Maclean & Harrison 2009). In the context of child sexual exploitation, this could be the power of the police to criminalise a young person, or children's services to remove a child from their carers if they deem the child to be at risk. The quote below describes a situation where a child has been criminalised by the police as a result of their exploitation:

'Child 3, aged 13, was found by the police at 3am…in a semi-derelict house alone with a large group of adult males. She was drunk, the result of having been supplied with alcohol, and there was evidence that her clothing had been disrupted. She alone was arrested for a public order offence, detained, prosecuted, appeared before the Youth Court and received a Referral Order for which the YOT arranged 'reparation', drug

and alcohol counselling, art psychotherapy and victim awareness sessions.'

(Casey 2015: 56)

- Information power: the power of knowledge (Maclean & Harrison 2009).

In the majority of situations professionals have greater knowledge of policies and procedures, and of the resources an individual is entitled to, than the service users themselves. This could be knowledge of safeguarding policies and legislation, the rights of children and young people or even knowledge of the young person themselves:

'Every so often they have a big massive meeting – and there's like 20 odd people there and it's like they know more about me than I do and I don't even get to go….'

(Alice 15 quoted in Warrington 2013: 120)

What becomes clear through this exploration of power is that in the context of a professional–service-user relationship, professionals hold more power than service users, who in this case are children and young people who have been subject to child sexual exploitation. This power imbalance is necessary to safeguard, but it is problematic for children and young people's agency and can mirror the power imbalance between the child and the perpetrator in situations of child sexual exploitation.

Summary

What the accounts in this chapter have demonstrated is that when the child's or young person's position of power (and their voice) is not considered, their experiences of abusive relationships tend to be viewed through unhelpfully polarised, and often moral panic informed, discourses. Unfortunately, despite efforts by the Government, voluntary sector organisations and individual practitioners, the dichotomies of innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion prevail. Indeed, serious case reviews have consistently found children being blamed for their abuse, deemed as consenting to sexual activity and

having their responses to trauma mistakenly interpreted as challenging behaviour.

In addition, although government guidance recommends using a child-centred approach that promotes children's rights this has not consistently been achieved in practice. Serious case reviews have found that children and young people have not been viewed as agents in their own right and their views have not been consistently sought.

This highlights a hypocrisy. Children have been viewed as having the agency to consent to sexual activity but not to be actively involved in decisions made by safeguarding practitioners about their lives. The discussions in this chapter demonstrate that agency, power and consent are not black and white. Practitioners must develop a more nuanced understanding of agency, power and consent to work in a child-centred way that respects children's rights and also safeguards them from abuse.

Chapter 5: Seeking Children's Voices

Previous chapters have identified issues with how victims of child sexual exploitation are viewed by professionals involved in safeguarding them. Children and young people subject to sexual exploitation have been considered, by some, as deviant and consenting to their abuse (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013 and Jay 2014). This is despite Government policy and guidance promoting a child-centred approach that respects children's rights and views them as victims, not criminals (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009). The result has been that children and young people have not always been safeguarded from abuse by those employed to protect them (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013 and Jay 2014).

Child sexual exploitation is an emerging field of research and there is limited information about the experiences and perceptions of those subject to abuse, although this has increased over the course of this thesis (Beckett et al. 2015, Franklin & Smeaton 2018, Hallet 2017 and Warrington 2013). Even less is known about children and young people's experiences of working with safeguarding professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. To help to address this gap, the core aim of this study was to explore how victims of child sexual exploitation perceived they were viewed by the professionals they worked with. To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were identified:

1. To examine the changing narratives of child sexual exploitation.
2. To critically analyse the voices of victims of child sexual exploitation in relation to their experience of working with professionals.
3. To discuss how victims of child sexual exploitation perceive they are viewed by professionals and the perceived impact of these attitudes.
4. To promote children's rights by using a participatory narrative approach and child-centred methods.

In this chapter, the design of this study is set out in detail. The positionality of the researcher is introduced to promote transparency and highlight any pre-existing judgements that could have impacted on the interpretation of the data collected (Creswell & Poth 2018). The chapter sets out the theoretical lens through which this study is viewed, that of children's rights. Following this discussion, a participatory narrative approach is introduced as the methodological underpinning of the study. Using these theoretical and methodological perspectives, methods are presented that are child-centred, ethically sound, consensual and participatory. These methods ensured the voice of the child was kept central to the research, and most importantly that participants were not harmed through their engagement. Finally, the chapter explains how the data was analysed.

Positionality

Qualitative research is affected by the experiences and attitudes of the researcher (Creswell & Poth 2018). The researcher's experiences, biases and values will shape the interpretation of the data, findings and conclusions (Cresswell & Poth 2018). It is important that researchers provide an insight into the factors that may influence their interpretation to enhance the transparency and credibility of the study (Denscombe 2017 and Smith 2009).

My positionality was the starting point for this research. Prior to undertaking this research, I worked with women and children who were at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation. I worked directly with women and children around prevention, protection and recovery, participated in safeguarding, trained professionals and contributed to one of the serious case reviews referenced in this thesis. Through these experiences, I gained first-hand experience of how professionals viewed those affected by child sexual exploitation. Concerns about the impact of professionals' views on the effectiveness of safeguarding and the experiences of victims of child sexual exploitation, led me to undertake this study. However, I had to be mindful that my experience of professionals or interpretation of their actions would not necessarily be the same as the participants involved in the study. To avoid confirmation or researcher bias, I

triangulated my data with academic research and practice reports, and member checked my understanding of the participants stories (Whitley 2013).

As a qualified social worker, this research was underpinned by the code of ethics for social work issued by the British Association of Social Workers (2012). There are three key values that underpin these ethics; those of human rights, social justice and professional integrity. Adopting human rights as reflected in the *UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (1989) requires social workers to respect the worth and dignity of all people (British Association of Social Workers 2012). The value of social justice provides social workers with a responsibility to challenge discrimination and recognise diversity (British Association of Social Workers 2012). Professional integrity relates to ethical practice where social workers act with integrity, compassion, empathy and care (British Association of Social Workers 2012). The values that underpinned my practice as a social worker underpinned my values as a researcher and guided my responses to situations that arose during data collection.

As a social work practitioner, I took a child-centred/ person-centred approach to my work. My experience of working directly with victims of child sexual exploitation highlighted the ability of children and young people to reflect on their experiences, share their stories and positively contribute to safety planning and service delivery. However, I witnessed first-hand situations where the voices of children were not heard, the considerable frustration this caused and the negative impact this had on safeguarding. Failure to actively engage children in planning about their lives was disempowering, damaging and an ineffective way of getting a child's buy-in to safeguarding strategies and care plans.

In line with child-centred practice, I chose to take a children's rights approach to research, where children are viewed as social actors with their own perspectives and expertise (James & James 2004). Taking a child-centred, children's rights approach to this research was consistent with the values of human rights and social justice. To promote professional integrity, my practice as a researcher was underpinned by social work's ethical framework, and

research participants, together with their contributions, were treated with respect. Although this thesis looks wider than the world of social work, the profession's principles promote research that is ethical, empowering and emancipatory.

Davidson (2004) said there are 'inevitable tensions between 'being a researcher' and 'being a social worker'' (384). Indeed, there were occasions where the tension between researcher and social worker left me feeling paralysed. I met research participants who had unmet needs, that as a social worker I could have helped to address. Giving contact information for support agencies did not always feel enough. As a result, I felt guilty for leaving practice and there were occasions when I became disillusioned about the impact I could have as a researcher. This is something that has been experienced by other social work researchers. Davidson (2004) felt that what she could offer to research participants as a researcher, 'sometimes felt too little' (384).

Experience of working in the field of child sexual exploitation, brought an interesting dynamic to the insider versus outsider debate. An insider shares the characteristics, role or experience of the research participants whilst an outsider does not (Dwyer & Buckle 2009). Benefits have been attributed to both being an insider and an outsider. An insider is perceived to have a superior understanding of the research participant's culture, be able to interact naturally and create a greater intimacy with participants than an outsider (Bonner & Tolhurst 2002). An outsider is perceived to be more subjective, independent and unbiased (Breen 2007). I can no longer claim to be a young person and I have not experienced child sexual exploitation; this makes me an outsider. However, I have experience of working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation so I cannot claim to be a total outsider. I inhabited the space in-between. As commented by Dwyer & Buckle (2009), we need to 'abandon these constructed dichotomies [insider versus outside] and embrace and explore the complexity and richness of the space between entrenched perspectives.' (62). In my experience, there were benefits and limitations of occupying the space in-between. On one hand, my previous work in child sexual exploitation gave me the confidence to speak to research participants

face-to-face and a practical understanding of the topic. On the other hand, being a social worker created an initial barrier for at least one participant whose previous experience of social workers was poor.

Another factor to be acknowledged is that as well as being a social worker, I am an employed, educated, white, adult female. These personal features created power differentials, which could have negatively impacted on the experience of research participants, and in turn, on the data and information gathered. For example, many of the research participant's schooling has been disrupted by sexual exploitation which impacted on their education attainment and job opportunities. The difference between our life experiences gave me more professional power (Maclean & Harrison 2009). To work towards rebalancing power relations, data collection was conducted at a location known to and agreed with the research participant. The participant could choose to have a key worker present and when to finish the session or take breaks. Communication was undertaken in simple clear English and I wore casual clothing to try to put participants at their ease (Cutts 2013). Balancing the power differentials was central to my whole approach.

Philosophical Assumptions

My positionality fed into the philosophical assumptions that underpinned the study; see Table 3.

Table 3: Philosophical Assumptions with Implications for Research

Assumption	Perspective taken (informed by positionality)	Implications for Research
Ontology	There are multiple realities.	Research participant's perspectives were respected and viewed as their truth.
Epistemological	Knowledge is known through the subjective	The study sought the subjective experiences of research

	experiences of research participants.	participants in relation to working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. Value was placed on the participants stories and a participatory narrative approach was taken.
Axiological	Research is value-laden, and biases are present.	To promote the transparency of this study, the researcher's positionality was presented. This information was provided so readers could more easily identify potential bias. To increase the credibility of the study, serious case reviews, practice reports and academic research were used to triangulate the research findings.
Methodological	Research methods are informed by research participants as well as by theory.	There was flexibility within the data collection strategy so data collection sessions could be modified in response to research participant's preferences. Open questions that were broad and general were asked during data collection sessions so participants could choose what to share.

(Adapted from Creswell & Poth 2018: 20)

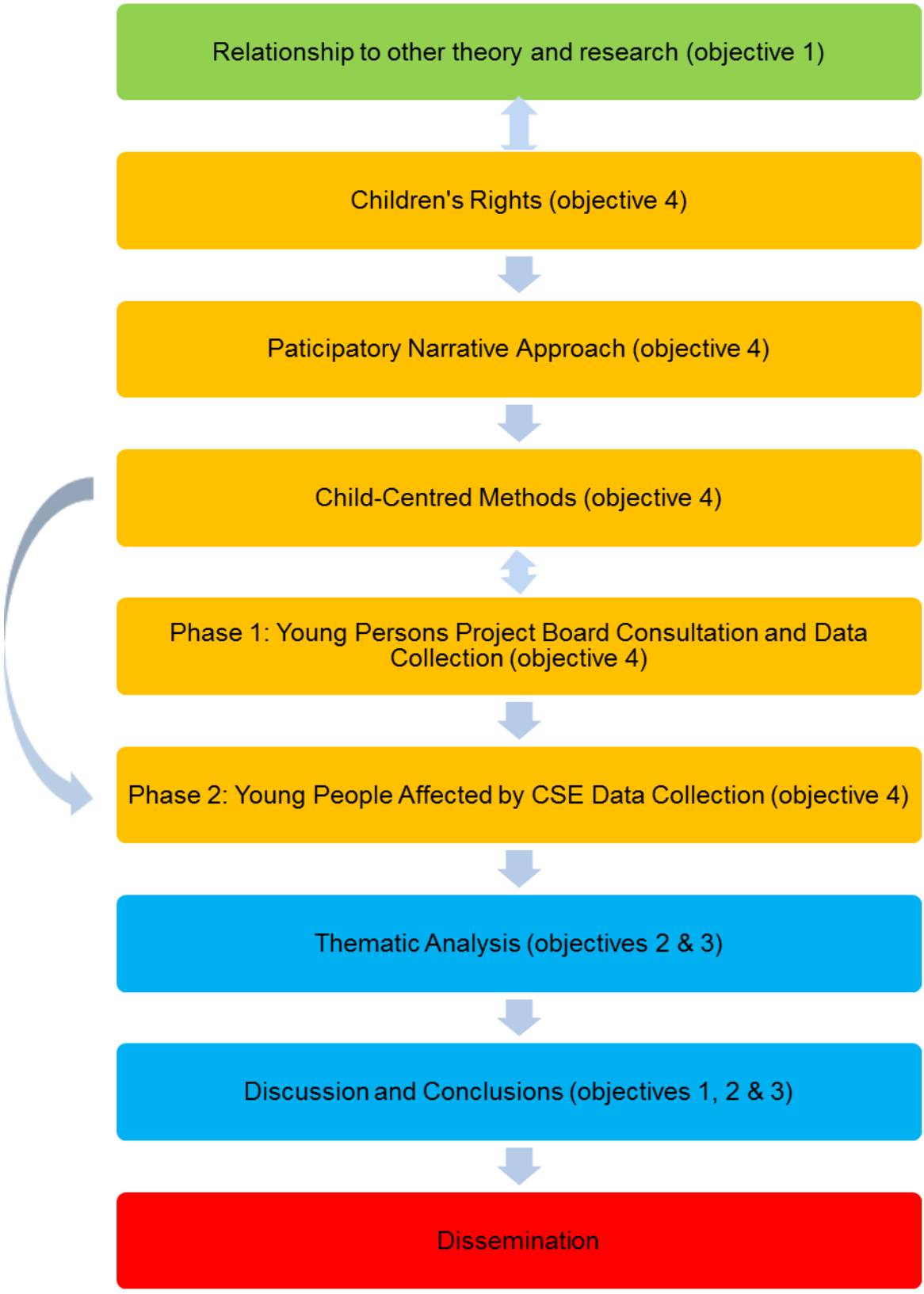
The assumptions in Table 3 are consistent with social constructionism. Social constructionism assumes that, 'the nature of the world can be revealed by observation, and that what exists is what we perceive to exist' (Burr 2015: 3). This study focused on the perception of research participants, recognising that there are multiple realities and that an individual's reality is what they perceive it to be. Indeed, the perception of children and young people's experience of working with professionals is their reality.

Research Design

As the aim of this research was to investigate the experiences of victims of child sexual exploitation using a children's rights approach, this study was shaped by one-to-one and focus group data collection sessions with victims of child sexual exploitation. To ensure the study remained child-centred, an existing Young Person's Project Board (YPPB) assisted in the research design.

Figure 5 outlines the research design for this project. A children's rights approach underpinned the study and was complemented by taking a participatory narrative approach to the research. In line with these theoretical underpinnings, child-centred methods were used. A Young Persons Project Board (YPPB) was consulted to ensure the data collection sessions and accompanying resources were age appropriate. Data collection sessions were carried out with individuals who had experienced child sexual exploitation and were not currently being exploited. These sessions were designed to use creative methods and be participant-led in line with child-centred methods. Finally, the data collected was analysed and conclusions were drawn. The rest of this chapter will take the reader through each stage of the research design to explain why this particular design was chosen, and to highlight limitations.

Figure 5: Research Design



Conceptual Framework: Children's Rights Approach

As discussed, I consider myself a child-centred practitioner and believe that, in line with the sociology of childhood, children are experts in their lives (James & Prout 2015). Given my positionality and the topic of this thesis, it was important the research gave a voice to those who had been subject to child sexual exploitation.

This research is guided by the standards of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC catalysed academics to develop new methodologies which sought to give children a voice, and to explore their concerns in a child-centred manner (Clarke 2011). A group of researchers led by Judith Ennew advocated for children to have the right to be properly researched (Abebe & Bessell 2014 and Lundy & McEvoy 2012). Although this right is not part of the convention, it is underpinned by a number of its articles: Article 12, Article 13, Article 33, and Article 36 (Lundy & McEvoy 2012). Save the Children (2004) identified the following Articles as particularly important when carrying out children's rights research with children:

- Article 12: Respect for the views of the child – children should be supported to express their views about decisions that are made about their lives.
- Article 13: Right to freedom of expression – children should have the opportunity to express opinions about their lives.
- Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion - children need space to explore how they feel and to develop their own opinions.
- Article 15: Freedom of association – children need to be able to discuss issues with others
- Article 17: Access to appropriate information – information must be provided in an accessible format for children to make informed decisions.

(Save the Children, 2004)

In addition to these, Abebe and Bessell (2014) refer to Articles 3.3, 'high professional standards', and 36, 'protecting children from exploitation'. Article 36 can be interpreted as being met by preventing abuse through research

discoveries or ensuring that research participants come to no harm as a result of the study (Abebe & Bessell 2014). This can create tension for researchers who want to include the voices of victims of abuse in their studies but are concerned that involvement in research could be distressing for the participants. In relation to this tension, Abebe & Bessell (2014) state that adhering to the concept of the right to be properly researched does not mean that all children are entitled to be researched, but it ensures that those who are, have their human rights respected.

Queen's University Belfast's Centre for children's rights outline how a children's rights approach can be adopted within research;

- Research aims should be informed by the Children's Rights Convention standards;
- Research process should comply with the Children's Rights Convention standards; and
- Research outcomes should build the capacity of children, as rights-holders, to claim their rights and build the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations.

(Queen's University Belfast, 2012: n.p)

To achieve this, Lundy (2007) states that children must have space for expression, support to communicate their views, and a researcher that listens to, and acts, on these views.

Increasingly, research into child sexual abuse and/or exploitation involves children and young people (Franklin, Raws & Smeaton 2015, and Warrington et al. 2017). Children and young people participated in both these studies in two ways. Both projects were supported by a young person's advisory group and interviewed children and young people as research participants (Franklin, Raws & Smeaton 2015 and Warrington et al. 2017). Franklin, Raws & Smeaton (2015) investigated how the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation can be met. They found that not being listened to created an increased vulnerability to child sexual exploitation

and disclosures of abuse not being taken seriously (Franklin, Raws & Smeaton 2015). One of their research findings was the need to listen to young people with learning disabilities (Franklin, Raws & Smeaton 2015). Warrington et al.'s (2017) study presented children and young people's perception of accessing and receiving support after familial sexual abuse. This study highlighted the capacity of children and young people to take part in research. However, Warrington et al. (2017) also emphasised that research must consider 'children's mutually reinforcing rights to protection, provision and participation' (12).

These mutually reinforcing rights can create tensions. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* principle of best interest fits with the principle of ethical research, that of 'do no harm' (United Nations 1989). These principles are particularly important when engaging in a study that involves speaking to children and young people who had experienced sexual exploitation. One of the risks to participants that became involved in this study was that by talking about the professionals they worked with in relation to child sexual exploitation, memories of abuse could have been triggered which might have led to further distress and potential re-traumatisation. As researchers we need to find a balance between enabling children to be active agents in their own lives and communities whilst ensuring their protection from harm (Save the Children 2004).

To assess the risk of harm in relation to asking research participants about abuse, Becker-Blease & Freyd (2006) undertook a literature review on this subject, and found that research participants who were asked about their experiences of abuse found it no more stressful than other experiences in everyday life (for example, watching TV). They also found that questions relating to abuse were considered the most important by research participants (in relation to questions about grade point averages and aptitude test scores) with the most favourable cost-benefit ratio (Becker-Blease & Freyd 2006). Cost-benefit ratio refers to the balance between the costs associated with taking part in the research versus the benefits.

To determine whether these conclusions are still relevant, current research on the topic has been reviewed. Guerra & Perda (2015) investigated the emotional impact on adolescent victims of sexual abuse who participated in research that addressed the consequence of their abuse and found that sexually abused adolescents reported fewer unpleasant emotions after participating in the research than non-victims. In addition, most adolescents reported that they actually felt good about their participation in the study. This is consistent with the findings of Batsleer (2011), Levy (2012) and Capous-Desyllas (2013) who found that when young people affected by sexual abuse engage in activities that aim to raise awareness or improve the situation for other young people, such as engaging in research, this can have a therapeutic impact. Guerra & Perda (2015) concluded that 'it is possible to survey adolescent victims of sexual abuse on aspects related to their experience without causing them significant distress' (943).

These results are supported by Priebe et al. (2010) and Ybarra et al. (2009). Priebe et al. (2010) investigated whether adolescents in general or vulnerable subgroups (e.g. those who have been sexually abused) experienced discomfort when answering a survey about sexuality and sexual abuse. Their data found that the majority of adolescents did not experience discomfort when answering the survey, and that there was no difference between the two groups (Priebe et al. 2010). Ybarra et al. (2009) researched the impact of asking sensitive questions about violence to children and adolescents. Their study discovered that only 1% of all participants found that the survey, which included sensitive questions, brought back bad memories or reminded them of bad experiences, and that victims were as likely to report not being upset by the survey as non-victims. Although these studies suggest the risk of emotional distress is low, the experience of research participants who have taken part in CSE specific studies in under-researched (Brodie et al. 2016).

There are also risks associated with not engaging young people who have been affected by child sexual exploitation in research. Warrington (2010) highlights that failure to challenge the prevailing assumption that sexually exploited young people are too vulnerable to be involved in decision making, excludes them

from opportunities available to their peers (including participating in research) which leads to discrimination, inequality and exclusion. Violanti (2000) comments that excluding those who have experienced child sexual exploitation from research, because of concerns about their vulnerability, risks repeating abuse dynamics. For example, there is a risk that the disempowerment experienced through sexual exploited could be mirrored within academia if participation is not facilitated.

In addition, avoiding talking about topics that relate to abuse with research participants makes us less able as a society to develop policies, legislation and interventions that prevent child sexual exploitation and protect and support those that have been exploited (Becker-Blease & Freyd, 2006). Also, failing to ask about exploitation contributes to the wall of silence that is often associated with abuse, and deters victims from disclosing or asking for help, enabling abusers to continue to abuse (Becker-Blease & Freyd, 2006). Save the Children (2004) state that participation by children helps to challenge the stigma that can attach to those who have experienced violence.

The studies discussed suggest that if the right approach is taken to research there is a limited risk of causing distress when asking victims questions related to the abuse they have suffered, and there is a significant risk to society of not doing so. However, there was still a risk. To minimise the risk of causing any distress, a set of robust risk management strategies were put in place. These strategies included consulting with gatekeepers to assess whether they considered an individual emotionally resilient enough to take part in the study; see the ethics subsection.

Once the decision was made to speak to children and young people who had experienced sexual exploitation, the study was designed to promote children's rights. Table 4 summarises how children's rights were incorporated in this research.

Table 4: Children's Rights in Practice

Article	Application to this Study
Article 3: Best interest of the child	Gatekeepers assessed whether an individual was emotionally resilient enough to take part in the study.
Article 5: Guidance from adults	A criterion of taking part in the study was that research participants were linked with a specialist support organisation.
Article 12: Respect for the views of the child	A participatory narrative approach was taken where participants were encouraged to share their experiences in their own words. Research participants were viewed as experts in their own lives and creators of meaning.
Article 13: Right to freedom of expression	Participants were encouraged to express themselves in the way they wanted to; using the language and terminology they felt comfortable with. The researcher met with participants on a second occasion to check they were happy with the information they had shared and how it had been interpreted (member checking). Research participants were given information about their rights within the study, for example, their right to choose not to participate.
Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	The agenda of the data collection sessions was not dictated by the researcher. Research participants led discussions to ensure they were able to talk about and explore the issues that were important to them. The researcher asked open ended questions so participants could share whatever information they wanted.
Article 15: Freedom of association	Some research participants preferred to share their experience as part of their pre-existing support group. In response, focus groups were added to the methods of data collection and additional ethical clearance was sought and granted.

Article 16: Right to privacy	Contributions from the YPPB and research participants were anonymised and identifying information removed.
Article 17: Access to appropriate information	To try and ensure the information given to research participants was accessible and methods were appropriate, the YPPB was consulted about the study's methods, documents and terminology.
Article 36: Protection from exploitation	Member checking was carried out to check that participants were happy with my interpretation of their data. Feedback has, and will be, provided to those who took part.

Whilst this research was underpinned by a children's rights approach, as demonstrated in Table 4, this study cannot claim to have been totally compliant with a children's rights approach. For example, the study did not directly build the capacity of research participants to claim their rights (Lundy & McEvoy 2012). A more accurate description would therefore be 'rights-informed' (Lundy & McEvoy 2012: 79).

Theoretical Links

Other conceptual frameworks were considered when designing this study. For example, thought was given to using feminist perspectives to underpin the research as advocated by Cooney & Rogowski 2017. Feminist approaches to research are committed to 'honouring women's ways of knowing and living in the world, and to improving the conditions within which that knowledge is cultivated and living takes place' (Showden 2011: ix). Feminist theories have been used to research violence against women and child sexual abuse (Lombard & McMillan 2013, Pearce, 2009, Showden 2011, Stark 2013 and Warner 2009).

Children's rights rather than feminism was chosen as the overarching conceptual framework for a number of reasons:

1. Solberg (2015) suggests that within feminist approaches, children and young people are often considered as the children of women, rather

than research participants in their own right. In contrast, children's rights frames children and young people as capable agents that have rights (Solberg 2015 and Bezley et al. 2009).

2. Feminist research has focused on the abuse perpetrated by males against women and children, but predominantly girls (Lombard and McMillan 2013). Pearce (2009) guards against taking a polarised approach to child sexual exploitation of a male offender and a female 'victim'. Pearce (2009) believes polarisation could result in the experience of boys and young men who have been subjected to sexual exploitation, being overlooked. Indeed, Becket et al. (2017) reported that up to one third of those subject to child sexual exploitation are male, and that this may be an under-representation given that males are less likely to disclose abuse and for it to be recognised by others (Becket et al. 2017). Taking a children's rights approach avoids focusing solely on this perceived gender bias, and provides space for the experiences of girls, boys, young women and young men to be explored.
3. Feminist research has largely focused on exploring the relationship between the perpetrator of abuse and the person abused in terms of gender inequalities (Warner 2009 and Franchino-Olsen 2019). Very few have focused on the relationship between professional safeguarding adults and children and young people who have been exploited. In this research, the focus is on the relationship between the person who has been abused and the professionals that they worked with. Taking a children's rights approach facilitates this analysis by outlining the rights that professionals and organisations should respect and promote when working with children and young people who have experienced sexual exploitation (UN 1989).

Given the reasons listed above, using a children's rights framework was considered to be more closely aligned to the aim of the thesis, to critically analyse the perspectives of children and young people in relation to their experiences of professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation.

However, Franchino-Olsen (2019) considered 12 different theoretical frameworks relevant to commercial child sexual exploitation, including economic theory, feminist theory, and a rights-based model. Franchino-Olsen categorised rights-based frameworks (such as children's rights) as ones where people were viewed as individuals with rights that can be violated through discrimination and inequality. Franchino-Olsen (2019) identified the limitations with taking a purely rights-based approach, criticising it for paying too much attention to systematic issues that contribute to child sexual exploitation (Franchino-Olsen 2019).

Indeed, the children's rights framework was unable to provide a theoretical explanation for all the findings in this thesis, whereas other frameworks could. For example, the feminist theories of rape myths and victim blaming (see chapters 3 and 4) were used to explore attitudes held by some professionals in chapter 7. The theories of neoliberalism and managerialism (see chapter 2) were taken from economic theory to explain the structure and priorities of safeguarding organisations in chapter 9, and French and Raven's theory of power (see chapter 4) was taken from social theory to explain the relationship between professionals and service users, also in chapter 9.

Given that different theoretical frameworks provide different insights and explanations in the area of child sexual exploitation, it would be advantageous if future research considered taking a more integrated approach.

Methological Approach: Participatory Narrative Approach

Narrative Approach

A narrative approach to research is focused on exploring the experiences of an individual (Creswell & Poth 2018). A narrative approach elicits the participant's account of an experience as described in their own words/voice, by providing them with the time and space to explore a topic in depth (Carey 2009 and Edwards & Talbot 1999). Narratives reveal the participant's truth or perception in relation to their human experience (Riessman 2008). The narratives collected in this research were individual's oral histories of their experience of working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation.

Narrative studies are normally defined by the following features:

- Data are the stories shared by research participants.
- Stories tell of individual experiences – in this case, research participant's experience of working with professionals.
- Stories occur within specific places or situations – the context for the stories in this research was child sexual exploitation.
- Stories are gathered through different forms of qualitative data – data collected from research participants is discussed alongside other sources, for example, serious case reviews and voluntary sector reports.
- Stories can be analysed using a variety of strategies – as the primary concern of this study was on what was said by research participants, rather than how it was said, thematic analysis was undertaken; see the analysis section of this chapter (Riessman 2008).
- Narrative stories are often shaped by the researcher into a chronology – some, but not all, participants' experiences have been presented as a timeline of events.
- Stories often contain turning points, tensions or transitions – the consequences of events are presented within the analysis.

(Adapted from Creswell & Poth 2018)

Cresswell and Poth (2018) state that a narrative approach works well when collecting stories from a small number of individuals; in this study, nine participants shared their experience of working with professionals.

Taking a narrative approach was consistent with UNCRC Articles 12, 13 and 14; see Table 3 (1989). Both children's rights and a narrative approach respect the views of the child (Article 12); promote freedom of expression (Article 13); and, encourage individuals to explore what is important to them (Article 14).

To achieve a high-quality piece of narrative research with children and young people, Reissman and Quinney (2005) recommend the following:

1. Detailed transcripts – data collection sessions will be recorded at the time and transcribed afterwards
2. Focus on language and context – transcriptions will be analysed in the context of policy developments and theoretical explanations
3. Attention to structural factors – consideration will be given to the wider cultural and structural factors that may influence the participant's narratives
4. Acknowledgement of dialogic characteristics - emotional responses will be recorded during and immediately after the data collection sessions
5. Comparative approach – data collection sessions will be compared to draw out similarities and differences.

These standards guided this research. There were challenges to using a narrative approach. One that was particularly relevant to this research was the issue of power relations (Creswell & Poth 2018). Berry (2016) warns that 'researchers using narrative enquiry must be mindful of the power of the bond formed in the sharing of stories and not encourage participants to share more than they intend' (10). Measures were put in place to try and mitigate this risk. For example, data collection sessions were led by the research participant, so they were in control of their story, and the researcher met with participants after the first data collection session to check they were happy with what they had shared. Participants were told they could withdraw part or all of their story up until a certain date by contacting the researcher.

Participation

Since the introduction of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989, there has been an increased focus on the participation of children in policy, practice and research (Cumberland Lodge 2015). Parkes (2013) has reviewed different models of participation to find the model that is most effective in promoting Article 12 of UNCRC: respect for the views of the child (UNCRC 1989). Parkes (2013) advocates the use of Lundy's model of participation when considering whether article 12 has been engaged.

Lundy (2007) argues there are two elements to Article 12: '(i) the right to express a view, and (ii) the right to have the view given due weight' (931). Lundy (2007) also argues that Article 12 cannot be considered in isolation due to the interconnectedness of children's rights. As Figure 6 illustrates, Lundy's model encapsulates Articles 2, 3, 5, 13, 15 and 19 as well as Article 12 of the UNCRC (Lundy 2007).

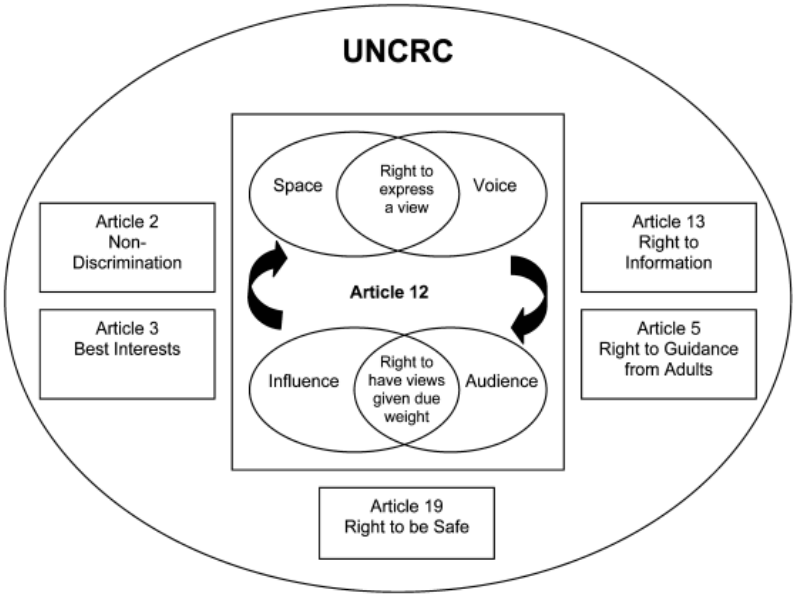


Figure 6: Conceptualising Article 12

(Lundy 2007: 932)

Lundy's (2007) model focuses on four interrelated elements:

- 'Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view.
- Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views.
- Audience: The view must be listened to.
- Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.'

(Lundy 2007: 933)

Table 5 considers the extent to which each of these elements were facilitated in this piece of research.

Table 5: Lundy's model of participation in practice

Element	YPPB	Research Participants
Space	Members of the YPPB were invited and encouraged to take part in consultation sessions by their co-ordinator. These sessions took place at locations regularly used by the group. The researcher travelled to them.	Research participants were invited and encouraged to take part in consultation sessions by their project workers. These sessions took place where they chose; either at the premises of the organisation they were working with or at their home. The researcher travelled to them. The limitation to this element was that people were only invited to take part if their project worker assessed that participation would not harm them. Consequently, some people were excluded from taking part.
Voice	YPPB members were encouraged to express their views freely. The researcher assured them that comments on the research would not be taken personally and all contributions would be	Research participants were encouraged to express their views freely. To facilitate this, open questions were used, participants were encouraged to use their own terminology, and they were assured their contributions would be

	greatly appreciated.	anonymised.
Audience	The YPPB's recommendations were adopted. The YPPB's views on terminology formed the analysis chapter, *What's in a Word: The power of terminology*.	Research participant's experiences of working with professionals formed the analysis chapters, *Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision* and *Power Dynamics*.
Influence	A research poster created for the study was shared with the YPPB co-ordinator. The co-ordinator was asked to share this with the YPPB. Once the study is completed, a practice report will be written and shared with those who took part in the research.	A research poster created for the study was shared with the organisations. The organisations were asked to share this with research participants. Once the study is completed, a practice report will be written and shared with those who took part in the research.

The limitations to participation are considered further in the limitations subsection of this chapter.

Child-Centred Methods

To support the theoretical framework outlined above, this study used child-centred methods. These methods were used to elicit the views of children and young people by valuing them as social actors in their own right, and experts in their own lives who should inform research, policy and practice in all matters that affect them (National Children's Bureau 2011, and Smith 2010). Child-centred research methods are those that enable victims of child sexual exploitation (or children more generally) to participate in research, support them to get their voices heard and share their expertise. Child-centred methods are

consistent with using a narrative, participatory and children's rights approach to research, as they facilitate meaningful involvement in the research for children and young people.

To elicit narratives, traditionally data was collected using methods such as questionnaires, surveys and interviews (Driessnack 2006). However, these adult-centred methods are not considered an appropriate method of data collection when working with children and young people (Driessnack 2006). This was particularly pertinent in this study, as the research participants may have only previously experienced an interview situation when giving evidence to the police or social care about the abuse they experienced.

To address this issue, child-centred methods were developed to facilitate the effective collection of children's and young people's stories; these are discussed below.

Consultation Sessions

A local authority set up a Young Person's Project Board (YPPB) that it consults to provide a young person's perspective on topics relating to relationships and sex education. This Board was consulted in this research about the methods used to collect data, terminology and accessibility of research documents.

The YPPB sessions were arranged and supported by a sex and relationship education consultant and the programme manager for local authority. The facilitators of the group arranged suitable venues and coordinated young people getting to the respective venues. On the day of the consultation, members of the board were provided with an information sheet about the research and signed a consent form in order to take part.

Two consultation sessions were undertaken with YPPB. To ensure these sessions were child-centred, they were run creatively with the provision of craft materials and snacks (Modally & Goddard 2009). The first session focused on the development of accessible participant documents (e.g. consent forms and information sheets), themes for the data collection sessions and the structure of

these sessions. Both the first and second sessions consulted the YPPB on the use of terminology. During the first session the Board identified the terms that they felt were most appropriate to use in cases of child sexual exploitation to inform the study's glossary (see chapter 6 and glossary). In the second session, the YPPB was presented with terms that had been used by professionals as reported in serious case reviews. The YPPB was asked whether these were appropriate terms to use. Chapter 6 analyses this discussion.

Data Collection Sessions

The aim of this piece of research was to enable young people to share their own experiences and to be given a voice. Data was collected in individual and group sessions.

Individual Sessions:

Two sessions were offered to the research participants; the first was aimed at eliciting their experiences and the second provided an opportunity for checking and for reflection on the data collection process. To ensure that the data collection sessions were child-centred, they were creative and interactive (Modally & Goddard 2009).

The first session began with research participants being invited to create a timeline of their interaction with professionals. This activity was to serve as an icebreaker and a story prompt for the remainder of the session (Driessnack 2006, and Fargas-Malet et al. 2010). Pens, felt tips, colouring pencils and coloured paper were provided for this activity. Pirskanen et. al, (2015) used a similar technique in their study into children's family relationships and found that visual methods can help to make the research participant more comfortable, support the research process by providing a foundation for discussion and provide an alternative method for communication. However, none of the research participants chose to undertake this activity. Instead, participants opted to share their stories and experiences freely. Discussions were led by the young person or focus group with the researcher asking open ended questions to elicit their experiences or stories of working with professionals.

Following this initial session, research participants were invited to meet with the researcher again. During this session, the participant or focus group was provided with a summary of the information they shared in the initial session to confirm whether or not they were happy with what was recorded, to correct mistakes and to provide further information (Goldblatt et al. 2011 and Koelsch 2013). This process of meeting with participants to ensure that their experiences have been accurately interpreted is commonly referred to as member-checking (Goldblatt et al. 2011, and Koelsch 2013). The outcome of member-checking is that methodological misinterpretations of the data are minimised and, in line with a participatory approach, that participants are actively involved in the study (Goldblatt et al. 2011). In addition, during this session, participants were asked to reflect on their experience of being involved in this study (Koelsch 2013).

Refreshments were provided during each session and the participants were encouraged to take breaks (Mudaly & Goddard 2009). These measures were put in place to make the sessions as comfortable as possible for the participants and to promote their well-being. The research participant had the opportunity to debrief with the researcher at the end of each session to address any concerns that had arisen as a result of taking part in the study. The researcher ensured that concerns were dealt with either by herself or with the support of the gatekeeping organisation. Addressing concerns promoted the well-being of the participant in line with the do no harm principle of ethical research.

At the end of the 1-2-1 data collection sessions, participants involved in the study were given a thank you card and a £10 high street voucher to thank them for their time and contribution. There is some debate over whether children and young people should be provided with monetary compensation for their involvement in research, due to concerns that it could coerce individuals to take part (Clark 2011). To address this concern, potential research participants were not told they would receive a voucher until after the data collection sessions were completed. The voucher was a thank you and not an incentive for participation. Clark (2011) found that providing a monetary token of appreciation to children involved in her research was a positive experience for them, or as

she puts it ‘an empowering token of performing a valued act of self-contribution’ (33).

Focus Group Sessions:

When contacting gatekeepers, the opportunity arose to speak to an established group of young people who had experienced child sexual exploitation. Additional ethical approval was sought and approved to enable this group to become part of the study. The researcher attended the group at their normal location and at their usual meeting time. As an ice-breaker, the researcher ate lunch with the group and took part in their weekly craft session. The researcher was able to use the group’s weekly discussion session to talk about the study. Consent was gained from participants and project workers were present throughout. During the first data collection session, participants shared their experiences of working with professionals. The researcher returned on a further two occasions for member-checking. Additional information was shared at both these sessions and, in addition, two of the participants spoke to the researcher in a 1-2-1 session. Rather than giving individual participants vouchers, vouchers were given to the group as a whole to be used to support the group’s activities.

Due to the nature of the group environment, these sessions were unpredictable. At one session, a participant became hostile when informed that the researcher was a social worker. This was an understandable reaction given the experiences she and others shared about their experiences of professionals. This situation was diffused when the researcher explained the aim of the study and this was verified by others in the group. At another session, a participant had a panic attack. The participant had experienced these before and the other participants and the project workers knew how to manage the situation. On this occasion, it was at the end of the group session and most people had left. The researcher had supported people having panic attacks previously and was able to help ground the participant while the project worker went to get help. The researcher was able to manage chaotic situations, hostility and difficult situations by using skills and experience gained as a social worker.

Sampling

Sampling for this study was purposeful (Creswell & Poth 2018). Purposive sampling involves selecting research participants who are likely to have valuable insights on the research topic (Denscombe 2017: 42). Research participants in this study were chosen because they could provide information, either to help develop the research, or to share their experience of working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. Table 6 outlines the sampling framework for this study.

Table 6: Sampling Framework

Gatekeeper	Organisation Details	Sample
Local Authority	The Local Authority has developed a Young Person's Project Board (YPPB) that is consulted to provide a young person's perspective on topics relating to relationships and sex education.	Existing group Over 16 years old Informed consent gained
National Voluntary Organisation	Provided free and confidential support 24 hours a day for people affected by crime and traumatic events.	Over 16 years old Not being exploited Informed consent gained
Voluntary Sector Organisation	An independent charity offering support for children and young people aged 12 to 26 years. They provide a safe environment in which young people can access support and explore the possibilities for change. They promote a greater understanding of the sexual exploitation of children and young people.	Over 18 years old Not being exploited Informed consent gained

Voluntary Sector Organisation	The organisation provides an extensive range of activities and support for both young and old. It runs an Adult Post-Abuse Service that supports historic victims of child sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse and domestic violence.	Over 18 years old Not being exploited Informed consent gained

YPPB

Members that took part in the research ranged from 16 to 18 years old and the group included both males and females. Members were recruited from schools within the Local Authority to provide consultancy on subjects relating to sex and relationships. Through their activities, this group of young people had an understanding of child sexual exploitation and sexual violence. None of the young people disclosed having direct experience of child sexual exploitation or sexual violence.

Table 7: YPPB Demographics

	Age years	**Female** no.	**Male** no.	**White British** no.	**BME** no.
Session 1	16-18	4	1	4	1
Session 2	16-18	2	3	4	1

Females accounted for 60% of attendees. Given that the ratio of males to females within England and Wales is approximately 50:50, males were under-represented within this sample (Office of National Statistics 2011: n.p). However, statistics indicate that two thirds of those accessing child sexual exploitation services through Barnardo's are female, and therefore the sample was an accurate reflection of the gender of those who have been identified as being sexually exploited (Barnardo's 2014: 4). With regards to ethnicity, the sample reflects the ethnicity of the population of England and Wales with 80% being White British (Office of National Statistics 2012: n.p). Currently, there is

insufficient data on the ethnicity of those affected by child sexual exploitation to determine whether this sample is representative of those affected (Coy, Sharp-Jeffs & Kelly 2017).

Research Participants

Young people were recruited through specialist child sexual exploitation voluntary sector organisations. To be eligible to take part in the study, the research participant had to be over the age of 16 years and in recovery from child sexual exploitation. Recovery was understood to be a situation where the individual was no longer being sexually exploited and was receiving support to address the impact of the abuse (Asquith & Turner 2008). The gatekeeping organisation made an assessment with regards to whether an individual had moved into recovery, and whether they were emotionally resilient enough to take part prior to inviting them to join the study (Pirskanen et al. 2015).

There were considerable barriers to individuals taking part in the study and, therefore, a pragmatic approach was taken in relation to sample size. The aim of the study was to recruit a small number (ten to fifteen) of research participants. Given the small sample size, the research participants did not provide a representative sample of those affected by child sexual exploitation and, therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the total population (Barnes 2012). However, the merits of this study come from an in-depth examination of the experiences and perspectives of the participants in order to gain a better understanding of the issue (Barnes 2012).

Table 8: 1-2-1 Data Collection Session Participant Information

	Total	**Age** years	**Male** no.	**Female** no.	**White British** no.	**BME** no.
Number	4	17+	0	4	4	0

Table 9: Focus Group Data Collection Session Participant Information

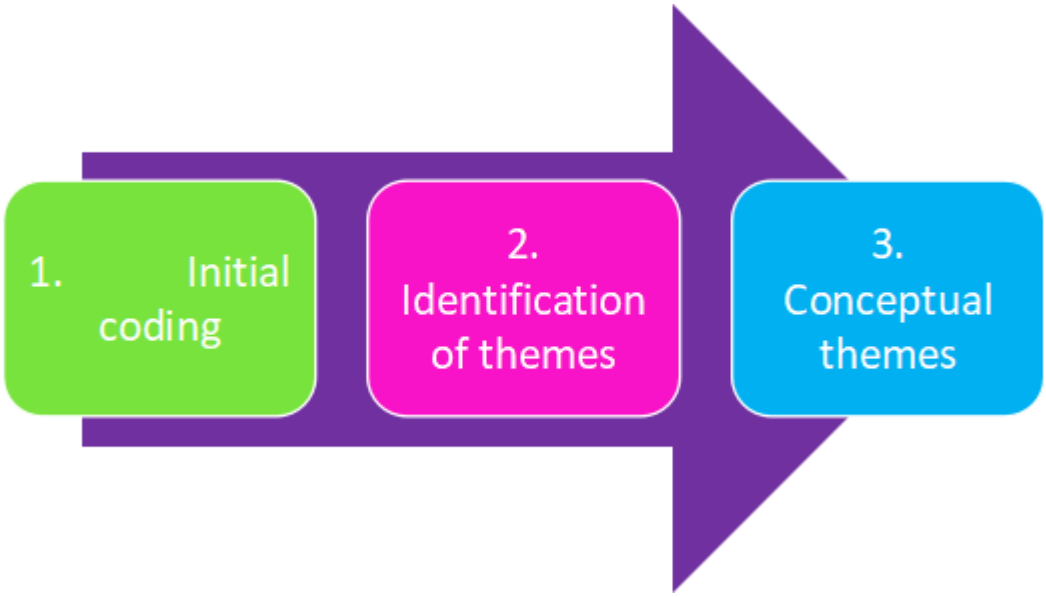
	Total	**Age** years	**Male** no.	**Female** no.	**White British** no.	**BME** no.
Focus Group	7	18+	0	7	7	0

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the research participants' experiences (Katz & Barnetz 2014). The unit of analysis was the research participants' experience of working with professionals (Riessman 2008). Thematic analysis involved reorganising the research participants' stories into themes to provide a more detailed discussion of the meaning of their stories; this process is called restorying (Cresswell & Poth 2018).

Thematic analysis, or restorying, of the data was undertaken in three stages as illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Thematic analysis



Initial coding – each narrative segment was allocated a code that represented the overall meaning of that particular contribution. This stage was carried out in Nvivo.

Identification of themes – the codes created in the initial coding were then sorted into themes. For example, choice and consent are both negatively impacted by the process of child sexual exploitation and would both fit within the theme 'impact of child sexual exploitation'.

Conceptual themes – once codes had been reduced into themes, these themes were then interpreted and reduced into conceptual themes. For example, the theme 'lack of understanding of child sexual exploitation' incorporated a professional's lack of understanding of both grooming and the characteristics of those affected.

The following three analysis chapters, '*What's in a Word', 'Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision'* and '*Power Dynamics'*, outline the initial coding, identification of themes and conceptual themes for the content of each specific chapter.

Ethics

Given the sensitive nature of this research, ethical considerations were given considerable thought. The measures put in place to promote the concept of undertaking research that did no harm are outlined within this section. Coventry University's Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations gave the study ethical approval (Appendix 4).

<u>Consent</u>

Research participants must have given informed consent before data could be collected. In order for them to give informed consent, they were provided with the following information:

- Details of the research;
- Full requirements of each participant;

- What will happen to the data collected; and,
- Whether their identity will be protected.

(National Children's Bureau 2011)

YPPB:

The YPPB was an existing group run by a Local Authority. All the members of the YPPB had already completed parental consent forms to take part in the group. These consent forms covered a range of issues including, and most importantly, taking part in challenging discussions around all aspects of sex and relationships. Given the participants parents consented to their children taking part in research around sex and relationships, additional consent was not sought from the parents for this study. Prior to the researcher attending the YPPB, the group was provided with information about the research, their potential involvement and details of what will happen to their data. Consent was gained from all participants prior to the sessions commencing and recorded on a consent form. Scanned copies of these consent forms have been saved on the University's hard drive and the original paper copies have been shredded.

Research Participants:

These participants were provided with an information sheet by their project worker prior to them agreeing to meet the researcher. The sheet outlined the purpose of the study, what would be required by research participants and how their data may be used. This information was reiterated at the beginning of data collection sessions in addition to informing potential research participants that they can end the data gathering session at any time, take breaks and withdraw consent for the information to be used after the session has been undertaken (up to a specific date). This information was provided in an accessible format; see Appendix 2 (National Children's Bureau 2011).

Consent was recorded on an informed consent form. These forms were scanned and saved on the University's H drive and the original copies were shredded.

Safeguarding

Given the experiences of the research participants in this study, safeguarding the well-being of those involved was of utmost importance and was given careful consideration (Dodsworth 2015).

This study focused on the experiences of the interaction between victims of child sexual exploitation and safeguarding professionals, and not the abuse they had suffered. However, some participants wanted to put their experiences in context, and this could have led to safeguarding disclosures, re-traumatisation, distress as well as vicarious trauma on the part of the researcher as well. To minimise the risks associated with these issues, the following precautions were put in place:

- Disclosure – both the information sheet provided to participants prior to agreeing to be part of the research, and the discussion at the start of the sessions made it clear that if information was disclosed which suggested they or another person was at risk of harm, the safeguarding policy of the gatekeeping organisation would be followed. The project workers from the organisations were responsible for following the safeguarding procedure in response to the disclosure, and the researcher would check that this had taken place.
- Re-traumatisation/distress – discussions took place with the research participant's project workers with regard to the appropriateness of them engaging in the research prior to inviting them to participate. Only when the project workers, deemed engagement in the study to be appropriate did research sessions go ahead. This was a dynamic assessment and was re-evaluated throughout the research process. To minimise the potential for re-traumatisation, the sessions focused on the research participant's experience of professionals and NOT the sexual abuse itself. Regardless of this, there was the potential for memories to be triggered; to address this, the participant's project workers were on hand to debrief following the completion of the data collection session (whether issues arose on the interview day or subsequently). In addition, it was made clear that the research participant could stop the interview at any

point and take a break or stop the session. Participants were also given the option of having a project worker (or equivalent) present during the data collection process. At the end of the session, a second information leaflet was given to participants with the contact information of additional relevant support services (for example, Child Line and the Samaritans helpline).

- Managing expectations – Participants were given realistic information about how long the study was likely to take to complete, and the potential impact it would have on the lives of other young people affected by child sexual exploitation to prevent them feeling/being exploited (Warrington 2010).
- Vicarious trauma – listening to the experiences of the participants involved in this research was at times distressing and traumatic. This was exacerbated by echoes of stories I had heard in practice. Davidson (2004) recognises that listening to research participants can trigger new and/or old vulnerabilities. In addition, during the research, I was called to give evidence in the trial of two perpetrators (who were sentenced to 11 years in prison), and two people that I had worked with, passed away. As a result, there were times when I found this research difficult to continue. To deal with the emotional demands of the study, I accessed counselling via Coventry University's health and well-being centre and the peer support I developed in practice. I also sought support from other students undertaking research in the field of child sexual exploitation and my Director of Studies. The majority of these spoke about the emotional toll of their research, and many described symptoms associated with vicarious trauma. My experience is that the emotional impact of research is something rarely considered, discussed or addressed. This is supported by Dickson-Swift et al. (2009) who found the emotional labour undertaken by researchers was undervalued within the university culture. This needs to change and has been identified in chapter 10, '*Conclusions*', as an area for further research.

Similar risk management strategies have been used by researchers at the University of Bedfordshire which is considered a forerunner in research on child

sexual exploitation (Beckett et al. 2013, and 2015). The study, *'It's wrong…but you get used to it',* involved young people aged from 13 to 28 years of age being interviewed about gang-associated sexual violence and exploitation (Beckett et al. 2013). The study, *'Children's Voices Research Report: Children and young people's perspectives on the police's role in safeguarding: a report for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies*', involved young people from 7 to 19 years of age who had come into contact with police due to concerns about safety or well-being (Beckett et al. 2013).

Health and Safety

To minimise any risk to the health and safety of research participants or the YPPB members, sessions took place during daytime hours (9.00am – 5.30pm) at mutually agreed locations; these were the premises of the gatekeeping organisation or locations they had used before. Lorentzen et al. (2008) found that undertaking interviews in surroundings that are familiar to the research participant and where they feel safe and secure, minimised unpleasant emotions resulting from the session. The gatekeepers arranged/co-ordinated transport for the research participants and the YPPB members to and from the venue.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity were preserved as no information was disclosed that suggested there was a risk of harm to the participant or to others. If a disclosure had been made that suggested there was a risk of harm, confidentiality would have been broken. This limitation to confidentiality was made explicit in the information sheet and was verbally explained at the beginning of every session. Providing information with regards to the limits of confidentiality prior to sessions enabled participants to make informed choices about what they shared with the researcher, with the understanding that safeguarding concerns would be acted on (Mudaly & Goddard 2009).

Organisations involved in the study are acknowledged within outputs relating to this research. However, specific organisations will not be linked directly with comments made by research participants. This will further preserve the

anonymity of research participants and protect organisations from any potential reputational issues. If there had been concerns with an organisations professional practice, these would have been raised with the organisation directly.

Data Management

With the consent of the research participant, an audio recording was made of each data collection session. These recordings were kept on a MP3 device and uploaded onto NVivo. Once the audio file was uploaded it was removed from the MP3 device. The audio file was transcribed using NVivo which is hosted on Coventry University's secure IT system.

A code was used to identify the individual sessions so that no information was kept on NVivo that could have identified the participant if consent was withdrawn (IP1, IP2 etc.). Limited personal information was kept in a Microsoft Word document so that participant data could be removed from the study should they withdraw consent.

Information on NVivo or Microsoft Word was stored on Coventry University's H drive which is password protected.

Additional Ethical Clearance

A number of organisations were approached as part of this research to see if they would be able to facilitate access to potential research participants. Interestingly, each organisation had different requirements.

When approaching organisations, I sent the following:

- Benefits of taking part in research flyer
- Coventry University Ethics Approval
- Coventry University Sponsor Details
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Data Collection Topic Guide

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check
- Indemnity and liability insurance information
- Informed consent form participants
- Informed consent form project workers
- Research proposal
- Support organisations information sheet for young people
- Young people research information sheet

Smaller voluntary sector organisations were satisfied with the information they were provided with, and data collection sessions where then arranged with potential research participants via their project workers.

The largest of the voluntary sector organisations required the research proposal to go through its own ethics approval process. The first application submitted was rejected. One of the aspects of the research design that the organisation challenged was the requirement for research participants under the age of 18 years, to have their parents' consent to take part in the study. On reflection, the inclusion of this requirement was an example of protectionism that could have prevented otherwise eligible young people from accessing the study. Following the feedback from this organisation, I altered the study design and resubmitted ethical applications to both this organisation and Coventry University. The organisation accepted the less restrictive, more child-centred research design. On the basis that the organisation had considerable experience of research with children and young people, Coventry University accepted its recommendations and granted ethical approval for the amended research application.

A private sector company that works with children who had been sexually exploited was also contacted. In contrast to the voluntary sector organisations, this company wanted a range of additional measures put in place before it would consider allowing access to any of the young people it worked with. The company asked me to meet their staff and spend time with the young person's therapist prior to a decision being made about whether it would be appropriate for me to meet the young person. The company was also keen for me to meet

the young person casually before asking if they would like to talk to me about their experiences. These requests were completely reasonable but in stark contrast to the response of the voluntary sector.

Limitations and Challenges

The research was limited to investigating the experience of those over the age of 16 years who had been subject to child sexual exploitation and were not, at the time of the data collection, being abused. These boundaries were put in place to protect the well-being of the research participants. However, this resulted in some children and young people's voices being excluded from the study. Anyone under 16 years or being exploited at the time of the research could not be eligible to take part. This created a sample bias and resulted in some children and young people being discriminated against and excluded from the research (Warrington 2010).

In addition, children and young people could only take part if they were linked in with a specialist sexual exploitation organisation. Again, this was to promote the well-being of research participants by ensuring they had access to support during and after participating in the study. However, this excluded those who did not have, or did not want to have, access to a specialist organisation. This added to the sample bias as within child sexual exploitation there are low levels of disclosure and engagement with/ access to support services (Warrington et al. 2017).

There were also limitations associated with the methological approach and methods used in this study. Taking a narrative approach meant the study drew on the stories of a relatively small number of research participants. As a result, the findings cannot be considered representative of all children and young people's experience of child sexual exploitation, and therefore cannot be generalised (Grix 2010). However, taking this approach enabled an in-depth analysis of the stories that were shared (Creswell & Poth 2018).

Summary

In line with the children's rights approach, this study viewed children and young people as social agents who are experts in their own lives. As such, a participatory approach was taken. A YPPB contributed to the development of the study's methodology and the research participants were all individuals who had been subject to child sexual exploitation. Research participants' narratives were collected to ensure their voices were kept central to the analysis and to the results of the study.

Given that the topic researched was in the context of participants having experienced child sexual exploitation, particular consideration was given to the study design and ethics. The study aimed to balance facilitating victims of child sexual exploitation having a voice, with protecting them from further harm and re-traumatisation. To achieve this, potential participants were identified by specialist sexual exploitation organisations. These organisations supported participants before, during and after the data collection sessions, and participants were fully informed about the study and the limits to confidentiality in advance of the sessions. Participants were not asked about the sexual abuse they suffered, and the participants had an opportunity to debrief with both the researcher and their support worker.

Chapter 6: What's in a Word? The power of terminology

This chapter explores the significance of the terminology used by professionals in constructing knowledge about those who have been subject to child sexual exploitation. The terms used to describe child sexual exploitation and those involved are not simply descriptive terms (Hallett 2017). The terms used inform and demonstrate people's attitudes to the problem (Dodsworth 2015). Indeed, the words and language used communicates how child sexual exploitation is perceived and how those involved are viewed (Hallett 2017). For example, replacing the phrase child prostitution with child sexual exploitation was aimed at re-framing this issue from one in which the child is complicit to one where the child is subject to sexual abuse (see chapters 2 and 3).

As the previous chapter documents, serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation have consistently identified terminology and phrases that were shown to be unhelpful in relation to safeguarding children from abuse. Much of this unhelpful terminology was recorded as having been used by professionals, including police officers, social workers and school staff, to describe young people subject to child sexual exploitation. The terms themselves provide an insight into the attitudes of professionals and how they view these children and young people.

Authors of serious case reviews have interpreted the terms used by some professionals as 'victim blaming' and identified this as a factor in failures to safeguarding children from abuse (Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board 2015, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013, and Jay 2015). However, there is little research about how these terms are experienced, interpreted and how they can impact on the children and young people themselves.

To explore how children and young people experience the terms used to describe individuals subject to child sexual exploitation, the YPPB, which is comprised of young people who had not disclosed CSE, were asked what these

terms meant to them as part of a session to identify the appropriate terminology for the study. Members of the YPPB were consulted to avoid introducing research participants who had experienced child sexual exploitation to unhelpful and judgemental attitudes, and to remove the risk of those participants who had experienced child sexual exploitation internalising these negative messages and being retraumatised. This decision was made in line with taking a children's rights approach, where participation is balanced with protection. In this situation, concerns about the potential negative impact on research participants outweighed participation, and the YPPB was consulted instead.

Terminology

The YPPB was asked whether they thought words or phrases were appropriate to use to describe young people subjected to child sexual exploitation. The terms chosen were those quoted in serious case reviews and identified as having been used by professionals to describe a child or young person who has been subjected to child sexual exploitation. Table 10 lists the views expressed by professionals about children and young people they came into contact with in the context of child sexual exploitation and quotes from serious case reviews that illustrate these views. Once the YPPB had shared their perception of the terms, they were informed that these terms had all been used by professionals to describe those subject to child sexual exploitation.

Table 10: Views expressed by professionals

Professional's view of young person	Examples of professionals expressing these views from Serious Case Reviews
Challenging	'young people being viewed as problematic and referred to in terms of "hard to reach" "rebellious" "challenging behaviour" rather than by attempting to understand the behaviour and provide sustained support.' (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013: 83)

Professional's view of young person	Examples of professionals expressing these views from Serious Case Reviews
Criminal	'In a small number of cases…the victims were arrested for offences such as breach of the peace or being drunk and disorderly, with no action taken against the perpetrators of rape and sexual assault against children.' (Jay 2014: 36)
Fails to engage	'there is no victim as such as she is not willing to give police a statement' (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 41)
Liar	'stated that she was someone who: 'lies convincingly…for some reason she seems to love the way of life she is carving out for herself, but she will disclose nothing" (Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board 2016: 24)
Lifestyle choice	''nothing happened that she did not want to happen'' (Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016: 3)
Making bad choices	'they were seen as very difficult girls making bad choices' (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 1)
Promiscuous	'at times the language used about the children, for example, references to promiscuity, was highly judgemental and demonstrated a lack of understanding of the degree to which they were in control of what was really happening to them.' (Coventry Safeguarding Children Board 2016: 17)
Prostitute	'"If we mentioned Asian taxi drivers we were told we were racist and the young people were seen as prostitutes."' A former social worker' (Casey 2015: 35)

It has not been possible to link these examples with specific professionals (for example police officers or social workers); however, all of these terms have been used by those involved in safeguarding children and young people from child sexual exploitation.

Thematic Analysis

The YPPB discussion was recorded on a MP3 device and uploaded onto NVivo. The audio file was transcribed before being coded and analysed to identify common themes. Thematic analysis involved sorting the data contained in the transcript into common themes to find meaning in the YPPB's subjective experience. Figure 8 to 11 present the thematic analysis process in relation to the data collected from the YPPB.

Figure 8: Theme 1: Understanding of child sexual exploitation

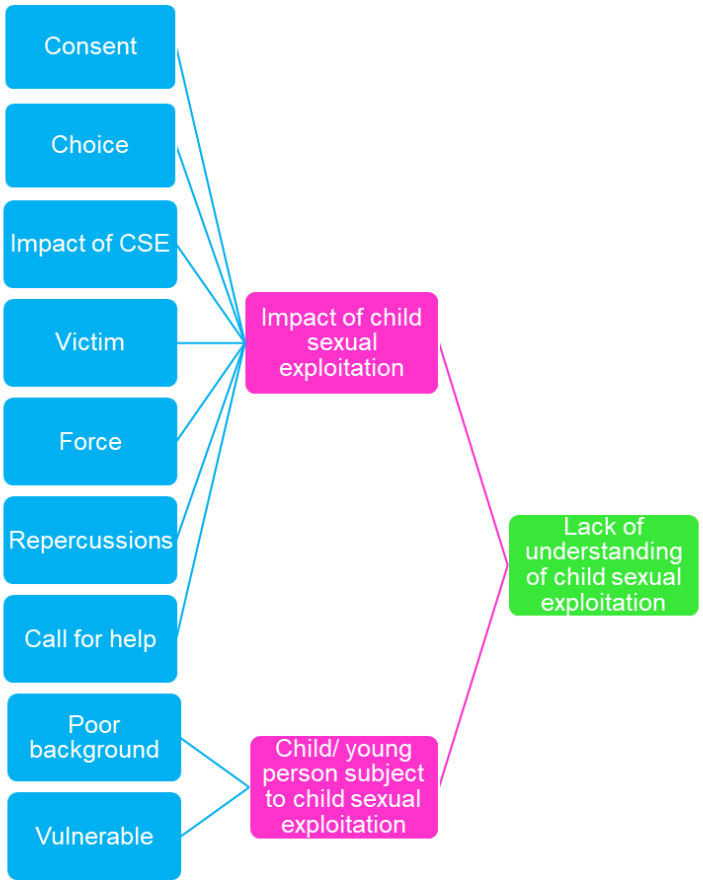


Figure 9: Theme 2: Judgemental attitudes

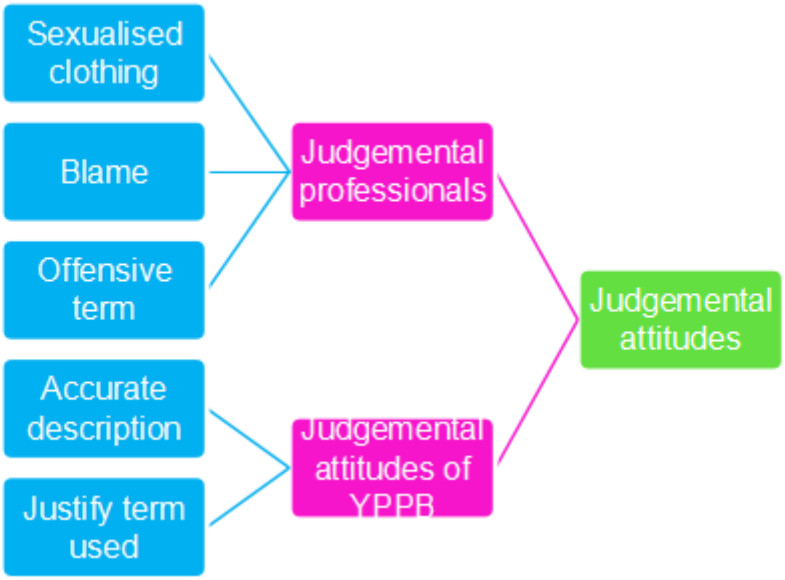


Figure 10: Theme 3: Limitations of professionals

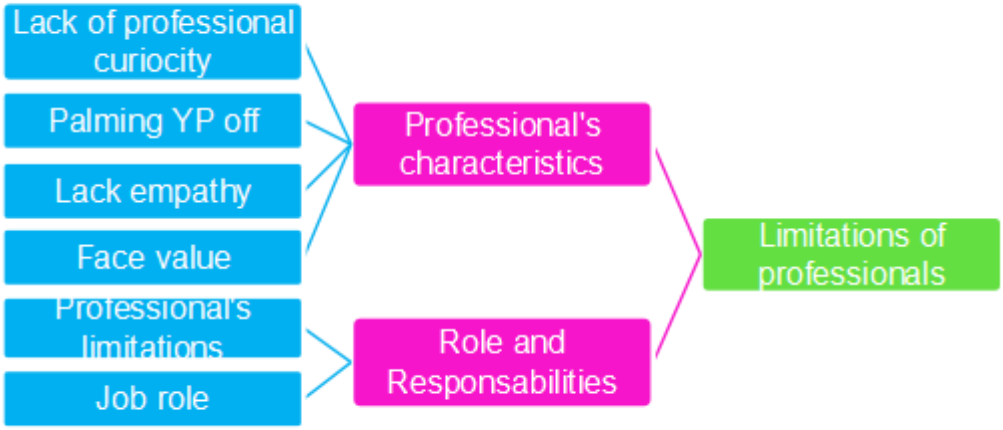
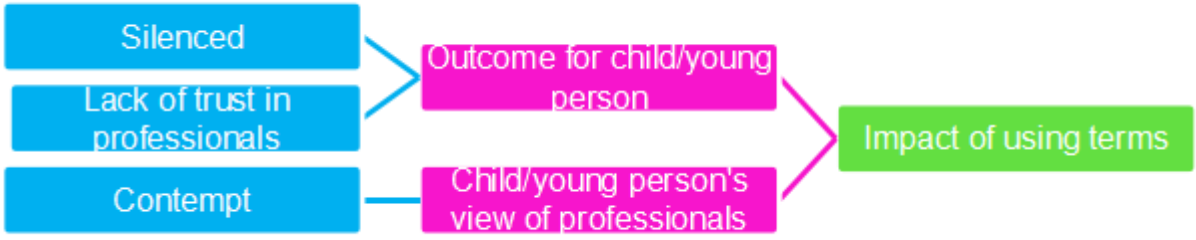


Figure 11: Theme 4: Impact of using terms



As Figures 8 to 11 demonstrate, four overarching themes were identified from the YPPB data:

1. Professional's lack of understanding of child sexual exploitation
2. Judgemental attitudes
3. Professional's limitations
4. Impact of using terms

This section presents a detailed account of the conceptual themes identified in the data collected from the YPPB in relation to their perception of the meaning and impact of the terminology identified in Figures 8 to 11.

Professional's lack of understanding of child sexual exploitation

The YPPB repeatedly emphasised that child sexual exploitation constrains or erodes choice. Indeed, the term choice was the 7th most common word (of more than three letters) used during the data collection session. The YPPB said the terms 'lifestyle choice', 'promiscuous', 'sexually available' and 'prostitute' all suggested that the child or young person had a choice.

When asked if the YPPB felt that the term 'lifestyle choice' was an inappropriate term to use in relation to those affected by child sexual exploitation the following comment was made:

> 'I think that's bullshit, I think they are not making a choice, I think they are being forced into it, do you know what I mean, no one's going to willingly be like oh yeah come on come rape me, that's so stupid.'
>
> (YPPB 2016)

It is clear from this quote that this member of the YPPB strongly disagreed with the suggestion that children or young people who were sexually exploited were making a lifestyle choice. The YPPB member emphasised that no one would choose to be raped and dismissed the view of anyone who thought otherwise as stupid. The YPPB explained that choice could be constrained or eroded by historical factors, such as a young person's background:

> ‘They tend to go for people who are like vulnerable so they are not going to understand anything else like they have already had a shit time.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

Here the YPPB member recognises that an individual’s background could increase their vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. For example, someone who has been brought up in an environment of domestic abuse may have a skewed understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

The YPPB explained that choice or consent could also be affected by the strategies used by perpetrators who commit child sexual exploitation. For example, the YPPB identified that the threat of repercussions could remove an individual’s ability to choose:

> ‘Maybe you may choose to meet up with someone, like, who happens to be in that gang, but you can choose to like leave them alone, but if they now know where you live, they can come and find you and you don’t have a choice.’
>
> (YPPB 2017)

The YPPB member recognised that the fear of repercussions could affect an individual’s ability to choose whether or not to return to a perpetrator. Many of the serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation have recorded threats being used to intimidate and manipulate children and young people. In Oxford Safeguarding Children Board’s (2015) serious case review into child sexual exploitation in Oxford, the author found evidence of those subject to child sexual exploitation being threatened.

> ‘They threatened to blow up my house with my Mum in it.’

> ‘I was expected to do things – if I didn’t they said they would come to my house and burn me alive. I had a baby brother.’

> ‘I wouldn’t ever have said no – they’d have beaten the shit out of me.’
>
> (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 13)

These are the words of children and young people subject to sexual exploitation in Oxford between 2005 and 2010. They reinforce the point made by the YPPB in relation to the erosion of choice, specifically where extreme violence was both perpetrated and threatened (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015).

The YPPB also identified the term ‘fails to engage’ as one which demonstrated a lack of understanding of the impact of child sexual exploitation:

> ‘The word failing is like I think it’s uncalled for, because like after everything they have been through, they don’t understand how they are feeling, saying failing, they don’t need another negative, like.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

The YPPB member recognised that children and young people who have been sexually exploited have been through a difficult experience and that labelling them as failing compounds this.

As these examples illustrate, the YPPB felt that some of the terms used by professionals indicated a lack of understanding of child sexual exploitation and its impact on children and young people.

Judgemental attitudes

The YPPB felt that the following terms were judgemental and placed blame on the individual subject to child sexual exploitation for their abuse; ‘lifestyle choice’, ‘fails to engage’, ‘liar’ and ‘rebellious’.

For example, in response to the use of the term ‘liar’, the YPPB stated that this word should not be used before the professional has a full understanding of the situation:

> ‘That’s wrong, they shouldn’t deem them as anything, before they’ve properly investigated.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

This quote suggests that the YPPB were not ruling out the use of the term liar, if indeed the child or young person had been found to be lying. However, they were clear that this term should not be used unless it is an accurate description.

When the term ‘challenging’ was introduced, the YPPB felt that using this term placed blame on the child or young person for being sexually exploited:

> ‘They are kinda suggesting it’s their own fault ‘cos of the way they are.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

However, there was less of a consensus with the use of the words ‘promiscuous’ and ‘prostitute’. Although the outcome of the discussion around the term promiscuous was that all members agreed it was not an appropriate term to use in relation to child sexual exploitation, one member felt that it was an appropriate term to use in some circumstances:

> ‘I dunno, yeah but if you look at society most 14 year olds looking 21 they all will all go out in bralettes, crop tops and shit like that, like, I’m not saying it’s right for people to rape them but like, they know what they are doing, do you know what I mean, they’re all like, I’m going gym, they are going gym to get a good body to put it on show, do you know what I mean.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

Interestingly, this comment mirrors a statement made by the Crown Prosecution Service to explain why they had not taken a child sexual exploitation case forward, ‘the victim tends to wear sexualised clothes when she is out of school, such as cropped tops’ (Coffey 2014: 56). The impact of a victim’s dress on victim blaming has been explored in chapter 4. The assertion that a woman is

more likely to be raped if she is wearing ‘sexualised clothing’ is both a rape myth and victim blaming.

There was also some debate over whether or not prostitute was an appropriate term to use.

> ‘I dunno, quite a few like choose to go into it as a career, but a lot of these won’t, they’ll be forced into it.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

> ‘No, unless they have chosen that life, I still do think that even if you are a prostitute you still have a choice, even if people are like I am doing it because I want the money, you still have a choice to do that you could be bankrupt, you choose to be that way, do you get me, I think it is like that choice thing they don’t have a choice over who they have to sleep with.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

The YPPB made a distinction between whether or not the individual was being forced or had chosen to exchange sex. They appeared to be in agreement that those who are subject to child sexual exploitation do not make a choice and are therefore not prostitutes. Interestingly, there was no discussion of whether the age of the individual impacted on their ability to choose or to give consent.

The lack of an initial consensus by the YPPB over the use of the word prostitute is something that has also been witnessed in academia. Since 2009, the general consensus, following the introduction of the Government guidance *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Child Sexual Exploitation,* has been to use the term child sexual exploitation in place of prostitution (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009). The Centre of Expertise, National Working Group, and University of Bedfordshire all use this term. However, a number of academics, including Coy (2016) and Melrose (2013), have challenged this view. Melrose (2013) believes that moving from using the term ‘abused through prostitution’ to ‘sexual exploitation’ has led to confusion by practitioners as to which practices fall within sexual exploitation. Coy (2016)

asserts that there should be no distinction between child sexual exploitation and adult prostitution given that a third of women involved in prostitution were paid for sex before they were 18 years old. Coy (2016) also believes that framing child sexual exploitation as child abuse through prostitution emphasises the gendered nature of the problem and locates it with the stigma, shame and criminalisation associated with prostitution.

Once all the terms had been discussed by the YPPB, they were informed that these words and phrases had been used by professionals in relation to those subjected to child sexual exploitation. The YPPB again highlighted that these descriptions were judgemental and blamed individuals for their abuse:

> ‘They are going to think it’s them and it’s like you judging a book before [by] it’s cover……’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

The lack of consensus in relation to the terms ‘prostitute’ and ‘promiscuous’ indicated that the YPPB was unsure about what constitutes choice and consent in some situations which is a reflection of some professionals’ attitudes. This will be considered further in chapters 7 and 8.

Professional’s limitations

The YPPB felt the terms ‘rebellious’ and ‘fails to engage’ demonstrated a lack of professional curiosity and laziness on the part of practitioners working in the field of child sexual exploitation.

> ‘Maybe it’s them [professionals], maybe that’s the issue, maybe they don’t understand them [young people], quick to blame someone else.’
>
> (YPPB 2017)

> ‘It’s a lot easier just to say oh yeah he’s rebellious instead of getting down into the actual problem that lies within.’
>
> (YPPB, 2016)

> ‘Lazy, its that kind of, oh it’s just how they are.’
>
> (YPPB, 2016)

Indeed, the serious case review undertaken by Janet Galley (2016) into child sexual exploitation in Derby found ‘staff did not recognise the significance of their [victims] behaviour in terms of abuse, and they were dealt with as ‘rebellious adolescents’’ (Derby Safeguarding Children Board 2016:6). In this case, a lack of recognition or understanding of young people’s behaviour contributed to a failure to safeguard them from abuse. A lack of professional curiosity and rigour was also identified as one of the reasons there was a delay in safeguarding young people from child sexual exploitation in Oxford’s serious case review (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015).

> ‘….there was a lack of curiosity across agencies about the visible suffering of the children and the information that did emerge from girls, parents, or carers, or some very worried staff.’
>
> (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 1)

The YPPB also highlighted the impact of organisational constraints on service provision and service user engagement:

> ‘Also perpetrators are most likely to be quite scary and stuff, so lying is their only option, of making them feel like they are safe, you can run to the authorities but they are only there for a selected period of time, so it’s quite hard to tell the truth when you are in a sticky situation like that, the repercussions are really dangerous.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

This quote also illustrates the practical limitations that are in place for practitioners. As stated, professionals are rarely available 24/7 and this impacts on their ability to safeguard children and young people in these situations, particularly as many services are only available Monday-Friday between the hours of 9am and 5.30pm. This is in stark contrast to the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.

Professional limitations, whether they are structural or attitudinal, negatively impact on their ability to safeguard children and young people from child sexual exploitation. This topic will be revisited in chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10.

The impact of using the terminology identified in Table 10

During the session with the YPPB they expressed concerns in relation to the impact of using the terms identified in Table 10 in relation to those affected by child sexual exploitation. For example, the YPPB felt the word liar was belittling:

> ‘It’s like they’re [professionals] the people that are supposed to be helping them and they’re the people that are like belittling them, making them feel like they can’t say anything.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

> ‘Being called a liar, they [children and young people] wouldn’t be happy to open up and tell the professional any more information.’
>
> (YPPB 2016)

Both these quotes illustrate how terminology can create a barrier to children and young people engaging with professionals. If children and young people feel that they are being judged or blamed by professionals, they will be less likely to disclose abuse or to continue to engage with interventions aimed at promoting their safety.

This sentiment echoes that of a professional quoted in Beckett & Warrington’s 2015 report entitled, *Making Justice Work*;

> ‘It was never that she was proved to have lied, but because she had a reputation of a case where the charges had been dropped CPS weren’t even going to consider it, so they weren’t going to waste time on it. So it becomes about the probability of success rather than what this young person has been through. ...and for her it’s that she wasn’t worth

believing. And she doesn't believe in telling the police, there's no point, she's marked.'

(Beckett & Warrington 2015: p.29)

This comment was made in relation to a victim of gang-associated, multiple-perpetrator rape. The outcome of these attitudes being held in this case was that the perpetrators were not investigated or brought to justice leaving them free to continue to sexually abuse children (Beckett & Warrington 2015).

When the YPPB was asked how someone affected by child sexual exploitation might feel if they were described using the terms in Table 10, they responded:

'I wouldn't speak to anyone, I would just literally, probably, for the rest of my life just take it, I wouldn't speak to anyone, 'cos you just think who can you trust, if you can't trust the people who are meant to be protecting you, who can you trust?'

(YPPB, 2016)

'I wouldn't speak to them [professionals] again.'

(YPPB, 2016)

These comments highlight how important the terminology used by professionals, in situations of child sexual exploitation is. The YPPB again expressed the view that the terms used by professionals could create a barrier to children accessing or engaging with support, stating the impact would be realised not only now but into the future. The YPPB suggested that use of these terms would erode trust and prevent a child from working with professionals. Without the support of professionals, the YPPB was concerned that abuse would be on-going for the rest of the individual's life.

At the end of the session, the YPPB was informed that all of the words and phrases discussed had been used by professionals to describe young people affected by sexual exploitation. Their response to this information was as follows:

> ‘Fucking wankers.’
>
> (YPPB, 2016)

> ‘The terms, they are all subjective, because they are seeing it from their point of view, saying what they have seen, so say if someone’s promiscuous and stuff like that, like a teacher could say that because of how someone goes on at school, but that [the behaviour] could be for other reasons.’
>
> (YPPB, 2016)

> ‘It’s quite sad.’
>
> (YPPB, 2016)

Strong language, as demonstrated in the quote ‘fucking wankers’, indicated that this particular member of the YPPB had a very strong emotional response to the use of the terms in Table 10 by professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. The language used communicated anger and frustration with professionals who she felt used language that was inappropriate and offensive (Jay & Janschewitz 2008). Other members of the YPPB used less offensive language but their contributions expressed the same negative response. Professionals who had used the terms, identified in Table 10, were viewed negatively by all members of the YPPB. This was evident in the words used to describe the professionals who used these terms, members of the YPPB used either strong language such as ‘fucking wankers’ or dismissive words such as ‘stupid’ and ‘lazy’.

Summary

The results of this chapter demonstrate how incredibly important professional attitudes, as expressed through the use of particular terms, are in relation to promoting positive engagement with children and young people and effective safeguarding. The YPPB discussions confirmed the assertion made by authors of serious case reviews, that terminology used by professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation can have a detrimental impact on young people’s

experience of working with them. The YPPB found the terms identified in Table 10 to be judgemental, victim blaming and offensive. They also felt that the terms demonstrated a lack of understanding and professional curiosity by professionals.

Using terms such as those discussed in this chapter, disempower children and young people. Being viewed as a criminal, consenting to abuse and untruthful creates a barrier to support; both in terms of professionals offering support and children and young people accepting it. As the YPPB hypothesise, the outcome of using inappropriate terms would be that children and young people would be reluctance to disclose abuse and/or engage with services, leaving them isolated from support. In these circumstances, isolation from services creates a situation where children and young people's rights are neither respected nor promoted.

It must be noted that the YPPB is not a proxy for children and young people who have been subject to child sexual exploitation. However, its members have provided a valuable insight into how terms used by professionals are interpreted by children and young people, and the potential impact of their use. This knowledge contributes to the analysis of the research participants' experiences, as it provides an insight into how terms used by the professionals they worked with may have affected their view of both the professionals and themselves.

Chapter 7: Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision

Zoey: 'You didn't have a voice, that's how it felt.'

This chapter is the first of two chapters that give a voice to the lived experience of those affect by child sexual exploitation with respect to their interaction with professionals. Two key themes emerged from thematic analysis of the contributions of these participants: service provision; and power dynamics. This chapter focuses on service provision and the following chapter considers power dynamics.

This chapter begins by presenting the thematic analysis that led to the identification of service provision as a key theme. Sub-themes are then analysed using the voices of research participants. What is demonstrated is that research participants' experience of service provision was variable. Participants identified situations they consider helpful and, unfortunately, they were also able to provide examples of poor practice.

In line with taking a children's rights approach to research, what is important in this and the following chapters, are the experiences of the research participants themselves. It is their perception of working with professionals, or their 'truth' that is presented. They are experts in their own lives and as such, it is their experiences, reflections and recommendations that are at the core of this research.

Thematic Analysis

As mentioned above, two key themes emerged from thematic analysis of the experiences of research participants who had experienced child sexual exploitation: service provision; and power dynamics. This chapter focuses on service provision. Figure 12 illustrates the nodes and sub-themes that fed into this as a conceptual theme.

Figure 12: Theme: Service provision

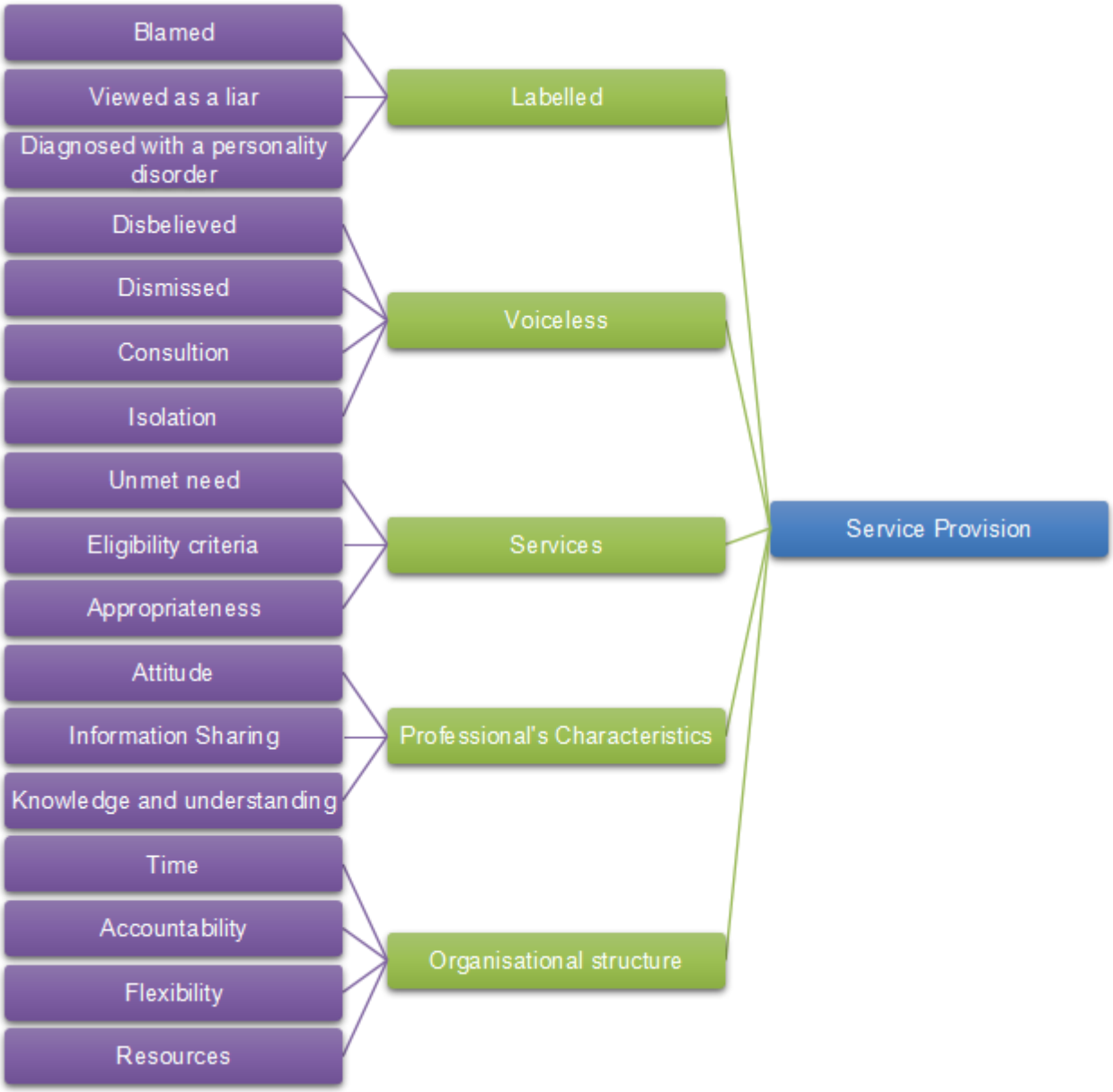


Table 11: Number of participants that spoke about each theme

	Labelled	Voiceless	Services	Professional Characteristics	Organisational Structure
Number of 1-2-1 Participants	4	4	3	4	4
Focus Group (7 participants)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Each sub-theme is discussed below.

Labelled

Labelling relates to the terms people use to describe others. Labels can be used to categorise people in order to 'define needs, justify interventions and to formulate solutions to perceived problems' (Moncrieffe 2013: 1). However, labels can also be used to pathologise, stereotype and stigmatise (Tepperman 2010).

Two participants, Anna and Zoey, felt as though they were labelled as attention seekers following periods of suicidal ideation. Zoey experienced this for the first time at an incredibly young age and suggested that the label followed her into adulthood, as illustrated by the following quote:

> **Zoey**: 'I tried committing suicide when I were 8-year-old and CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service] told me I were attention seeking, that's all it's ever been, I'm attention seeking and to this day, I'm still attention seeking.'

Zoey explained that she had social care involvement from the age of 3 years as a result of neglect, and that over the course of her childhood she had approximately 64 different local authority placements. Rather than viewing the attempted suicide as an indicator of Zoey's unhappiness, Zoey felt professionals dismissed her feelings by labelling her an attention seeker;

> **Zoey**: 'The only thing that kept coming up is my behaviour, my behaviour, you've got to move because of your behaviour, they didn't see why I was acting the way I did, they made me feel like there was something wrong with me.'

Anna also talked about being labelled an attention seeker following a suicide attempt, as demonstrated in the quote below;

> **Anna**:'…I ended up at car park roof nearly jumping off it because I didn't want to be there no more and they classed that as attention seeking…'

Anna explained this suicide attempt was made as a result of the trauma she experienced as a result of being raped. Anna felt that professionals were able to dismiss the impact that trauma had on her mental health by labelling her as an attention seeker. Anna discussed what she believes are the long-term implications of this labelling;

> **Anna**: '…I still find it very difficult to even talk to my own mental health worker about it now 'cos they've labelled me this personality disorder and I think no matter what I say or try to express myself I don't think it will ever be good enough…'

Anna's perception that she was viewed negatively by professionals has created a barrier for her with regards to being able to meaningfully engage with professionals, and therefore, to being able to access appropriate support.

Both these young women reported that the label of attention seeker was accompanied by a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder (BPD). Kulkarni

(2017) stated that BPD, ‘is one of the most stigmatised conditions in psychiatry today’, as it locates the problem within the individual and its symptoms can be misinterpreted as ‘bad behaviour’ (Kulkarni 2017: 333). This is supported by Kyratsous and Sanati (2017), who argue that people with a diagnosis of BPD experience epistemic injustice as a result of being viewed as manipulative. In addition, Ociskova et al. (2017) found that health care professionals often used stigmatising and derogatory expressions to refer to individuals with BPD, including the term ‘attention seeking’ (16). Anna spoke about how she felt the labels of BPD and attention seeker were used to dismiss or diminish her experience;

> **Anna**: ‘They could have just sat down and said, so tell us what’s going on. And listen instead of either trying to put words in or say, oh it’s your personality disorder, I used to get that a lot when I first got a mental health worker, oh it’s part of your personality disorder or it’s just attention seeking and stuff like that and as soon as they used to say that I’m like, why do I bother.’

Anna explained that the use of these labels by professionals prevented her from being able to have a voice. This is consistent with Ociskova et al.’s (2017) finding that the stigmatisation of those who have been diagnosed with BPD, results in these individuals being marginalised within mental health care. Individuals are marginalised both by professionals, and by themselves, as they do not believe they will not be able to access help from mental health services (Ociskova et al. 2017).

Kulkarni (2017) believes that borderline personality disorder is over-diagnosed. This may have been true for Anna, who stated that her diagnosis of BPD had been overturned, and that she had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) instead. Kulkarni (2017) argues that ‘complex post-traumatic stress disorder’ should be used as a diagnosis rather than BPD. This recommendation was made because trauma is a key factor in the development of both these disorders, complex PTSD is a less stigmatising diagnosis, and an

individual is more likely to be able to access treatment with a diagnosis of complex PTSD compared to BPD (Kulkarni 2017: 333).

Zoey's and Anna's experience of labelling suggests they have been pathologised and viewed as the problem. Pathologisation is where suffering experienced by an individual is considered to be the result of an internal illness without considering the impact of external factors (Warner 2009). If this is the case, then it is an example of victim blaming. The individual is blamed for their illness and attention is drawn 'away from the powerful effects of social inequalities, and political and interpersonal oppression, as well as situational stress' (Magnusson & Marecek 2012: 138). Indeed, the symptom of their experience becomes an explanatory tool.

Victim blaming has been a common feature of serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation. Griffiths made the following comment in her serious case review into child sexual exploitation in Rochdale, 'young people being viewed as problematic and referred to in terms of "hard to reach" "rebellious" "challenging behaviour" rather than by attempting to understand the behaviour and provide sustained support.' (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013: 83). The consequence of victim blaming by professionals in Rochdale, was that children experiencing abuse were not safeguarded by statutory agencies (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013). In the case of Anna and Zoey, the outcome was that they perceived they had been stigmatised, discriminated against and marginalised.

Research participants reported that voluntary sector organisations were non-judgemental and did not engage in labelling. Anna spoke about a professional she worked with who was based with a voluntary sector organisation;

> **Anna**: 'She doesn't judge, she doesn't say it's your fault, there isn't any consequences, she might say, "well that was a silly thing to do" but she wouldn't ever put blame on you, she would give you fantastic, what's it called, when someone advises you, she gives fantastic advice…'

This quote demonstrates that Anna believed she experienced a non-judgemental service that was non-punitive and avoided labelling from the voluntary sector worker. In the quote, Anna appears to see the value in the worker's ability to separate Anna's actions from her as an individual. The worker comments on Anna's behaviour without making a broader judgement about Anna's character. This is in stark contrast to both Anna's and Zoey's perceived experience of statutory services.

Voiceless

Voiceless refers to situations where an individual cannot express their opinion, or their opinion is not listened to. Disappointingly, every research participant in this study spoke of occasions when they felt that either, their views were not sought, or they were ignored. A case study of one participant's experience of disclosing abuse and the subsequent criminal investigation will be used to illustrate occasions where she felt that her views were not respected, and the subsequent impact of this on her. The accounts within this case study align with numerous other accounts provided by participants.

Chloe, a participant in 1-2-1 data collection sessions, told me that she had disclosed child sexual exploitation whilst she was an inpatient on a mental health ward. Chloe explained that she chose to disclose at this time so that she could be supported through the criminal justice process by staff on the ward. However, Chloe felt that her wishes were disregarded and reported that she was discharged following her first police interview.

> **Chloe**: 'I was panicking and that was the reason I disclosed 'cos I knew what was going on in my head. I knew, actually, I can't deal with this. I need to tell someone, and actually, I need the help. And I told them to get the help and they kind of just brushed me aside, and kinda went, OK you've told us, you can leave. That's what it felt like to me.'

Chloe identified being in hospital as the one place where she felt safe, as that was where she felt that her needs would be met. Chloe believed that her request to remain an inpatient was ignored, and she explained that this resulted

in her feeling less supported and, therefore, more vulnerable. For Chloe, the sense that she was ignored may have reinforced the sense of powerlessness many experience when they are being abused (Warner 2009). Arguably, it may also have reinforced her view of professionals as being the decision makers 'without her' rather than 'with her'.

Chloe stated that she did not want anyone other than the police to be present during her interviews. However, Chloe believes that a member of staff from the hospital was allowed to watch her initial interview from a separate room;

> **Chloe**: '…I'm like, why, why does she need to know the dirty details? She doesn't...'

Chloe described feeling powerless to control who had access to her story and confused about why her information was shared with a member of hospital staff. To progress the investigation, the police reportedly required Chloe to tell her mother what had happened. Chloe explained that she did not want to tell her mother but felt forced into doing so;

> **Chloe**: '…They, they, as well when I disclosed the police forced me to tell my mum. They said, 'if you don't tell your mum, we can't go on with the case'. And at that point I wasn't having a very good relationship with my mum. And my mum was my only care provider, I didn't have anyone else, and it was literally my mum. And I was kinda irritated that they forced me, like if I actually wanted to do anything, I wanted to feel safe, I wanted to feel better about myself, to actually do any of that, I had to tell someone I didn't want to tell…'

For Chloe, disclosing abuse triggered a series of events in which she felt out of control. Chloe felt unable to control her own information and forced into disclosing to her mother. Ironically, in an attempt to gain control by reporting abuse, Chloe experienced feelings of powerlessness and oppression. The consequence of feeling forced into disclosing to her mother was that Chloe felt re-victimised;

> **Chloe**: '…I felt, I felt like it was happening again, I felt literally I wouldn't say it was as bad as rape, but it felt like I was put in a situation where I couldn't say no…'

For Chloe, her involvement with the police echoed her experience of being raped. Chloe identified both these situations as ones where she was forced into a situation where she was unable to say no. It is not surprising that a feeling of powerlessness would trigger memories of a previous situation where Chloe felt disempowered. Chloe's experience is an example of secondary victimisation or re-victimisation, a situation where an individual's original trauma is compounded (Gekosk et al. 2003). Warner (2009) states that re-traumatisation (or re-victimisation) can be the result of what was discussed, how it was discussed, and the service context.

At one point in the investigation, Chloe talked about being informed that the police did not have enough evidence to make a case against the perpetrator;

> **Chloe**: '…And then I just kinda contemplated life at that point. I was like, no one believes me, how am I going to move on if no one believes me and it is just in my head that this has all gone on…'

Receiving this information was devastating for Chloe. Feeling as though she was not believed by professionals, resulted in Chloe feeling confused and doubting whether she had actually been exploited. The view that the professionals were dismissive of the exploitation may have also normalised the abuse (Gladman & Heal 2017). Chloe disclosed that the response she received from the police led to suicidal ideation. Chloe reflected that this could have been avoided if the police had explained that they believed her but did not have enough evidence for a prosecution. Chloe's perpetrator was eventually prosecuted.

As part of the process, Chloe was entitled, under the Victim Code (Ministry of Justice 2015), to provide a victim personal statement. The aim of a victim

personal statement is for a victim to explain how the crime affected them (Ministry of Justice 2013). If a perpetrator is found guilty, the statement is presented to the court (Ministry of Justice 2013). The statement is intended to give the victim of the crime a voice; however, this was not Chloe's experience;

> **Chloe**: 'Well I wrote what I wrote, A [police officer] then had to re-edit it 'cos I put swear words in there and you're not allowed to use swear words in court. I was like, well why aren't you?...And I'm like, if they are allowed to swear, why aren't I? It's kinda like you're treated like the offender as well…I felt like an absolute nonce reading out all those bloody posh words. I was like, yeah, I'm one for posh words but instead of saying like 'fucking' I had to put something else…No it's A's voice; it was like my words but in A's voice and like half of it was twisted. I had so much more to say that just two bits of paper.'

Chloe felt she was unable to use her own voice, and this resulted in her feeling that her message was misconstrued and, therefore, that her voice was not truly heard. For Chloe, to feel like her voice had truly been heard, the statement needed to be in her own words. Editing her statement could have also given Chloe the impression that her statement was not good enough. Had Chloe been given information about what could be presented in court, she may have chosen to use her original, pre-edited, version of her statement.

Chloe's experience is not unique. In 2015, the Victim's Commissioner published a review of the Victim Personal Statement, the findings of which are consistent with Chloe's experience. In the review, judges and magistrates reported that there were occasions when it appeared the victim's personal statement had been written by the police rather than the victim (Victim's Commissioner 2015). This was corroborated by those consulted as part of the review, with one victim commenting 'the whole process made me feel worthless, even the process of writing the statement where the officer reworded me in a way I hadn't said – and gave it a meaning I didn't mean' (Victim's Commissioner 2015: 31).

Chloe's perpetrator was found guilty of the crimes he committed against her, and her victim personal statement was read out to the court. However, being unable to express how she felt in her own words left Chloe feeling as though she had not received justice;

> **Chloe**:'…I think it is very impersonal, the whole experience of going to a court. You don't get to say what you want to say. It's all scripted. You have to say what's on the script and that's it. You can't F, you can't blind, you can't do anything, you have to have respect for someone who's just got a degree. That is literally it, he wears a wig and has a degree but I can't sit there and get my justice because, yeah, he got sentenced but I never got justice, I never got to say what I wanted to say…'

Chloe's experience raises questions about what justice looks like for those who have been subject to child sexual exploitation. This issue was also identified by Beckett & Warrington (2015), who found the outcome of the criminal justice process did not provide young people with closure or a sense of satisfaction.

Details of the court case, including information from Chloe's victim personal statement, were reported in the media. Chloe felt as though she had no control over her own story;

> **Chloe**:'…everything I quoted in my personal impact statement was there, everything, nothing got privatised, nothing, the whole court case was aired, it's like dirty laundry, putting all my dirty laundry out there…'

> **Chloe**:'…They put in details, like so many details, my Grandma reads that newspaper, like my Grandma reads it, I don't want my Grandma knowing the gory details. That's what they put in that. No one needs to know the gory details…'

Again, Chloe's experience is consistent with that of the victims who took part in the Victim Commissioner's review (2015). Research participants told the review they were not given information about whether or not the media would be able

to report details of their statement, ‘I think it is horrifying that the VPS [victim personal statement] is given to the press without the victims being told. I would never have done one if I had known this would happen’ (Victim Commissioner 2015: 18). This lack of control and public sharing of private information was traumatic for Chloe and could have resulted in (further) re-victimisation.

Chloe spoke highly of one police officer. Chloe felt listened to by the officer and believed he took what she had to say seriously. The feeling of validation that Chloe received from her interaction with the police officer had an enormously positive impact;

> **Chloe**:’…It was more like; he took the time for me and he actually believed in me. Like I felt like no one did and I felt like no one would and it’s almost like if I hadn’t come out with that conviction that he still would have been the one that believed me. Like whether the court believe me, whether anyone else believed me, I know [police officer] believed me from the start and it kinda just gave me that little bit of faith. Like he was just brilliant, honestly he was brilliant.’

Chloe articulates the importance of professionals believing her account of abuse. Indeed, Chloe reflected that being believed by the police officer would have even mitigated a ‘not guilty’ verdict.

Similar to Chloe and her experience with the police officer discussed above, many participants were able to identify occasions when they had felt listened to. Many of the practitioners that were identified as listening and responding to the views of research participants worked with organisations that would identify as being part of the ‘voluntary sector’;

> **Zoey**: ‘They've believed what I've said, they've listened, they’re trying to support me through it.’

This quote from Zoey is made in relation to a voluntary sector organisation that supports women who have experienced child sexual exploitation. The approach

of the organisation validated Zoey's experience, and made it clear to Zoey that she was in no way responsible for the abuse she had suffered. As she says, they listened to her and believed her. As a result of feeling believed, Zoey says that she has been able to develop a trusting relationship with the organisation and, for the first time, feels as though her needs are being met.

Another aspect of having a voice is being aware of rights and entitlements. However, a common theme in participants' experiences was that they lacked information about decisions that were made in relation to their care, and what their rights and entitlements were.

When Zoey was moved from one local authority residential service to another, she was reportedly not told where she was moving to or the reason for the move;

> **Zoey: '**…I was asking why, and they wouldn't tell me why. And I wanted to know, would I be home for Christmas, they told me I was moving to Leeds and I got there, and they were speaking Scouse, so I were like, I'm not in Leeds'

Zoey said she asked about what was happening to her and was given incorrect information about the city she was moving to. Zoey went on to explain how her belief that she was provided with misinformation added to her distrust of professionals and reinforced her sense of powerlessness.

Sonia also spoke about the local authority, specifically children's services, failing to inform her about care planning. Sonia explained that her children are currently living in local authority care and she is not updated about their care;

> **Sonia**:'…They don't even update me; they are meant to update me. Before my review and it were like, do you know this, do you know, no I don't have a care plan, I've never had a care plan, I haven't had a care plan in two year, no I don't know when he was last at the dentist, no I don't know about his health issues and I've still got, I share PR with

> social care. I had none of this, before I come here [voluntary sector organisation] last year in March, I were doing it on my own, I weren't getting invited to LAC review meetings, I weren't, they weren't involving me in anything. Since I started coming here [voluntary sector organisation], I do get to go to LAC reviews, it's very rare I get an update, but I get to go to LAC reviews and stuff like that…'

Sonia reports that since being supported by a voluntary sector organisation, she has been given access to more information. Sonia explained that the voluntary sector organisation advocated on her behalf to gain access to key documents and information, for example, dates of meetings and reports.

Issues were also raised with regards to research participants not being made aware of policies and procedures. Chloe spoke about feeling like an observer within the criminal justice process, in part because of her lack of understanding of the system;

> *Researcher: Do you think the police explain enough about the process?*
> **Chloe:** 'No, not at all, they don't even explain reasons no, reasons yes, reasons no, they don't explain any of it. You are literally a bystander you are an outsider to the investigation. Even though it happened to you, even though you are the one who's bringing this person to justice. You are an outsider. You may as well know the same information the newspapers know. Because they technically know more than you'

Feeling uninformed about the investigation and the criminal justice system led to Chloe feeling invisible. Chloe felt like an outsider in her own investigation, with criminal justice professionals being the insiders. If children and young people are unaware of their entitlements within the criminal justice system, they are unable to exert their rights and are disempowered.

Later in our discussion, Chloe spoke about the professionals she met during the court process;

> **Chloe**: ‘I don’t know what she was but my woman, I think she was a barrister, I don’t really know what she was, she was OK.’

Chloe also expressed confusion when she was asked if she had an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advocate). It is worrying that Chloe was unclear about who the professionals she encountered within the criminal justice system were. Being unsure about people’s roles and responsibilities in Court could have had a detrimental impact on the outcome on the case. For example, if Chloe mistook the prosecution for the defence barrister, it may well have impacted on the way she answered the questions posed. It may have also exacerbated Chloe’s feeling of being an outsider.

Services

This section refers to the ability of research participants to access services. A participant’s ability to access services depended on a range of factors. This section focuses on research participant’s perceptions about whether the services they needed actually existed, whether they met eligibility criteria, and if the services were accessible.

Research participants spoke about difficulty in finding and accessing services that could support them during or post sexual exploitation. Amy shared that she had asked the police and social care for information about organisations that could offer support in relation to child sexual exploitation:

> **Amy**: ‘You know when I were asking police and social services organisations where I could go, because I’m a [profession] I can’t just go into like [support organisation] and mingle in with all the other people there because I could end up working with them young people and I tried explaining that to them and they were just like well there is nowhere else that you could really access. I said, well is there not like a support group

> for CSE victims, like you know, historic CSE victims, and they were like no, never told me about this place [voluntary sector organisation]'

Members of the focus group told me that the police and social services were aware of the voluntary sector organisation but believed they did not want to promote it. This is especially disappointing in light of the focus group being unanimous in their praise for the organisation;

> **Amy**: 'I just think that, for me I think it's that I've found a lot of pieces of the puzzle that I need… when we're sat here talking and communicating I think the best thing for me is that when I listen to N [project worker] she can tell me things and I don't even need to ask her in detail 'cos I already know...I think that's just therapy in itself'

Being able to access this service provided Amy with peer support and information to help her process what had happened to her. As she states, this alone was therapeutic.

For those who were able to access services, they spoke about being let down by professionals and services during the period when they were exploited. Zoey's experience demonstrates the ways in which she felt let down by services that should have safeguarded her.

Zoey explained that she was first exploited by taxi drivers who transported her from the children's home she was living in to school. Zoey said that she reported this to her social worker, but she felt that her concerns were dismissed:

> **Zoey**: 'I were getting taxis to school, paid from social services, and I was reporting stuff what taxi drivers were doing and they were still sending the same taxi the next day for me to get into go to school. So then my behaviour were all over at school.'

Following this disclosure, Zoey stated that she was moved to another children's home in a different city. However, Zoey reports that this did not stop the sexual

exploitation. Again, Zoey felt disclosures she made about abuse were dismissed;

> **Zoey**: 'Even, even, I used to run way a lot and even when I were missing and if the police did find me, but the majority of times they didn't, when I did come back they had to ring the police to say that I were back, so they'd have to come and speak to you and if I reported something that had happened, they weren't bothered, they've seen me, that's it, I'm alive, and then I'd be gone again that same night'

Zoey attributed this attitude to either the police disbelieving her or as she surmised not being 'arsed' with the paperwork. In Griffiths report into child sexual exploitation in Coventry, the five children who were the subjects of the review, were found to have been reported missing to the police at least 96 times during the period they were abused (Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board 2016). Griffiths found no evidence that the police linked these missing episodes to child sexual exploitation (Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board 2016). One child disclosed a sexual assault following a missing episode but the recording of this states that she was sexually active since she was 13 and 'admitted that she had lied' (Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board 2016: 18). These findings are similar to Zoey's explanation for why her complaints were not actioned, suggests that she felt that she was either not worth the time or was considered to be lying.

Another example of Zoey's perception that she was unfairly judged by professionals came from her interaction with Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Zoey said she was referred to CAMHS and offered an assessment. She recalls being allocated to the same doctor she had seen when she was younger, and this triggered a flashback:

> **Zoey**: '…it was the same doctor that did an assessment on me when I were younger, I don't know, I had a flashback and I ended up screaming and he discharged me and said that I couldn't come back there again. I had to wait from like 17 to 18 to get any help from mental health'

Zoey believes she was discharged from CAMHS because of her behaviour (screaming). As Zoey explained, her behaviour was a result of a mental health difficulty, but she did not feel that this was taken into consideration when the decision was made to discharge her. As a result, Zoey felt that she was left in limbo until she reached 18 years old, at which time she could try to access adult mental health services.

As Zoey neared adulthood, despite being involved with children services since the age of 3 years and living in local authority care continuously from the age of 10 years, the support she was given was reportedly reduced;

> **Zoey**: 'And then I think I were about 17, they said basically you're out now, that's, you're independent, you've got to go and live on your own. Urm I lived in like, it were meant to be supported flats, it weren't supported flats at all, it was more like a security guard just sat there not doing anything'

Zoey explained that she had no experience of budgeting or paying bills and had just £30 a week to live on. Zoey remembered being linked in with a service aimed at supporting people to develop independent living skills, but she found them ineffective. In Zoey's words, she 'ended up in a mess' and stated that this led to her being evicted. During this time, Zoey disclosed that she continued to be sexually exploited. Consideration must be given to whether the withdrawal of support by children's services, both practically and financially, increased Zoey's vulnerability to continued exploitation. This is something that was identified by Jay (2014), who reported that moving a young person into independence prematurely, increased their risk of harm.

Sarah also spoke about service provision being problematic. In the focus group, Sarah spoke about the detrimental impact receiving a service for child sexual exploitation had on her education:

> **Sarah**: ‘If I worked with them, they used to come and see me at school, if I worked with them, every single day that they used to come and work with me I'd get excluded ‘cos they put me in that much of a foul mood and I had no energy left and I just sat with people and I'd get excluded and they said to me, why, ‘cos they've just done that, they're trying to help you. Excuse me, I weren't in this mood before I went in a room with them for an hour.’

From Sarah’s perspective, professionals failed to reflect on the change in her behaviour and its potential cause. As a result, Sarah felt she was punished for her response to challenging and emotionally demanding support sessions. Sarah reports that the outcome of this was that her education suffered.

In one of the focus groups, a young woman attended, Josey. Josey agreed that information about her current situation could be shared by her support worker. The support worker explained that Josey had a history of exploitation, and had her child removed by Children’s Services because she was unable to recognise unhealthy relationships. The worker stated that Josey engaged with support, and as a result it was decided that her child could be returned to her care. However, the worker explained that Josey’s perpetrator had been housed down the road from Josey’s property and, therefore, that she needed to be rehoused before her child was returned to her care. The worker described supporting Josey to be rehoused by the local authority and the catch-22 situation that ensued; Josey could not be given a two bedroomed property until her child was in her care, but her child could not be returned until she was in a two bedroomed property. The worker confirmed that Josey had now accessed a two bedroomed property but remarked that her flat is located in ‘the CSE capital of [name of town/ city]’. This is another example of service provision being problematic. In this case, it can reasonably be assumed that placing someone who has historically been subjected to child sexual exploitation in an area alongside known perpetrators increases their vulnerability to further abuse and exploitation.

There were examples where research participants described being offered support during their abuse that they found helpful. Two participants spoke positively about the service they received from health staff. Emily spoke about attending hospital following an overdose and feeling able to disclose to the nurse who attended to her:

> **Emily**: '…She said but like if you need support, I'll even support you if you want me to, she was like lovely. She actually was lovely. But she was just a nurse.'

Emily expressed gratitude for the offer of help but recognised the limitations of the nurse's job role in being able to offer the support that she needed. Chloe also spoke positively about her experience of accessing medical support:

> **Chloe**: 'Like they went above and beyond at the [name] centre, they were amazing, like honestly, like, even the woman who was actually doing the tests was just saying technical terms like your dentist does, like even she would turn round and just talk to me and even though it was horrific, it was absolutely horrific, they made it more bearable. They made it just a little bit better…'

In this situation, Chloe recalled being kept informed about what was happening and having medical terms explained. This meant that Chloe understood what was happening to her and she remained at the centre of the situation. Chloe also felt physically cared for as a member of staff held her hand throughout the examination. In addition, Chloe highlighted that her and her friends' (who accompanied her) basic needs were attended to, as they were provided with food and drink. All of these factors helped Chloe cope with a distressing experience.

With regards to support to recover from abuse, Amy, a participant in the focus group, shared her experience. Amy disclosed that she gave birth to a child when she was 13 years old as a result of child sexual exploitation. Amy explained that giving birth at such a young age caused on-going health issues

which resulted in her being unable to stand for prolonged periods of time. Years later, a re-investigation of her case led to a number of perpetrators being taken to court. To facilitate Amy giving evidence, statutory services reportedly agreed to fund a course of treatment to relieve her pain and enable her to stand in the witness box. Despite the Council understanding that the physiotherapist predicted that a 12-week course of treatment could eradicate Amy's pain for life:

> **Amy**: 'The day the trial finished they pulled funding, I met the social worker, I think it was 4 days after the trial and she said that it needed to stop, that was the last meeting that I was going to have with her.'

Amy reported that immediately after giving evidence, her treatment was stopped and her case closed to social care. Amy explained that she had been told that the reason for the treatment being cancelled was that she had used up her allocated budget when she placed her child in childcare during the trial. Luckily, a voluntary sector organisation stepped in and raised the money required for Amy to complete the treatment.

Zoey, Emily, Anna and Chloe all shared experiences of being unable to access therapeutic interventions following abuse. Chloe shared she was told that she could not access therapeutic services because of her involvement in a court case:

> **Chloe**: 'Well I sort of me with SIBS [Sexually Inappropriate Behaviour Service], yeah, I met with them but I found them absolutely stupid because I was going through my court case I couldn't talk to anyone and it's just like, well, what's the point of coming here then, I meant to actually discuss what's going on but I can't talk to you because I'm going through a court case and then by the time I'd actually finished my court case I was already 18.'

This experience was common to the young people involved in Beckett & Warrington's (2015) research into child sexual exploitation and the criminal justice system. The young people in this research were also unable to access

counselling or therapeutic support, and this left them trying to manage the emotional consequences of their situation themselves (Beckett & Warrington 2015). Indeed, Chloe spoke of being left in limbo:

> **Chloe**: 'You are the same person you still were three years ago. You are still the same person; you have progressed nothing.'

The Crime Prosecution Service (CPS) (2017) is clear in their guidance on the provision of therapy to witnesses (this includes victims) prior to a criminal trial, that access to emotional support and counselling should not be denied. The guidance states that when a decision is being made about pre-trial therapeutic interventions, the paramount concern must be the best interest of the child (CPS 2017). It is questionable whether, in the situation described by Chloe that her best interest was prioritised over that of getting a successful conviction. Without therapy, Chloe felt that she was left in limbo for three years. When I met with Chloe, she reported that she had still not received any support to understand what had happened to her and she expressed confusion about how she felt about her perpetrator:

> **Chloe**: 'I said to my partner, I don't know if I hate him, like him, love him. I don't know how I feel anymore. My head is so screwed up about him, I don't know how I feel.'

Chloe's quote illustrates that to an extent, she remains under the control of her perpetrator. To be able to start to make sense of what had happened, Chloe needed support to understand the grooming process that she was subjected to, and the impact of this on her thoughts and feelings. In light of this, part of the research session was spent discussing child sexual exploitation, grooming and its impact on consent. This was possible because prior to undertaking this research, I worked with children and young people who had been sexually exploited. In addition, advice was given to her and her support worker about services she could access going forward.

In comparison, Emily shared her experience of being provided with information about what she had experienced, speaking highly of the Freedom Programme:

> **Emily**: '…Part of me thought I had to do it because I was his girlfriend and even the sex, people don't always notice that as well, class it, like, I didn't know that until I did the Freedom Programme, that it was actually rape. Where I was like, no, no, it can't be, I was really shocked when she said it, saying it, like you do have a choice to say no…'

The Freedom Programme is an educational domestic abuse programme (Craven 2008). Emily felt that the knowledge provided as part of the programme validated her experience and helped her to identify whether future relationships were healthy or unhealthy. This desire for information was consistent with young people who were consulted by Griffith, who said that there should be more lessons in schools on topics such as sexual and intimate relationships, so that young people might be able to identify unhealthy relationships (Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board 2016).

Anna and Zoey both reported being able to access counselling through the voluntary sector. Anna spoke about the positive impact counselling had already had:

> **Anna**: '…And they have their own counselling service here and I only met her, well, I met her briefly a couple of weeks ago but I weren't in a good state then but today I stayed for half an hour and it was the first time in ages I realised there's a way through it…'

Counselling gave Anna hope that there was a way through her difficulties. After only two meetings with the counsellor, she said she could see light at the end of the tunnel. Indeed, Anna believed that if she had not received help from this voluntary sector organisation, things could have been very different:

> **Anna**:'…I mean, if I didn't have [voluntary sector worker] through everything, I don't know if I would be sitting here, I don't'

In this quote, Anna is alluding to the fact that if she had not received support from the voluntary sector worker, she would have ended her life. It highlights the level of despair that Anna felt at being unable to access the services she needed via the statutory sector.

There was an additional complication for members of the focus group who had become parents. These participants felt Children's Services monitored them and their parenting more than they monitored the general population:

> **Jen**: 'I think they was watching me, when they sent social services to me, I think they was watching to see if I were all all right in the head'
>
> **Anna**: 'Because you've been abused they think that you are mentally not right'

Anna and Jen expressed feeling that they had in some way been tainted by their abuse and that rather than the abuse experience unlocking more support, it left them feeling less supported and more scrutinised. Anna and Jen felt that Children's Services had failed to protect them from child sexual exploitation and failed to provide the therapeutic support they required to move towards recovery, both of which may have impacted on their parenting. They both described feeling persecuted for being abused through increased monitoring of their parenting.

A number of participants disclosed that their children had been removed from their care by Children's Services. Two participants attributed this to mental health difficulties they suffered as a resulted of the trauma they experienced in childhood, and subsequently, being unable to access appropriate interventions:

> **Anna**: '…they've just picked her up and literally just placed her in my sister's care and because mental health can't give me the service that's needed I can't have her back.'

In this quote, Anna is talking about her daughter being removed from her care and placed with her sister. Anna explained that she has on-going mental health difficulties as a result of the trauma she experienced when she was physically abused and neglected by her father and step-mother, and sexual exploited. Anna states that she was not provided with any therapeutic intervention following these experiences, and reports that she now displays symptoms of trauma. Anna explained these symptoms are the reason that her daughter has been removed from her care. Anna felt she had been let down historically, as she was not been protected from, or supported, to recovery from abuse. Anna reported that this failure continued as the intervention she requires is not provided by the National Health Service (NHS) in her area.

Sonia disclosed that her children were also removed by Children's Services as a result of mental health difficulties she experienced as a result of abuse. However, Sonia does not believe her children were kept safe in local authority care. Sonia spoke about social services failing to protect her children:

> **Sonia**: 'They didn't keep my kids safe did they, I was telling them that my kids were getting abused in placement and they weren't listening to me and then it all came out and they had to get an emergency placement because they were being abused...'

Sonia reported being failed to be protected as a child and now believes that the same is happening to her children. History appears to have repeated itself; failure to listen to Sonia has resulted in prolonged abuse for both her and her children.

Professional Characteristics

When discussing participants' experience of working with professionals, participants described their individual personalities or characteristics. Participants were clear about the characteristics they saw as positive and negative, and there was agreement between participants.

Figure 13 illustrates the professional characteristics or personality traits research participants found helpful or unhelpful.

Figure 13: Professional Characteristics

Positive Attitudes/ Characteristics Negative Attitudes/Characteristics

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2018

Unsurprisingly, practitioners who displayed attitudes or characteristics considered positive by the research participant were also viewed as supportive. Members of the focus group spoke positively of voluntary sector workers who advocated on their behalf:

> **Amy**:'…And [voluntary sector worker] was the only person in the whole room out of all them professionals that stood up and said that's wrong. What you're saying there, that's wrong, and they kicked her out for it.'

For Amy, witnessing her voluntary sector worker advocating for her developed her confidence and trust in the service. In addition, seeing this worker 'kicked' out of the meeting may have created a sense of solidarity. Certainly, within the focus group sessions there was an undercurrent of 'them' (statutory services) versus 'us' (research participants and the voluntary sector organisation supporting them). This will be explored further in chapter 9*; 'Rhetoric v's Reality'*.

Those professionals who were viewed as going beyond their duties to support an individual were spoken about most favourably by research participants:

> **Zoey**: 'If you were sat at the canal at a certain time and you wanted to kill yourself, she wouldn't just leave you and that's someone that gives a fuck to me.'

In this quote, Zoey is talking about a voluntary sector worker. Zoey valued the worker's dedication, reliability and flexibility of this particular worker. Gilligan's (2016) research into what young women affected by child sexual exploitation want, similarly identified the need for workers to be 'friendly, flexible, persevering, reliable and non-judgemental' (115).

Emily also felt that she had the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with staff members in a voluntary sector organisation:

> **Emily**: 'I think they are proud of me for everything I've overcome, um, when I spoke at their conference, I made all of them cry, 'cos of how well I'd done and it's kinda just like a family to be fair, they have done so much for me, they are such a good organisation…'

Emily talked about the service as being ‘a family’ which demonstrates the strength of relationship that was developed. This is also reflected in the use of the word ‘proud’, which is commonly used when describing how a parent feels about their child. Pride implies a level of ownership. Emily’s quote suggests that she acknowledges the organisation’s contribution to her achievement and, importantly, that she values it, or even wanted it, in a similar way to how a child seeks recognition from its parents

Positive practice was not exclusive to the voluntary sector. As previously discussed, Chloe found a police officer she worked particularly helpful:

> **Chloe**: ‘He just, he was so more personal than everyone else I met, he just, like he told me about, I think it was his son, something that had happened to his son and he kinda made it a bit more personal, that he wasn’t just doing it because it’s his job.’

Chloe talked about developing a reciprocal relationship with the officer which she felt he was also investing in. This reciprocity was interpreted by Chloe as the officer going beyond his duties and valuing her as an individual.

Sonia identified openness and honesty as positive characteristics associated with two social workers she considered to be good practitioners:

> *Researcher: What made them [two social workers] good?*
>
> **Sonia**: ‘They were open and they were honest and that’s what I like…just be open and honest with me so that I know what I’m dealing with…’

Sonia described a ‘good’ professional as one that is transparent and provides her with information regardless of whether it is perceived to be good or bad news. For Sonia, honesty enables her to fully understand the situation so that she can respond in the way she deems appropriate.

Not every professional was viewed positively. Chloe shared an experience she had with a police officer who accompanied her to a SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre):

> **Chloe**: '…she was, pardon my French, an absolute bitch, she was absolutely foul, absolutely foul. Like I have never met someone as nasty as her. She literally, I was crying and she didn't even offer a little bit of comfort yeah, she was absolutely awful.'

Chloe felt this police officer was dismissive of her. This was exacerbated by Chloe's interpretation of the officer's body language. During the examination, Chloe believes she heard the police officer sighing and took this as further evidence of her dismissive attitude. For Chloe, the police officer's response minimised the seriousness of the incident and demonstrated a lack of empathy and/or compassion. Ahern et al. (2016) considered the impact of working in child sexual exploitation on practitioner's well-being. A few practitioners interviewed said they disengaged their emotions to enable them to focus on the child or young person (Ahern et al. 2016). However, disengaging their emotions could be perceived by children and young people as the practitioner being disingenuous and uncaring (Ahern et al. 2016).

The outcome of Chloe's experiences with the police is that she would be reluctant to seek help from them in the future:

> *Researcher: Would that experience impact on you speaking to the police in the future?*
>
> **Chloe**: 'Yeah, yeah, I wouldn't do it again. Never, even if I got hit in a car crash and lost all my arms and legs I wouldn't do it. Any crime, I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it.'

This potentially leaves Chloe isolated from a service that should be there to protect her, thus increasing her vulnerability to harm. Unfortunately, this is not

an isolated example. Zoey also stated that she would not access statutory services if she required support in the future:

Researcher: If you were in trouble now, who would you go to?

Zoey: 'Nobody. I wouldn't go to the police or owt…'

Again, this increases Zoey's vulnerability, as her previous negative experiences of professionals has left her reluctant to seek support from them in the future.

Research participants suggested that one reason for poor practice was a lack of knowledge and understanding from professionals of child sexual exploitation. Chloe discussed this when recounting how the topic of child sexual exploitation had been covered at her school using an awareness raising video:

Researcher: Do you think teachers knew enough?

Chloe: 'No, definitely not. Definitely not. I think before they teach it they should be given, even if it's just sitting down like a conference meeting with people that it had happened to and them just giving the teachers ideas about how they should do it because, the teachers go in there so blind. They literally play it [a video] and that's it, that's all they do, it's shocking for an adult to watch, it's shocking for a kid to watch, but maybe if they actually spoke about it, as much as it is shocking, maybe if they did speak about it, it would happen maybe a little bit less.'

Chloe felt the topics of consent and exploitation were not adequately covered at school. This was found to be a particular issue for children and young people with learning difficulties (Franklin & Smeaton 2018). Franklin and Smeaton (2018) found that children and young people with learning difficulties were less likely to receive education around sex and relationships, and that those who did were not given adequate information about topics such as consent and exploitation.

Members of the focus group also suggested that professionals should have more training, and that this should include speaking to people who have experienced sexual exploitation:

> **Amy**: 'Shall I tell you what I think they should do? I think they should listen to people like us and have like a training course where we deliver it and then they might actually think about getting somewhere in life'

Later in the focus group, I asked participants what they would want included in professional training around child sexual exploitation;

> *Researcher: If you were putting training together what messages do you want to get across?*

> **Amy**: 'The way to treat us, the way to treat us, the way to look at things, the way to treat families, parents, carers erm there are other things that we can go into detail about like the way perpetrators are, the actual way everything is done, you know, even down to the gory, and I think it needs to be done, it needs to be done, but erm, nobody has ever stepped forward to do that with us, nobody is prepared to do it, the council are not'

Amy expressed frustration at being unable to share her knowledge and experience of child sexual exploitation. Amy, alongside other members of the focus group, believe they have an important contribution to make to professional training, but again, felt voiceless because of the lack of opportunities.

Emily's experience has been very different to those in the focus group. Emily described being actively engaged in research and training:

> **Emily**: 'I'm a lot more confident, I would have never thought a year ago I would be able to talk in front of people, especially now about my experiences or outcomes, but now…'

Emily identified a wide range of benefits from being involved in research. In this quote, Emily recognises that her confidence grew as a result. Within the same conversation, Emily reflected that the experience helped her to re-build a level of trust in professionals and develop her confidence and self-esteem. Emily emphasised the importance of practitioners being aware of their own vulnerabilities and limitations, and to acknowledge these with children and young people as a way of building trust. Emily expressed empathy for professionals, recognising that they need support and training to be able to address these limitations and make a difference to the lives of those they work with. Emily's message was one of hopefulness that professional practice can improve.

Organisational Structure

This section considers the impact of organisational structures on the experience of research participants. Structures refer to how the organisation is designed (policies) and how it translates in practice (procedures). The policies and procedures of an individual organisation determine how professionals can operate, for example, the amount of time they can spend with an individual or the resources they have available.

Research participants recognised that professionals are restricted by the structure of their organisations and the wider safeguarding context. An issue that was common to those in the focus group was of having multiple social workers:

> **Lucy: '**You've got this social worker today and then I go and meet that one and it ends up being a different one. I've had about 10 different social workers.**'**

> **Amy**: 'I don't understand how a social worker is meant to build a relationship, three meetings and then they are gone. Once that one's gone, the next one is going to have to build up that relationship find out everything that is going wrong in someone's life and by the time they

> have learnt that, it's a new one. And then it's just like over and over again. Before my trial, I had to get to know four different social workers and I didn't want any in my life. I only got a permanent one because I made a massive complaint.'

Amy reflected on the reason for changes in social workers:

> **Amy**: '…I think in a way that's why they do change your social workers, this is me in my head, I think they change social workers regular so that if something does go wrong you don't know which of those social workers has done wrong. It would be very hard for me to pinpoint which one has done wrong back in day because there were that many, there were that many social workers…'

Ahern et al. (2016) reports that rapport building with young people who have been subject to child sexual exploitation requires regular contact over a lengthy period of time. Frequent changes in social workers, as illustrated by this quote, prohibit the development of meaningful relationships.

For Amy, having multiple social workers was about more than the need to build relationships with multiple practitioners. Amy perceived the frequent change in workers as a conscious strategy by the local authority to blur accountability. The quote reflects Amy's distrust of the local authority. Distrust of a service inevitably undermines the development and effectiveness of a working relationship. There was one occasion, however, where Amy described enjoying the time she spent with her social worker:

> **Amy**: 'The only time I enjoyed seeing my social worker was the actual court week, you know when I had to be in court well then she actually booked the whole week off, she didn't book anybody, see anybody else, do you know what I mean, you know it's weird, if you look at the way she were on normal weeks to that week she were a totally different person, she were'

This quote highlights how important it was for Amy that a professional gave her time. Although, Amy has verbalised difficulties with professionals elsewhere in this chapter, she clearly appreciated the support she was given by her social worker on this occasion. This quote also demonstrates that despite previous experiences with professionals, including this professional, being challenging, it did not take a lot for Amy to develop a positive regard for this worker.

Research participants themselves recognised that the organisational environment professionals worked within impacted their practice:

> **Amy**: 'They are restricted in what they do'

Amy acknowledged that social workers are restricted by both their job description and the resources available to them. In addition, to the limitations placed on professionals by their job roles, Anna believes their practice is impacted by management decisions:

> **Anna**: 'I know it's not her fault, I know it's her bloody manager, a screwed-up system what's making her be as harsh as she is.'

Anna suggests that management decisions are behind the 'harsh' decisions made by her social worker. This could indeed be the case; however, this belief may have also been created by Anna to enable her to continue to have a positive relationship with her social worker.

Chloe did not accept the idea that management decisions should overrule what professionals believed was the right course of action:

> **Chloe**:'…But sometimes you need to, you need to piss off the managers, you need to, you need to annoy the big bosses, you need to do it because otherwise you're not actually helping anyone…'

Chloe felt that professionals should be prepared to advocate for those they are working with, and to challenge decision making by senior staff. For Chloe, the

priority for professionals should be helping someone, rather than blindly following policy and procedures.

Participants also discussed the impact of budget cuts on service provision. Chloe complained that budget constraints placed on the criminal justice system would lead to her perpetrator only having to serve half of his custodial sentence:

> **Chloe**: 'Yeah he got a couple of years, but he only has to do half that, he only has to do half that, like I get why 'cos England's cheap skates and that lot, I get that '

Zoey and Anna both identified services they believed would have been beneficial to their recovery, but were not provided due to budget cuts:

> **Zoey**: 'Yeah, and that's closing down I think 'cos it hasn't got funding'

> **Anna**: 'It's just frustrating and all they say is it's because of cuts…'

If budget cuts and lack of funding are affecting service provision, this monetizes individual's needs. Reducing resources for those who are subject to, or recovering from child sexual exploitation, could be perceived in terms of the worth placed on these individuals by society.

When the focus group was asked what changes they felt were needed within Social Care, Anna responded:

> **Anna: '**Change the system. I think it does need shaking and put back into the right pieces, that's how I feel.'

In this quote, Anna recognised the impact of the structures within which professionals work. Indeed, Anna identified that the Social Care system as a whole would need to be reviewed rather than placing the responsibility for change with individual practitioners.

Again, research participants' experience of the voluntary sector was more positive. Emily spoke about her experience of accessing a voluntary sector organisation for support:

> **Emily**: 'No matter, like if it's a certain situation I've always got a quiet place to come into. If, no matter what things I need to talk about if it's just a general chat, OK I stay in reception and I speak to [receptionist] because I feel comfortable. And they are always there. I can just text them and say, oh this and that has happened or with [support worker], sometimes I'll ask her if she can go over some questions for my coursework where I can refresh my memory and stuff. She's always there. Just always there.'

What is clear from this quote is that this organisation is somewhere Emily feels valued, safe and supported. It also reflects the flexibility of the organisation with support being provided by a number of staff members on a variety of topics. This flexibility is something that has been reflected in other research participants' discussion of what makes a good service. This highlights a difference in the organisational structures of the voluntary and statutory sectors. Participants described voluntary sector organisations as being more able to respond flexibility and provide holistic support than statutory sector organisations.

Summary

This chapter presented research participants' accounts of the services they received in relation to child sexual exploitation. Positive and negative experiences were shared and discussed.

Included in the discussion were situations where young people found the care system unhelpful, relationships with professionals difficult and a lack of recognition of their wishes and opinions. These situations provided examples of children's rights not being respected. For example, feelings of voicelessness suggest that Article 12 was not enacted. Research participants believe that

some of these poor practices have resulted in failures to protect them from abuse and/or to subsequently support their recovery from exploitation.

There have also been examples where research participants have described experiences that suggest rape myths, victim blaming and labelling are attitudes held by some professionals. These results suggest that Victorian attitudes towards those who have been sexually exploited continue to be found in practice.

The chapter also provided examples of good practice where rights were respected. Research participants identified positive practice in both the voluntary and the statutory sector. However, where participants have consistently spoken positively about the voluntary sector, their experience of the statutory sector has been more variable. Indeed, participants shared many examples of poor practice from professionals working within the statutory sector. It is surprising that statutory agencies have fallen short compared to the voluntary sector in this regard, given that children's rights have been assimilated into UK legislation and statutory guidance (see chapter 3: '*Rediscovery of Child Sexual Exploitation'*).

Chapter 8: Power Dynamics

What gives you power to stop me?

The previous chapter *'Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision*' analysed research participants' experiences in relation to service provision. This chapter focuses on the second theme that emerged from thematic analysis of the experiences of research participants: power dynamics. The chapter is underpinned by chapter 4 which discussed agency, power and consent. This chapter begins by presenting the thematic analysis that led to the identification of power dynamics as a key theme. Sub-themes are analysed using the voices of research participants. The chapter considers two sub-themes relating to power dynamics: relational; and structural power.

Analysis of research participants' experiences in relation to power demonstrates that in the majority of interactions with professionals, they felt there was an imbalance of power. Although this was expected, it is important to explore the dynamics of power within the context of child sexual exploitation. As a result of professional practice, policies and procedures, and the socio-economic context within which these relationships exist, research participants reported a sense of powerlessness. Professionals were perceived to hold more power in the majority of examples shared. Some research participants explained how they attempted to gain power, with some strategies being more effective than others.

Thematic Analysis

Figure 14 illustrates the nodes and sub-themes that led to power dynamics being identified as a conceptual theme.

Figure 14: Theme: Power dynamics

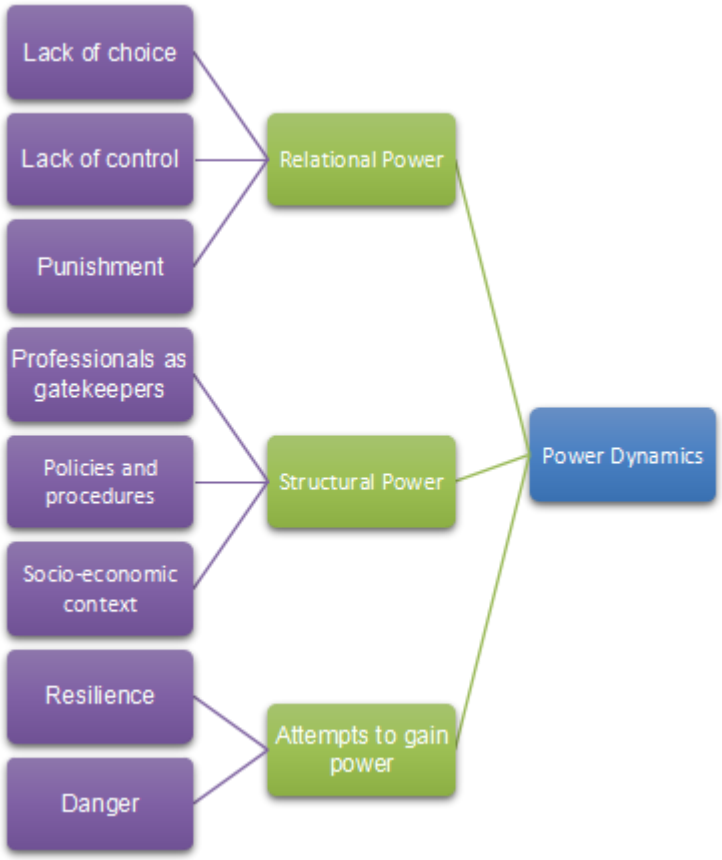


Table 12: Number of participants that spoke about each theme

	Relational Power	Structural Power	Attempts to Gain Power
Number 1-2-1 Participants	3	4	4
Focus Group (7 participants)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Each sub-theme is discussed below.

Relational Power

Relational power refers to the power that exists within relationships (Sheedy 2013). In this situation, the relationship being explored is the one that exists between those affected by child sexual exploitation and professionals. This section focuses on how the practice and attitudes of individual practitioners' impact on participants' experience of power and the different power dynamics that exist.

As discussed in the previous chapter, '*Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision'*, research participants often felt voiceless and unable to influence decisions made about their lives. They felt decisions were commonly made by practitioners without due attention being given to their wishes and feelings, rendering them powerless.

> **Zoey**: 'I was with a foster lady called [name]. I moved again 'cos we were on a full care order at this time and my mum wanted me to be with my brother but actually I didn't want to move from [foster carer], I wanted to stay. Urm so they moved me again, I didn't like the foster carers [that she was moved to]'

This quote demonstrates the significance of power in relation to the life changing decisions that were being made about Zoey and her siblings. Zoey's description of this move between placements illustrates the competing agendas that were playing out; her own, her mother's, the social worker's and her brother's. In this instance, Zoey's account suggests that her position of power was not sufficient to leverage a decision that she felt strongly about and was arguably in her interest. This is despite research finding that a child or young person's commitment to a placement was key to its success (Coy 2009).

Zoey explained that she was living with a foster carer that she liked. Indeed, out of 64 placements, this was the only one Zoey spoke about favourably. Zoey reports that despite not wanting to move out of this placement, she was moved

to live with different foster carers. Zoey's wishes and feelings were reportedly overridden by Children's Services. This was possible because of the power invested in social workers through legislation, and also because they are the gatekeepers of services.

This was not an isolated incident. Zoey felt that she had little power over any of her placement moves whilst she was in local authority care. Zoey reported that as a teenager she was moved out of the city where she was living.

> **Zoey**: 'I had a gut feeling, I'm gonna get moved. But I didn't know it was going to be to Liverpool, I thought it was going to be like to Sheffield or something, and obviously they said, well you're moving out of authority, you've got to pack your stuff in half an hour'

Zoey described being moved without any prior warning and/or influence over where she would be moving to. This quote describes a situation where Zoey felt completely powerless to have any influence over decisions that were being made about her life. It is possible that this feeling of powerlessness could have been ameliorated if Zoey had been told why these decisions were made, for example, to keep her safe.

Failure to take account of the wishes and feelings of a child in relation to their accommodation was identified as poor practice by Griffiths (Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board 2016):

> 'Conversely there is evidence of poor practice regarding one of the children on two very significant occasions in that she was moved from her foster placement without consultation or discussion after disclosing sexualised incidents and secondly required to change school without any evidence of her wishes being taken into account.'
>
> (Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board 2016: 29)

Other research participants shared incidences where they also felt their wishes and feelings were not considered when professionals made decisions about

their lives. As discussed in chapter 7 '*Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision'*, Chloe felt as though she had no choice over who provided her with support to give evidence to the police:

> *Researcher: Were you given a choice over who supported you?*
>
> **Chloe**: 'No'
>
> *Researcher: If you had a choice?*
>
> **Chloe**: 'I wouldn't have had anyone. I didn't, I didn't want a random stranger knowing my dirty details.'

Chloe's comments made it clear that she believed she did not have a choice in this situation. Chloe felt this decision was made by professionals on her behalf, rendering her powerless. As mentioned in chapter 7, the decision that appears to have been made by the police was that the nurse from Chloe's ward could watch her interview from an observation room. This is despite Chloe being uncomfortable with a 'stranger' knowing what had happened to her when she was sexually exploited. Indeed, Chloe had been violated by the perpetrator of abuse, and it could be argued that having to share intimate details about this crime with someone she did not want to, was a further violation.

Participants spoke about situations where they felt that professionals had misused their power. The following discussion was taken from a conversation that occurred within a focus group:

> **Jen**: 'And then they'll send a PC [police constable] out that ain't got a level of training of CSE, don't understand it, so then you've got, it were a couple of month ago where I got a uniform police man out and urm I'd been reading these books about er from another city and basically he turned round to me and said 'are you one of them girls whose wrote a book for a bit of money?'

Amy: ‘He said what?’

Jen: ‘He asked me if I’d wrote a book about me abuse for money. So when I, I kicked off and kicked him out er day after I got adult services’

Amy: ‘They sent social services to check on her to make sure you’re all right because you kicked a police officer out of your house for being rude’

Project Worker: Not to make sure that you’re all right, to start probing into…?

Amy: ‘I mean all right in your brain’

Anna: ‘That’s what they think that we’re emotionally all strong’

Amy: ‘Because she’s kicked a police officer out for being downright rude, she must be mentally ill’

The comments of the police constable were interpreted by the research participants as judgemental and offensive attitudes towards individuals who had been sexually exploited. Jen reported that when she challenged the constable, rather than the constable acknowledging that his practice was poor, he blamed Jen and reported her behaviour to mental health services. The constable’s comments appear to be imposing his own moral judgement on those subject to child sexual exploitation who choose to share their experience of abuse.

This was in stark contrast to Jen’s experience of working with a police community support officer:

Jen: ‘PCSO [Police Community Support Officer]. He was really supportive, err, just, I don’t know, just everything about him, he’s just great, personality, atmosphere around him, everything, nothing’s too much trouble’

In this quote, Jen spoke warmly about a police community support officer who provided her with support. In this example, Jen explained that what stood out for her was the officer's personality and dedication. Describing the officer's attitude as, 'nothing's too much trouble' suggests that Jen felt valued within this relationship, and confident that her needs would be met. The phrase 'nothing's too much trouble' also suggests the officer was willing to serve the interests of the young person.

Jen provided two examples of working with professionals from the same organisation and their contrasting practices. Jen felt judged and discriminated against by the police constable whereas she felt supported and respected by the PCSO. The police constable seemed to be more concerned with his own judgement of Jen's behaviour than understanding her perspective or experience. Indeed, the police officer appears to have been oppressive in his practice whereas the PCSO used his professional power to support Jen. Jen's description of her experience of the police constable and the community support officer are in stark contrast and raise questions about the predictability of professionals' responses.

Anna also described an occasion where a professional appeared to misuse her power. Anna explained that her social worker encouraged her to write her feelings down:

> **Anna**: 'It's like that thing where you write things down, I did that once with a social worker she says write everything down and pass it me and then she'd pick and say, well I didn't make you feel like that. It's like, well, you told me to do it'

Anna reported that despite being asked to write down her feelings, these were invalidated and rejected by her social worker. The social worker appeared to be attempting to construct Anna's experience in her own terms rather than Anna's. The social worker attempted an intervention but did not know how to manage the outcome. The result was that the professional's power silenced and undermined Anna's experience.

Hallet (2017) raised the same issue in her book *Making Sense of Child Sexual Exploitation*. Hallet (2017) shared the experience of Claire, a participant in her study, in relation to her experience of working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. Claire explained that talking to some professionals was like 'talking to a brick wall' (Hallet 2017: 117). She also felt misunderstood, '…I'm trying to tell them how I feel, *and they don't believe me…*' (Hallet 2017: 118). Claire reflected on the impact of professionals invalidating the feelings of others and the consequences of this. Claire recognised that invalidation could lead to reduced self-esteem and isolation. She also suggested that invalidating someone's feelings could lead to their exploration of the emotional impact of abuse being suppressed. Claire's experience from Hallet (2017) draws parallels with Anna's, both feel their feelings were invalidated leaving them powerless to express themselves and to develop the professional's understanding of their situation.

Participants stated that being unclear about policies and procedures and not having this information given to them by professionals left them unsure about their entitlements, and powerless to advocate for themselves. Chloe shared that she experienced this when she attended a SARC [Sexual Assault Referral Centre], and had no knowledge of their policies and procedures:

> **Chloe**:' But I had no appropriate adult in there even in like the forensic bit, I had no appropriate adult, no one I knew, no one actually I trusted. How would I know that they were not going to procedure? How did I know that actually what they were doing was like what they are meant to do?'

In this situation, Chloe felt powerless to recognise whether or not she was receiving an appropriate service. Without information about entitlements, Chloe was unable to challenge practice or know what services she could request. Indeed, a lack of knowledge on the service user's part could enable poor practice to go undetected. Chloe's quote demonstrates that professionals are in an incredibly powerful position as custodians of knowledge. To empower children and young people requires practitioners to inform them of their rights

rebalancing information power, yet the quotes above show that many professionals appeared to struggle to do this (Maclean & Harrison 2009). Failure to share knowledge was a source of tension between children and young people and practitioners.

Zoey also felt powerless as a result of information not being shared. Zoey disclosed that she was sexually exploited whilst living in Local Authority Care. Zoey explained that at this time, she was unaware that she was subject to abuse as she had no understanding of child sexual exploitation. Zoey complained that although professionals were aware that she was being abused, they failed to discuss this with her:

> **Zoey**: 'They didn't tell me anything, I were confused what were going on, I didn't know what were going on. When I've moved back and I've known something's not right, whatever's going on is not right, they were watching me get in these cars and they were not doing nothing about it'

Zoey believes that professionals knew she was being exploited but chose not to share this information with her. Zoey reported that she was kept in the dark. At that time, providing Zoey with information about child sexual exploitation could have helped her make sense of her situation, recognise that she was being abused and enable her to access help. Zoey also felt she was given misinformation by professionals:

> **Zoey**: 'When I first went into foster care again when I were 10, they lied to me, they said that I'd only be there for the weekend but I ended up being there for two years and obviously I was asking questions, where's my mum? Where's this? They'd never be honest and then they always put me in short term placements [short term local authority care] knowing full well I needed a long term so I were like moved all the time…'

Zoey perceived that professionals were not honest with her about her future living arrangements. Zoey explained that at the time she believed she would only be in local authority care for a short period of time, hence being placed in short term

placements. However, on reflection, Zoey questions why she was told this when she remained in care long term. Zoey described the confusion caused by the contradiction between what she was being told and the actions of the local authority. Again, this example demonstrates a situation where a child felt powerless to impact the decisions made about their future, and the cause of this powerlessness was professionals making decisions without involving her.

When information was provided to participants, they spoke about it positively. Indeed, Anna found the provision of information helpful and enlightening:

> **Anna**: 'But at least now someone has sat down and explained and this was all in half an hour so simple, explained how your brain works and to think it's OK, whatever's happened has happened, I'm not even in danger any more, but I need my brain to think like that all of the time instead of, it was like a half an hour session but that half an hour session, it's like I wanna kiss the ground she walks on because, that mental health, I have been trying for years'

The counsellor that, Anna was able to access through a voluntary organisation provided her with information about her mental health difficulties. Having someone explain the science behind her experiences has reassured Anna and given her hope. The value that Anna places on this information was clear, 'I wanna kiss the ground she walks on'. Anna's power has increased through access to knowledge and information, and she became clearer about how to move forward.

Practitioners have the power to use their discretion in relation to how services are offered. When Chloe disclosed her abuse, she explained that professionals altered how they delivered their service:

> **Chloe**: 'Like before that, before I disclosed it was [Chloe] get out, you're excluded for three days. But now, as soon as, after it happened they were like, 'are you Ok, we understand' and it was like, why are you

> treating me this way? Like, I don't like it, treat, go back to how it was. Like I'm the same person, I'm still kicking off in class.'

Here Chloe described how the behaviours and actions of staff at her school changed as a result of her disclosure. In this example, professionals used their discretion to alter the way they responded to Chloe. However, as it is clear from Chloe's quote, Chloe did not appreciate this change, nor did she ask for it. Chloe explained that this was not an isolated incident as when she disclosed to a nurse on her ward, the nurse also used her discretion to alter service delivery:

> **Chloe**: 'And then, she kinda just looked at me and then kinda like, I don't know what the word is, like wrapped me in cotton wool. Like literally that night after she had told me like it was wrong, she literally got me a blanket and, no one's allowed to sleep in the day area, she literally put a DVD on and let me sleep in the day area with a blanket. No one's allowed to do that so it made me feel a bit like outcast-ish. It made me like, well this isn't, it was nice, it was a nice gesture, but I think I would have rather stuck to my normal routine, disclosed it and then went to bed, like for me it was kinda like they were giving me special treatment because something bad had happened'

Chloe felt as though she was being rewarded for being sexually assaulted and this made her feel uncomfortable. In addition, being treating differently to her peers led to feelings of isolation. Chloe felt that being treated differently singled her out and highlighted to others that something had happened to her. Ultimately, Chloe did not want professionals to respond to her differently as a result of her disclosure, but this was not understood.

Reflecting on Chloe's discomfort in relation to the feeling that she was rewarded for being sexually exploited by being given special treatment again raises questions about professional practice mirroring the behaviours of a perpetrator of child sexual exploitation. The provision of rewards, either tangible or intangible, is a feature of sexual grooming (Hallet 2017). Perpetrators may use the offer of love, attention, friendship, affection, protection and care to groom an

individual (Pearce 2013). This is similar to Chloe's description of the nurse who she disclosed to in hospital. Chloe reflected on this herself:

> **Chloe**: 'Because of the grooming as well, because of the grooming, I don't like emotional care because it doesn't feel right, it feels like I'm being groomed again. So in my head it makes more sense to be physically cared for than emotionally.'

Chloe's perpetrator manipulated her into believing that he was caring for her. This experience has impacted on Chloe's interpretation of what would typically be considered a caring response by professionals. One of the consequences of sexual exploitation is that Chloe has become suspicious of people who offer her emotional care, as this reminds her of being groomed.

This sub-section has identified a number of ways in which professional practice has mirrored the behaviour of perpetrators for those who have been exploited. Oppressive professional practices that disempower children and young people can mirror the misuse of power and control by perpetrators of child sexual exploitation (Gladman & Heal 2017). Perpetrators use tactics that remove/reduce an individual's choices, restrict their freedom and/or impair their capacity which erodes the individual's ability to consent (Pearce 2013). In comparison, participants shared situations where professionals limited their choice and restricted freedom to ensure they took a particular course of action. Chloe describes her experience of being groomed by a perpetrator of child sexual exploitation:

> **Chloe**: 'I only consented because I was manipulated. Because I was manipulated with this and…'

Compare this with the quote below, where Chloe describes an interaction with professionals in the criminal justice system;

> **Chloe**: ‘I don’t want to tell her, why have you put me in that situation where I have to tell her? I was like, you are making me do something I don’t want to do? I was like, that’s almost criminal, like’

In both situations, power has been used to force Chloe to take a particular course of action. Neither the perpetrator of abuse nor the professional have taken account of Chloe’s wishes and feelings. Professional practice that forces children and young people to take a particular action normalises this behaviour which could increase their vulnerability to abuse (Hallet 2017). Oppressive practice could also result in re-traumatisation. Barrett & Fish (2014) explained that feelings of powerlessness are created by a system that empowers professionals to make decisions on behalf of others. In Chloe’s case the criminal justice system replicated her experience of child sexual exploitation. This issue is explored further in chapter 9.

Structural Power

Structural power refers to political and economic power (Sheedy 2013). In this section, the structural factors considered are the safeguarding system and the policies and procedures of the organisations that operate within it.

The safeguarding system in the UK is underpinned by legislation and policy guidance (Brammer 2015**)**. Legislation provides safeguarding practitioners with power and duties to facilitate the protection of children and policy guidance gives advice on how these should be used in practice (Brammer 2015). Safeguarding professionals have a range of powers they can use to protect children; however, the experience of these powers for research participants was not always positive.

One power that safeguarding professionals, in particular social workers, have is being the gatekeepers for services and support. As a result, research participants have been reliant on professionals giving access to services in order for their needs to be met. Research participants spoke about situations where professionals exerted their power by withdrawing or withholding resources, they required for their needs to be met. Zoey’s experience of leaving

local authority care illustrates how professionals having the power of being gatekeeper can be problematic for children and young people. Zoey described having no control over the decision for her to move out of local authority care into independence. Despite Zoey not feeling ready for independence, she reported that Children's Services used their power to withdraw the provision of local authority accommodation. Zoey explained that the result of this decision was that she moved into semi-supported accommodation; however, she found the reduction in support difficult;

> **Zoey**: 'So I ended up in a mess, erm, I was getting sexually exploited while living there, erm, then they kicked me out of there and put me in a hostel that were even worse.'

This comment suggests that Children's Services' decision to move Zoey into semi-supported accommodation increased Zoey's vulnerability to sexual exploitation, for which she was subsequently punished by being evicted. The local authority's decision was counter-productive. Instead of supporting Zoey into independence, the local authority put her in a situation which resulted in her being punished and being at greater risk of harm.

Zoey reported that as soon as she moved into the hostel, she applied for social housing. An application for social housing involves bidding on properties that you are interested in, which are then allocated to individuals and families on the basis of housing need (this is commonly assessed using a points-based system). As part of Zoey's housing application, she began bidding on properties, but unbeknown to her the application had been blocked by the manager of the hostel;

> **Zoey**: 'I were bidding, and the manager there knew I was bidding for like six months, [manager] why am I not getting anywhere? [The manager]'s left now. Oh erm, I put a stop on it. You've known for six months that I being trying to bid, what gives you power to stop me? You know, I'm 18 I can move, erm she put a stop on it.'

Zoey's account suggests the hostel manager used her power as a professional to prevent her from bidding on properties and, therefore, from accessing alternative accommodation. In this example, Zoey was powerless to influence where she lived despite following the correct procedure to access social housing. In addition, Zoey reported that she was not told that her application had been blocked and that her attempts to bid on properties were futile. This was not the only time Zoey felt powerless as the result of the actions allegedly taken by the hostel manager:

> *Researcher: Did she explain why she had put a stop on it?*
>
> **Zoey**: 'No, she got that lifted anyway after me kicking off, erm and then I were bidding and I got my flat, I said, look I've got a property, can you get a leaving care grant? For like carpets and stuff you need. I've got a flat, I get the keys Monday and I'm moving. No you're not, you owe me £300. So she said, I'm not having my leaving care grant until I paid her this money.'
>
> *Researcher: What was this money for?*
>
> **Zoey**: 'She said that I had caused damages, but I threw, I threw a Christmas tree 'cos it were Christmas and I were the only person in the flat so I did have a drink and I threw the Christmas tree but to me that's not £300, for a Christmas tree. And they tried pulling the wool over my eyes and I'm not stupid.'

This example illustrates that the manager's used her of power to restrict Zoey's access to resources she was legitimately entitled to as a care leaver. Zoey's account suggests a lack of empathy by the manager's with regards to Zoey's situation. In this example, the manager attempted to misuse her power to punish Zoey for what, it could be argued, was a reasonable response to the emotional impact of spending Christmas day alone. This situation also demonstrates that the only way Zoey felt she could assert herself was by 'kicking off'.

Unfortunately, attempts to exert power through 'kicking off', as described by Zoey, has resulted in those affected by child sexual exploitation being criminalised.

> 'In a small number of cases (which have already received media attention) the victims were arrested for offences such as breach of the peace or being drunk and disorderly, with no action taken against the perpetrators of rape and sexual assault against children'
>
> (Jay 2014: 36).

> '[redacted] [child who was being sexually exploited] had also been arrested [redacted] for causing criminal damage and theft at the takeaway.'
>
> (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013: 28)

In these examples, professionals have misused the power invested in them by the welfare system and punished children for behaviour that was a response to trauma and powerlessness.

This can also be seen in relation to medical professionals' ability to diagnose. As discussed in the previous chapter, Anna was originally diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD), which was subsequently changed to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The change in diagnosis altered how Anna was viewed and opened up different treatment options. The medical professional who diagnosed Anna with BPD had the power to label her and control her access to treatment. Access to appropriate treatment through medical professionals was also raised by Amy:

> **Amy**: 'From being sexually abused and having a baby at [age] my body has gave in, my pubic bones gave in but no GP will ever say that, they will always just say, it's your back, it's your back, it's your back. It's not my back, it's my pelvic bone but they won't ever, ever, ever admit to it.'

Researcher: Why don't you think they'll admit it?

Amy: 'Cos then it would lead to further things wouldn't it, it would lead to further things because it would prove that er what I've gone through has permanently damaged me. So what happened to me when I was [age] have permanently damaged my body and no doctor wants to put their name to it.'

Later in the session, Amy commented:

Amy: 'Well that's why they don't want, well this is what I mean, it's just a vicious circle if they admit it's because of the abuse that I suffered, it gets them in worser, it gets them in worser because they need to sort out what's happened, they need to sort it out, whether it be paying for an operation or what, they are not going to do it are they. And this is why I struggle, I'm [age], I shouldn't have pains like this'

In this example, Amy described the doctor's use of their legitimate power to diagnose her health issue. Amy does not believe this diagnosis is correct but does not have the power to overrule the diagnosis. In this case, the power gained by her GP [general practitioner] as a result of being a medical professional impacted on Amy's ability to access treatment. Zoey also worked with a medical professional who believed she was more of an expert in relation to Zoey's health, than Zoey herself:

Zoey: ''what you need is an eating disorder clinic and to help with your issues drinking'. I weren't drinking and I weren't struggling with my eating disorder. When I did have problems with my eating, nobody bothered so now, five years down the line they're saying you need an eating disorder clinic.'

Zoey has had difficulty accessing appropriate treatment for her mental health issues. When Zoey complained, she was told to access interventions designed for difficulties that she did not believe she was experiencing. Zoey was

diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, not an eating disorder or alcoholism. However, in this situation, the professional overruled Zoey's position as an expert in her own life.

In addition to being the gatekeepers of services, some safeguarding professionals, for example, the police and social workers, have the power to restrict an individual's liberty. This power comes from legislation such as the Children Act 1989 and the Mental Health Act 1983. Indeed, a number of participants reported that they had their liberty restricted by professionals as a result of being sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 and/or having their children removed from their care under the Children Act 1989.

> **Chloe: '**Yeah I had, my urm, I got sectioned, urm, well first I was in general and then I was on an adolescent ward and that was fine and then I kept running away so then I had police involved, just bring me back each time, and then I had like two-to-one community like, I don't know what they are, like nurses and I still kept running away from them and then urm, I got sectioned a couple of nights after…'

In the situation described by Chloe, professionals decided she should be in hospital for her own health or safety, or for the health and safety of others and she was sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 (Brammer 2015). Being sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 means the individual can be admitted to hospital for treatment without their consent (Brammer 2015). Having the power to detain an individual under the Mental Health Act 1983, whether considered necessary or not, creates a significant power imbalance.

Four research participants also spoke about professional power in relation to their ability to remove children. Anna disclosed that her child had been removed from her care by Children's Services as a result of her mental health difficulties. Anna reported that she has been unable to access appropriate treatment for her mental health difficulties, and that this has resulted in her daughter being removed from her care. Initially, this appeared to be due to Anna being wrongly diagnosed with borderline personality disorder and being dismissed as an

attention seeker (see chapter 7). Herman (2015) asserts that it is common for patients who have suffered complex trauma to be misdiagnosed as having personality disorders. Anna now has a diagnosis of PTSD, however, in the area that Anna lives, the treatment prescribed for PTSD is not available. Without treatment, Anna has reportedly been assessed as unable to care for her daughter:

> **Anna**: 'Urm, but mental health, I think they've failed me in all levels and they can sit now and sit to people like me that's been a good mum, and social's saying that you've been a brilliant mum, you've never neglected or abused her but because of your mental health, we've got to remove your daughter. And mental health say it's such a sad case, it's wrong what they are doing but is it wrong because you're not helping me, so it's, it's a frustrating one and they wonder why in meetings I get frustrated because social say that we don't usually take people like you to Court but because of your mental health we've got to and I only get two hours a week with my daughter and two hours a week, a little girl, who's waiting for mummy to come back and I can't give her a timescale'

Anna was frustrated that she has been unable to access the treatment she needs to address her post-traumatic stress disorder and is understandably devastated that the result has been that she has been separated from her daughter by Children's Services. Again, Anna felt powerless to alter the situation. The phrase 'we've got to remove' suggests the social worker in this case was forced into taking a particular action. The social worker appears to have acknowledged that the decision to remove Anna's child did not make sense as she commented that Anna was a 'brilliant mum'. It is as though Anna's mental health difficulties triggered the removal of her child regardless of the context or the social worker's professional judgement. Here the social worker was powerless to go against the action required by the system within which she works.

Sonia and Sarah also disclosed their children had been removed from their care. Sonia explained that despite sharing parental responsibility with the local authority, it did not keep her up to date with information about her children;

> **Sonia**: 'I never ever, I never get no minutes back, I don't get owt, I'm lucky really that I get to go to LAC [looked after children] reviews, I didn't have any LAC [looked after children] reviews before I started working here with X, none at all, I heard nothing'

Sonia shares parental responsibility with Children's Services and as such, she should be kept informed and involved in decision making about her children; however, she does not believe that this has happened (Children Act 1989). Sonia explained that since accessing support from a voluntary sector organisation, she has been able to access more information from Children's Services about her children. It is positive that Sonia reported that Children's Service was sharing more information with her, but it is concerning that this appeared to be the result of her accessing support from a voluntary sector organisation. When someone shares parental responsibility with Children's Services, they are legally entitled to be given information, and this should not be dependent on whether or not they are able to access the services of an advocate.

A common thread throughout the experiences of the research participants was that their voice was given less consideration than the voice of professionals. The focus group reflected on the professionals are treated differently to those accessing support;

> *Researcher: Do you feel that the voices of professionals are trusted more than your voice?*
>
> **Anna**: 'Yes, definitely'
>
> **Amy**: 'Clearly'

> **Anna**: ‘They’ve got a qualification, they’ve got a job, a title to their job, a title to their name, what have we got, a human being, a [age] girl, a [age] girl, female, blonde hair, whatever clothes that’s it, whereas professionals have got a title, got a name’
>
> **Amy**: ‘I don’t like it to be like this, but I think they was different with me ‘cos of how I am, because I’m a qualified [job title] and because I know what rights I’ve got. I’m not going to, you know, I’m not going to allow them to say, you know what I mean, I’m not going to allow them to say something without challenging it.

Anna and Amy highlight the power imbalance that results from professionals’ expert power. Qualifications, training and experience all contribute to an individual’s expert power, and these are things that most professionals have. In contrast, many of those who experienced child sexual exploitation had their education disrupted by abuse and, therefore, missed opportunities to develop expert power. This left people like Anna, feeling powerless.

Amy reflected on her experience of working with professionals and recognised that she was able to boost her expert power by training as a youth worker. Amy’s experience suggests that professionals respond differently to individuals with different levels of expert power. Amy believes that she was given more respect by professionals because she had greater information power as a result of being a qualified youth worker. Amy believes that knowing and being able to advocate for her rights, meant she had a better experience with professionals than others.

For those who have experienced child sexual exploitation, socially constructed beliefs impact on their ability to exert power; two of these are being an innocent child and a passive victim (James & Prout 2015, Kitzinger 2015). This is something Chloe reflected on:

> **Chloe**:’…one of the teachers always used the word victim and I frigging hate that word. I absolutely detest it. I hate it, because I am not a victim. I

haven't, yeah, something bad happened to me but I am not going to be weak and vulnerable and I'm not going to be that stereotypical victim label, that's not me. Like, if I had to give it a word it would be survivor, like I've gone through it, I've done it and I'm pushing past it. Victim is someone who is still suffering from it, still, still. Don't get me wrong, it affects me every day but I'm not going to let it like, I don't like the word victim. I hate it…'

Here Chloe rejects the term victim as she believes it portrays someone who is weak and vulnerable. Indeed, the construction of a victim as being helpless and passive is a common one used to justify denying an individual's access to knowledge and power (Kitzinger 2015).

In addition to the label of victim, Chloe found that being defined as a child was also problematic. Society views adults as more competent and, therefore, more legitimate decision makers than children (James & Prout 2015). This creates a power imbalance between adults and children in favour of adults:

Chloe: 'Oh they were horrid, I just didn't, it was [police force] and I just didn't like them. They were just, they treated me like a child. And, yeah, I was 15 but I wasn't a child. That's the way I thought. I look back now and I am like, yeah I was a child but back then I didn't feel like one. And I was kinda like, why are they treating me this way?'

As chapter 2 explains, during the Victorian era children were conceptualised as innocents in need of protection. In Chloe's example, she stated that she felt as though she was treated differently by police as a result of her age and that she felt patronised:

Chloe: 'And when I was speaking to them, they were very kinda basic, they were very basic. They were like, 'can you say this?' and 'can you say actually what happened?', 'when did it happen', like in a really patronising tone of voice. And I was kinda like, it was just irritated me,

like, I was just like, can you actually just let me speak and then ask your questions.'

Chloe's quote suggests the police took control of the interview and altered their practice in response to her age. Chloe explained that she found the interview format unhelpful and was irritated by the adjustments professionals made for her age. Overall, Chloe described a situation where professionals took the lead and she had little power to influence the process.

This sub-section identified a number of power imbalances. Research participant's relative lack of power in society prevented them from being able to effectively challenge decisions made by adult professionals or exert themselves as experts by experience. Society's construction of victims as passive and helpless resulted in decisions being made for research participants rather than with them, rendering them powerless. In addition, the power afforded to professionals through policy and legislation, and society's view of them as experts, resulted in them being able to overrule the wishes and feelings of research participants. Individuals who have experienced child sexual exploitation are disempowered by the intersectionality of the social constructions of a child (innocent), victim (passive) and service user (uninformed). This aspect of disempowerment will be explored further in chapter 9.

Attempts to Gain Power

This section focuses on research participants' attempts to gain power within their relationships with professionals. Two very different experiences are discussed. The section starts with positive experiences of empowerment and moves onto situations were attempts to gain power led to participants being at risk.

During data collection sessions, research participants identified a number of strategies they used to try and gain more power. One approach was to increase their knowledge. For example, Emily attended the Freedom Programme to learn more about domestic violence and abuse. The Freedom Programme is a 12-

week educational course developed by Pat Craven (2018) (a social worker and probation officer) to help women affected by domestic abuse to understand what happened to them. Emily shared some of the information that she had learnt from attending the course:

> **Emily**: ‘’Cos a lot of women, if they were married or in a relationship they couldn’t, they were basically owned by their husband. It used to be that your husband could rape you and it wasn’t illegal. Whereas 1990 it changed, 1990 as I was born that right they couldn’t get away with that.’

Emily enjoyed sharing this knowledge and recommended the book, *Living with the Dominator* by Pat Craven (2008). Attending this programme boosted Emily’s information power, power she was happy to share by passing on her knowledge to others. For Emily, the information she gained from the Freedom Programme helped her to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships:

> **Emily**: ‘That’s what happens when you have that support and you have that reassurance that someone’s going to be there you do get that sort of progress, and OK I’m in a good place, I’m in a healthy relationship and I’ve got a wonderful little boy, but with the support I had behind me has helped me realise what a healthy relationship is and what a healthy relationship isn’t and how I should be treated.’

The Freedom Programme raised Emily's expectations of a relationship and helped her to recognise what behaviour is unacceptable. Emily used this knowledge to re-frame previous relationships and recognise them as abusive. Emily is now in a relationship she considers to be healthy. Gaining knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships empowered Emily to make different choices in relation to who she chooses as a partner.

In contrast, Amy was clear that she and others in a similar situation to herself are experts by experience and, therefore, have an existing source of knowledge/information. Amy expressed a desire to share her knowledge and

experience with others to improve practice in relation to child sexual exploitation:

> **Amy**: 'I told [employee of the local authority] that I would be going out there and training people on everything I know about CSE and he didn't even offer, he didn't even say, oh well, we could help you do that, he just stood there as if he were er gauping'
>
> *Researcher: And what do you think that is all about?*
>
> **Amy**: 'Worried, they're worried that we're going to expose more about recent failures'

Amy believed her ability to use her knowledge and experience was blocked by a local authority employee because they were concerned about her exposing poor practice. Despite Amy identifying an area within which she has the power to change practice and improve experiences for others who come into contact with professionals, she has been unable to utilise this. In contrast to the local authority, a voluntary sector organisation that Amy is linked with has supported her to share her experience and expertise publicly.

Amy, Emily and Chloe all now volunteer for the voluntary sector organisations they linked in with for support, by sharing their experience of sexual exploitation and working with professionals publicly to improve practice. Emily found this to be a positive experience:

> **Emily**: 'Urm, it has helped with my confidence, it's helped me understanding that professionals are, not as bad, not as bad as people, if they have a bad experience they are going to think everyone's bad really but urm, it's helped me heal in a lot of places and it's helped build my self-esteem and my trust back up with certain professionals, not that I'm saying I would trust every professional, I think if I met a new professional I would be a bit curious at times but kinda a bit afraid but that's since being a child I find, since being a child I've been taught to have those

fears but it has definitely improved with doing the conferences and working alongside professionals.'

In this context, Emily was viewed as an expert by experience with a valuable contribution to make. Being treated with respect supported Emily to develop her confidence, trust in professionals and self-esteem; all of which positively contribute to her sense of power.

However, there were examples where research participants' attempts to exert power were problematic and potentially life threatening. For example, Chloe developed a strategy to enable her to access the service she felt met her needs:

Chloe: 'Yeah, like sometimes, if I just needed someone to talk to, I'd overdose and go there. And I'd literally call the ambulance like five minutes later just so I could go there'

Chloe: 'Well we worked out last night that I have done over 20 overdoses since I was 12. And it's mainly when I don't feel safe, and when I don't feel safe, even if I don't actually want to overdose, I don't like swallowing tablets, I'm not a table swallower, I don't like it, the reason why I do it is because I know the process. I know it's safe, I know what goes on, in my head it's all structured. I know I will go by ambulance, four hours later I'll have my bloods done after that I'll wait about an hour, two hours find out the results, after that I get a cannula put in, after that I start my fluids and then like 24 hours later I'm assessed by the mental health. I'm assessed by the mental health and then go home. I know it. To me it's knowledge, it's one thing I know and it's structured and routined.'

In this example, Chloe took control of her situation by taking an overdose. Chloe knew what she needed and stated that she was forced to take extreme measures to access the service she required. Chloe believed that she was

taking control of the situation; however, to get her needs met she was in a potentially life-threatening situation.

Chloe stated that she overdosed in order to access services. Zoey, Anna and Emily disclosed they had also taken actions that were life threatening but that, for them, these actions were intended to end their lives:

> **Emily:'**…I tried to do the overdose because I'd had enough like, I didn't feel I had a life'

Suicide can be interpreted as an individual taking control and making a deliberate choice to die (Broz & Münster 2015*)*. Indeed, Zoey and Emily's use of the terminology, 'I tried' suggests they felt they were making a choice. For individuals who complete suicide, they remove the ability of others to have power over them which could, in itself, be viewed as an act of power. In Jaworski's (2015) exploration of suicide and agency she commented, 'suicide can be framed as an act of empowering oneself even though those who die do not live long enough to know what this freedom means' (192). Whether or not suicide is problematic depends on an individual's attitude towards suicide, however, from the perspective of safeguarding, an individual who completes suicide has not been protected.

Zoey and Chloe disclosed they had also self-harmed. Self-harm is where an individual deliberately damages or injures their own body (NHS 2018).

> **Zoey: '**Like everything would be locked, kitchen would be locked, it were just like a complete prison and then my self-harming started…'
>
> **Chloe:'**…the day after it happened, that night I had self-harmed…'

Within the data collection sessions, the motivation behind Zoey and Chloe's self-harm was not explored. However, research on the topic of self-harm can provide an insight into one of the possible motivations for this behaviour. Sutton (2009) identified eight possible motivations for self-harm, one of which was to

gain a sense of control and, possibly, a sense of empowerment. In her book *Healing the Hurt Within*, Sutton quotes an individual who has self-harmed:

> 'I can't control what others do to me, but I can control what I do to myself'
> (Sutton 2009: 204)

This individual viewed self-harm as a way to exert control in the context of feeling powerless to influence how others treat them. In line with this, Warner (2009) considered self-harm in the context of child sexual abuse and suggested that self-harm can be used to 'reassert control over one's body' (24).

This sub-section explored individual's attempts to exert power over their own lives. Emily shared that she was able to achieve a sense of power and control by accessing knowledge and applying this to choices she makes about relationships. Amy and Emily were empowered, by voluntary sector organisations, to share their knowledge with others enabling them to influence the conceptualisation of child sexual exploitation and professional practice. Other attempts to gain control and exercise power were problematic. Chloe, Anna, Zoey and Emily all report using coping strategies that led to their lives being at risk. It is devastating that a sense of powerlessness may have resulted in these individuals attempting suicide and/or self-harming.

Summary

This chapter has considered the power dynamics that operate between professionals and those affected by child sexual exploitation. The discussion explored relational power, structural power and research participants' attempts to exert power. Relational power encompassed the dynamics of relationships research participants had with individual professionals and structural power included looking at the impact policies and procedures and the social-economic context had on power dynamics.

Exploration of the relationships that research participants had with individual practitioners raised concerns around their ability to exercise power over their lives. Professionals were reported to have overridden and/or invalidated the

wishes and feeling of research participants. Some practitioners were accused of misusing their power to restrict access to services and/or punish participants. Research participants also complained that they had a lack of access to information about policies and procedures and decisions that were being made about their lives. Indeed, when information was provided, research participants found this empowering.

A particularly concerning aspect of professional practice was that, at times, it appeared to mirror the actions of perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. Oppressive practice, where participants felt forced into talking a particular course of action, echoes the erosion of consent by perpetrators of abuse. Research participants reflected that they had been disempowered both by the perpetrator of abuse and the practice of professionals employed to protect them from this abuse. Another factor was that there were occasions when participants felt as though they were being rewarded by professionals because they had experienced child sexual exploitation. Again, rewards are commonly used by perpetrators during the grooming process to manipulate a child or young person for the purposes of sexual exploitation. This issue will be considered further in chapter 9 as key finding 2.

With regards to structural power, policy and legislation invest professionals with the role of gatekeepers, the power to diagnose and the ability to restrict an individual's liberty. Research participants disclosed they have been denied access to services they needed, either through these being withheld by professionals or because of being given an incorrect diagnosis. A number of participants also shared that professionals had used their power to remove their children from their care and/or section them, leading to compulsory detainment in hospital. Again, participants felt powerless to challenge these decisions, highlighting that the voice of professionals is valued more highly than their own.

Another aspect considered within structural power was the social construction of those affected by child sexual exploitation. Research participants complained about being viewed as less competent due to their age and more passive as a result of having experienced abuse. These attitudes were identified by

participants in the professionals they worked with. Indeed, these attitudes were considered to have made the service they received less responsive to their needs.

Despite working with professionals, within a system and a society that is believed to disempower those affected by child sexual exploitation, research participants shared ways in which they had attempted to exert power over their situation. Emily explained how being given information about healthy and unhealthy relationships has empowered her to make different choices, and she commented on the positive outcomes of being supported to share her experience with others as an expert by experience. Other reported attempts to gain power led, at times, to research participants being at risk of harm. Attempts to complete suicide and self-harm were disclosed by research participants. Both these acts can be viewed as attempts to gain control in situations where an individual feels powerless. However, these acts endanger life; key finding 3.

This chapter documents power imbalances that were felt by research participants working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. These are similar findings to those in the previous chapter, '*Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision'*. The following chapter, *Rhetoric v's Reality*, discusses these findings alongside wider literature on the topics.

Chapter 9: Rhetoric versus Reality

The chapters '*Changing Narratives of Child Sexual Exploitation*' and '*Rediscovery of Child Sexual Exploitation*' trace the changes that have occurred in the field of child sexual exploitation since the Victorian era. They describe developments in policy, legislation, the sociology of children and society's construction of those affected by child sexual exploitation. Child sexual exploitation is now framed as sexual abuse rather than prostitution. Professionals are encouraged to considered children as active agents with their own rights, who are experts in their own lives. Policy and legislation has changed in line with these developments, and now places a stronger focus on protecting children from abuse whilst promoting their rights and participation.

The three data analysis chapters '*What's in a Word*', '*Children's* and *Young People's Experience of Service Provision*' and '*Children's and Young People's Experience of Power Dynamic*' suggest that the reconceptualization of children and child sexual exploitation and the accompanying changes in policy and legislation, have not been fully embraced in practice (or at least not for participants within this research). This chapter explores the study's key findings from the data analysis chapters in relation to the wider literature on the topic.

Key Findings:

1. Dominant discourses from the Victorian era continue to be drawn on heavily by practitioners in the context of child sexual exploitation.
2. Practitioners need to develop a hypersensitivity as to how they wield their positions of power, given how central abuses of power are within child sexual exploitation.
3. Existing safeguarding policies and procedures struggle to address situations of child sexual exploitation and how to effectively protect children and young people from abuse.

4. The bureaucratic nature of some corporate parent arrangements can result in a more dehumanised relationship between the professional and the child or young person.
5. Neoliberalism and managerialism have hindered the professional's ability to respond effectively to child sexual exploitation.
6. Despite the UK's longstanding international commitment to children's rights and the rights-based approach being firmly embedded in legislation and policy, research accounts suggested the rights of children and young people subject to child sexual exploitation were frequently undermined.

Key finding 1: Dominant discourses from the Victorian era continue to be drawn on heavily by practitioners in the context of child sexual exploitation.

As outlined in chapter 2, the dominant view in the Victorian era was that children who did not fit the middle-class notion of children as 'asexual innocents' were deviants. Indeed, children involved in prostitution were considered to be 'precocious temptresses' and a danger to the moral fabric of society (Walkowitz 1980). Towards the end of the last century, there was an emerging recognition of children involved in prostitution as being victims of sexual abuse. As documented in chapter 2, there has been a paradigm shift, and what was once described as 'prostitution' is now termed 'child sexual exploitation'. This was not just a change in terminology, rather this paradigm shift was underpinned by a fundamental shift in societal attitudes towards children, their positions of power, and their capacity for agency and consent.

However, as the chapters '*Rediscovery of Child Sexual Exploitation'* and *'Agency, Power and Consent*' demonstrate, this paradigm shift is yet to be embedded throughout professional practice. This is supported by findings in '*What's in a Word: the power of terminology*', '*Children's and Young People's Experience of Services*' and '*Power Dynamics*'. What has changed is the terminology. Where in the Victorian era children would be referred to as being 'deviant', children are now pathologised using labels such as 'attention seeker' or having a 'personality disorder' as described by Zoey and Anna in chapter 7. The phrases 'making a lifestyle choice' or 'consenting to abuse' are a re-framing

of the term promiscuous. Describing children and young people as challenging or rebellious replaces the previously used term of precocious. Terminology has become more technical, grounded in scientific understandings of childhood, but the underlying sentiment is still evident (Burr 2015).

These attitudes were also expressed within the Young Person's Project Board (the group consulted in the research - YPPB). One member expressed the view that a female wearing particular clothing could be considered as being promiscuous:

> 'Some people, like, say if they are single yeah, they say I'll go out and be like I'll wear this so everyone looks at me, I'm not saying you can rape that person, but they are kind doing it to be promiscuous, to show themselves off.'
>
> (YPPB 2016)

This quote suggests that those described in this quote are 'sexually knowing'. The Victorian attitude was that 'sexually knowing' children were morally corrupt and not deserving of protection (Walkowitz 1980); the quote reflects a similar attitude. By wearing clothing that attracts attention, the individual's innocence is diminished. This view was found in Rogers et al. (2016) study into the impact of age and dress on blame in cases of child sexual abuse. Three hundred and seven people took part in the research that found victims were blamed more for child sexual abuse when wearing clothing that was considered to be sexualised (short skirt, revealing top, fashionable hair and make-up) (Rogers et al. 2016). Rogers et al. (2016) suggests this could be an example of the just-world hypothesis. The just-world hypothesis was developed by Lerner (1980) who proposed that people hold the belief that the world is a just and fair place where bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people. This belief enables people to believe that if they are good, then bad things will not happen to them, thus reducing anxiety and promoting a feeling of safety. The just-world hypothesis could explain why people, including professionals, blame children and young people for their abuse.

In addition, the children and young people affected by child sexual exploitation usually fit into the category of youth. As discussed in chapter 4, youth is a subset of children that has been linked to deviancy and delinquency (Heir 2011). The concept of youth reinforces the Victorian view that children who do not conform to being 'asexual innocents' are themselves immoral. This subset of children has an ambiguous place in society. Youths are afforded less protection in legislation and social policy and have less access to services than younger children. For example, Harbourer's Warnings (see chapter 3) can only be used when a child is under 16 years of age unless a child is in local authority care, when it can be used up to 18 (Gladman& Heal 2017). This leaves children, who fit the category of youths - those between the age of 16 and 18 - less protected in law. Research participants provided examples where they felt their age affected the service they received. Emily explained that when she went to report that she had been abused, she felt that the police officer she spoke to dismissed her because of her age. Emily believed the police officer thought:

Emily: 'That I was just another teenager lying or trying to get attention…'

This issue is compounded by the sexual age of consent being 16 years, an age where a young person is considered a youth. Some professionals have worked on the premise that once a young person has reached 16, all sexual activity is consensual, without recognising that grooming and exploitation erodes consent (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013: 44). The age of consent being 16 creates a dilemma for professionals who must decide whether a young person between the ages of 16 and 18 has consented to sexual activity or is subject to child sexual exploitation, something that might not be easy to determine. The decision made by the professional will impact on the young person's rights, as it will inform what action is considered to be in their best interest (article 3); this could result in the child's views (article 12) being overridden to protect them from sexual exploitation (article 34).

Woodiwiss (2014) argues that narratives about childhood sexual abuse need to move on from the dominant discourse of victims being innocent, weak, passive

and damaged, so the experiences of children who do not fit within this discourse can be recognised. Woodiwiss (2014) contends that to achieve this, harm should be separated from wrongfulness, and sexual innocence from childhood (139). This would emphasise that, regardless of the actions of the child or young person, child sexual exploitation is always wrong and that the person responsible is the perpetrator (Woodiwiss 2014). This is consistent with the view that children are active agents. However, Reisel (2016) found that this is something practitioners struggle to recognise. Reisel (2016) found the nuances of choice and agency were often lost in practice. To address this, Reisel (2016) suggested that professionals are given time and space to reflect on their cases, for example, through effective supervision.

Groupthink

The concept 'groupthink' provides one explanation for the persistence of the belief that children subject to child sexual exploitation are deviant and immoral (Thompson 2006). Groupthink is where groups of people develop the same view on a topic, to the extent that it becomes the norm (Thompson 2006). Up until the end of the last century, the dominant discourse was that children who were sexually exploited were responsible for their situation, deviant and immoral. People are reluctant to challenge an established norm because they fear that they will be viewed as an outsider (Thompson 2006). Amy, a research participant, described how groupthink affected the professionals she was working with:

> **Amy**: '…I think, back then, because there was a group of people trying to hide it, that's why a lot of people just went along with it. I think that's why a lot of people just went along with it because they couldn't stand on their own and say they couldn't expose a group, yeah that group would turn round and, well actually we can bounce off each other and you're on your own. You try and find someone to bounce off of to say the same thing as you and you might be a bit stronger.'

Amy articulated how the professionals she worked with were reluctant to raise concerns about child sexual exploitation, because the wider group wanted to hide the fact that it was a problem in the area.

The treatment of whistle-blowers in the field of child sexual exploitation demonstrates what can happen to someone who goes against the group. Taking the Rotherham and Rochdale child sexual exploitation cases as examples, whistle-blowers have lost their jobs (Dr Angie Heal - South Yorkshire Police drugs analyst), been moved to different departments (Sara Rowbotham - Rochdale's crisis intervention team coordinator) and had funding for their organisation pulled (Jayne Senior - of Risky Business youth project, Rotherham). These women all challenged the dominant discourse that children can consent to abuse, and they were punished as a result. The treatment of whistle-blowers makes the fear of being viewed as an outsider, a legitimate concern that may dissuade professionals from challenging the established norm. A reluctance to challenge the established norm results in the status quo being maintained, despite the promotion through policy and legislation of a new norm.

In 2017, Alexis Jay spoke at the National Working Group's Annual Conference. Jay (2017) identified 'group thinkers' and 'wilful blindness' as two concepts that led to child sexual exploitation being ignored in Rotherham; wilful blindness is discussed in key finding 3 below. Groupthink refers to situations where a group of people develop like-minded thinking (Thompson 2009). Group thinking becomes problematic when individuals become reluctant to challenge the status quo even though this is unhelpful (Thompson 20019). Thompson (2009) states that group think often leads to avoidance. In Rotherham, organisations and professionals avoided the issue of child sexual exploitation and failed to tackle the problem (Jay 2014).

To prevent groupthink and wilful blindness from paralysing safeguarding, Jay (2017) recommended the following strategies:

- Ensure teams include critical evaluators who promote dissent thinking;

- Include experts;
- Encourage challenge; and,
- Have senior staff who role model the desired attitudes and morals of an organisation.

Jay also stated that practitioners should be supported from keeping 'distress for swamping their ability to think' (2017). The strategies put forward by Jay (2017) would challenge professionals who continue to be influenced by dominant discourses from the Victorian era, as described by the research participants in this study.

Trauma informed practice

Chapter 7 described how Anna and Chloe were pathologised as a result of their response to trauma which echoed attitudes held in the Victorian Era towards children and young people affected by abuse (see chapter 2). Trauma informed practice can address professional's misunderstandings related to children and young people's behaviour in the context of trauma (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland 2018). Having a safeguarding workforce that is more trauma informed would enhance the identification of children and young people who may have been abused, improve the effectiveness of safeguarding interventions and promote recovery (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland 2018). Macy and Johns (2011) described trauma informed practice as that which:

- prioritises the child or young persons physical and psychological safety;
- addresses other problems the child and young person is experiencing;
- promotes the empowerment of children and young person;
- builds resilience;
- gives children and young people as much control and choice as possible, and
- minimises the potential for revictimisation.

Key finding 2: Practitioners need to develop a hypersensitivity to how they wield their positions of power, given how central abuses of power are within child sexual exploitation.

The chapter *'Power Dynamics'* identified power imbalances between children and young people, and professionals. One aspect of this power imbalance was related relational power; the power that exists within relationships (Sheedy 2013). This section uses a theory developed by French and Raven (1959, 1965), introduced in chapter 4, to explore the relational power dynamics described by research participants in the study.

French and Raven (1959, 1965) developed a theory through which professional-service-user power dynamics can be explored. Although this theory was created over half a century ago, French and Raven have continued to develop the theory and it remains relevant today; see Raven 2008. French and Raven viewed power as a matter of relationships. They identified six bases of power which impacted on the power dynamic in the professional-service-user relationship:

- Reward power
- Coercive power
- Legitimate power
- Information power
- Referent power
- Expert power

(French & Raven 1959, Raven 1965)

These bases of power are not discreet, and more than one base is often operating at any one time in any particular situation (Raven 2008). As the theory has developed, each base has been further differentiated (Raven 2008). However, this analysis is limited to the six overarching bases. In relation to child sexual exploitation, the examples below highlight how professionals hold power in their relationships with service users:

- Resource power: the ability of an individual to give out rewards such as resources or personal approval (Raven 2013). In this context, professionals can reward individuals by providing them with resources that meet their needs or by giving them access to services (Maclean & Harrison 2015). The chapter '*Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision'* demonstrated the variability in experience of research participants in relation to accessing services. Professionals are the gatekeepers of services and can enable access that could be viewed as a reward or restrict access that could be considered a punishment. This was the case for Zoey whose access to a leaving care grant was blocked by the hostel manager where she was staying. Children and young people need access to resources for protection (UNCRC 1989 article 34) and recovery (UNCRC 1989 article 39) from child sexual exploitation, and denying children and young people access to the resources they need, fails to promote their rights under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).

- Coercive power: the ability to apply punishment or sanctions (Maclean & Harrison 2015). For example, professionals can use coercive power to remove a child from a parent who is non-compliant, section an individual with mental health difficulties, or place a child in a secure unit. Coercive power was used against research participants. Chloe was sectioned, Anna had her child removed from her care and Zoey appeared to have been placed in a secure unit. This power is necessary to protect people from harm, but it can be misused. In Anna's case, she believes her child was removed by professionals because she had mental health difficulties rather than because she was unable to provide good enough parenting. If Anna's child was indeed wrongly removed from her care, this had infringed on her child's right to not be separated from their family (UNCRC 1989 article 9).

  Professionals used their power to place Zoey out of county, in what appears to have been a secure placement (see chapter 8). There is a debate over the use of secure units and/ or relocating children and young

people in cases of CSE. Whilst some professionals advocate for these interventions to prevent further exploitation (UNCRC 1989 article 34), others are concerned that, although it increases physical safety, it poses a risk to relational and psychological safety (Firmin 2019). Relocation or placement in a secure unit overrides the child or young person's right not to be separated from their parents (UNCRC 1989 article 9) or to associate with their friends (UNCRC 1989 article 15) and risks damaging existing positive support networks reducing relational safety (Firmin 2019). In addition, Firmin (2019) found that some children and young people interpreted being moved as they being to blame for the abuse, the move itself being the punishment. In these cases, reinforcing feelings of self-blame reduces psychological safety (Firmin 2019). In cases where the child's or young person's relational and/ or psychological safety is compromised, the intervention does not promote recovery and reintegration (UNCRC 1989 article 39), and they may return to the community being even more at risk, thereby contravening both UNCRC (1989) articles 34 and 39 (Firmin 2019).

- Legitimate power: professionals have 'legitimate' power because of their status in society and the authority they have been given by law (Maclean & Harrison 2015). This results in their views and opinions being valued more highly than others, and/or them having the power to impose a particular course of action. In this context, practitioners have legitimate power due to their status as a professional and as an adult. Different professionals have different legitimate powers. Police have the power of arrest, social workers have the power to decide if someone is eligible for a service, and doctors have the power to diagnose and treat. Anna and Zoey were both diagnosed as having personality disorders. As discussed in chapter 7, this is an extremely problematic diagnosis and only medical professionals have the legitimate power to make or remove that diagnosis. Being labelled with this diagnosis compromised both Anna's and Zoey's access to the support they needed to recover and, therefore, undermined UNCRC (1989) article 39, their right to recovery from trauma and to integrate.

- Information power: this power comes from knowledge (Maclean & Harrison 2015). In most situations, professionals have greater knowledge of policies and procedures, including the resources an individual is entitled to, than service users themselves, especially children. Failure to communicate information accurately and in a timely manner, restricts the ability of children and young people to make informed choices or to advocate for their rights. It limits their information power. Research participants complained that there were some circumstances where professionals failed to share knowledge and information with them. There were situations where research participants were unclear about their rights and entitlements, because they felt they had not been given sufficient information by the professionals they were working with. In these situations, professionals failed to promote UNCRC (1989) article 13, access to information, and article 42, knowledge of rights.

- Referent power: the respect given to an individual as a result of their personal attributes. An individual with referent power is admired, held in high regard and may be considered to be a role model (Raven 2013). Professionals from the voluntary sector were held in high regard by research participants. Participants valued the advocacy, support and services provided by voluntary sector workers. Participants also found them to be non-judgemental. Although the same was considered of some statutory workers, it did not extend to all. Indeed, some statutory professionals were clearly disliked. These were professionals, who were perceived to be judgmental, dismissive and disbelieving, and not, therefore, respectful of UNCRC (1989) article 12 and the views of children and young people. It must be recognised that the role of statutory workers differs from that of the voluntary sector and this may impact on how they are viewed. Statutory workers have the legitimate power to force a particular course of action in order to safeguard. In some cases, professionals removed children from and/or sectioned research participants. Given these actions went against the wishes of

research participants, it is understandable that the professionals involved were not respected.

- Expert power: this comes from the belief that an individual has superior insight or expertise (Raven 2008). Professionals gain expert power through training, qualifications and/or experience (Maclean & Harrison 2015). In chapter 7, Sonia and Amy both talked about invoking the expert power of others, namely project workers from the voluntary sector, who advocated on their behalf (Raven 2013). In chapter 8, Anna reflected on the fact that she does not have any qualifications, and this means she has less expert power than the professionals she works with. Amy acknowledges that she has been able to increase her expert power by qualifying as a youth worker, and that this has changed how professionals respond to her. However, in line with article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), professionals should respect the views of a child or young person regardless of whether they have been able to increase their expert power.

The power differential between child service users and professionals is stark and can negatively impact on children's rights. In at least four out of the six bases of power, professionals had more power than child service users. Amy had been able to gain expert power by becoming a youth worker, but the opportunity to gain qualifications has not been available to all. Indeed, Sheedy (2013) states 'the service user is permanently in a relative position whereby they lack the resources necessary to gain power and thereby control over their predicament.' (39).

Referent power was largely held by professionals working in the voluntary sector. Professionals working in statutory services were often disliked because they were considered to have failed to safeguard, restricted access to resources and/or held judgemental attitudes. Research participants also described situations where the use of professional power by those working in the statutory

sector, mirrored their experience of their perpetrators use of power. This is explored in the following section.

Mirroring of strategies used by perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.

Perpetrators use a range of methods to groom, exploit and control children and young people. These include exploiting power imbalances, giving a child or young person things they need or want and normalising abuse (Research in Practice 2017). Perpetrators use these methods to disempower children and young people and erode their ability to consent. Warrington (2013) advises practitioners to be mindful of the potential for their practice to reproduce abusive dynamics.

As discussed, children affected by child sexual exploitation hold less power in their relationship with professionals because they are both children and service users. This disempowerment mirrors the power imbalance between child and young people and the perpetrators that abuse them.

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

Research participants in this study shared examples of occasions where they felt disempowered and forced into taking actions by professionals. Chloe explained in chapter 8 that she felt forced into telling her mother what had happened to her by the police and that this replicated her experience of abuse, as in both situations she felt unable to say no. Zoey, Anna and members of the focus groups also shared experiences where they felt they did not have a choice when working with professionals:

> **Sonia:** 'You can't win with social care can you, you can't, you've got to go along with it'

These experiences of powerlessness mirror the disempowerment children and young people feel within abusive relationships and this can trigger re-traumatisation (Fisher et al. 2017). Fisher et al (2017) identified common features of situations that could trigger re-traumatisation and result in people feeling as though they were back in the abusive situation:

a. Physical or sexual contact.
b. Seeing someone/something or being aware of a particular sight, sound or smell that reminds them of the abuse.
c. Situations which cause them to feel out of control, powerless or vulnerable.
d. Situations which require them to talk about or relive the abuse, such as criminal proceedings or some types of therapy.

(Fisher et al. 2017: 117-118)

Research participants described feeling out of control, powerless and vulnerable as the result of professionals' practice. In line with Fisher et al. (2017) Chloe's experience of powerlessness within the criminal justice system resulted in re-traumatisation:

Chloe: 'I literally put myself through more trauma to get nothing out of it.'

Chloe's comment describes the trauma she experienced when she tried to report a sexual assault. Re-triggering trauma disrupts a child's and young person's resilience and recovery (Fisher et al. 2017).

Professionals can also impact a child's or young person's consent. Chapter 4 introduced Jenny Pearce's (2013) social model of consent and applied to it child sexual exploitation. The model identifies four ways in which consent can be abused: coerced, normalised, survival and condoned. Research participants described situations where professionals contributed to the abuse of consent. For example, in chapter 8 Zoey described professionals witnessing her getting into perpetrator's cars and not saying anything. This is an example of condoned consent, where professionals failed to recognise that Zoey was being abused

and, therefore, condoned the actions of the perpetrator. In these situations, by condoning abuse professionals also restrict the child's or young person's access to support because, as discussed above, they have resource power, and decide if the criteria has been met for an intervention.

Pearce's (2013) model of consent can also be used to explore consent given by children and young people to interventions provided by safeguarding professionals. The examples below demonstrate how Pearce's (2013) model can be extended:

Coerced consent: a child is manipulated into agreeing to engage in an intervention (Pearce 2013). When Chloe disclosed abuse to the police, she was told that for the investigation to progress she had to tell her mother (see chapter 7). Chloe herself described this as being 'forced' to do something she did not want to do. In this example, Chloe only 'consented' to telling her mother because she believed if she did not, the police would not pursue a case against her perpetrator. This put Chloe in an impossible situation; she either had to tell her mother something she was not ready to or her case would be closed. Professionals were able to restrict access to the criminal justice system as a result of their resource, legitimate and referent power, which allowed them to override Chloe's right to be protected from sexual exploitation (UNCRC 1989 article 34)

Normalised consent: the view that professionals do not need a child's consent for an intervention (Pearce 2013). In chapter 7, Sarah spoke about professionals visiting her at school to work with her concerning her experiences of child sexual exploitation. Sarah explained that these sessions affected her mood, and she found it difficult to re-engage with her lessons afterwards. By not seeking Sarah's consent, no consideration was given to whether she wanted these sessions, and if she did, how and when they should be delivered. This overrode her right to express her views, wishes and feelings (UNCRC 1989 article 12). Professionals were able to do this because they held more legitimate and expert power than Sarah.

Survival consent: a child or young person agrees to an intervention in exchange for something they need (Pearce 2013). An example of this is provided by Sonia as quoted previously in this subsection. Sonia wants to have her children back in her care, and to facilitate that, she feels that she needs to 'go along with' decisions made by professionals. In these circumstances, safeguarding professionals have power over parents because they have greater resource, legitimate and expert power. With regards to children's rights, professionals have determined that it is not in Sonia's children's best interest (UNCRC 1989 article 2) to live with her, and have overridden their right not to be separated from their parent (UNCRC 1989 article 9) and to respect their right to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect (UNCRC 1989 article 19).

Condoned consent: professionals blame children and young people for their circumstances rather than viewing their own practice or corporate parenting as problematic (Pearce 2013). This can be seen in Zoey's experience of local authority care. Zoey had approximately 64 different local authority placements, and each time a placement broke down, professionals blamed it on her and her behaviour (see chapter 7). Professionals did not appear to consider whether corporate parenting practices had contributed to Zoey's placements breaking down. The power of the corporate parenting system overrode Zoey's right to be provided with alternative care that is continuous (UNCRC 1989 article 20). The power of the system is discussed further in chapter 10: layers of disempowerment.

This section has illustrated how professional practice, organisational policies and the structures of safeguarding can mirror strategies used by perpetrators of abuse and erode a child's or young person's consent. This subsection has demonstrated how professionals can exploit power imbalances, restrict access to services and support, and contribute towards the normalisation of abuse (Research in Practice 2017). As discussed, professionals who misuse their power and do not respect children's rights increases a child's or young person's vulnerability to future abuse and prevents them from moving successfully towards recovery by normalising unhealthy relationships. Whereas, professional who empower those they work with, like those who worked with Emily,

demonstrate what a healthy relationship looks like, which helps the individual to identify these in future (see chapter 8).

The section below outlines how professionals can avoid reinforcing negative power dynamics and replicating strategies used by the perpetrators of abuse.

Anti-oppressive practice.

The tension within adult-child and professional-service user dynamics cannot be avoided, but its impact can be ameliorated through anti-oppressive practices that promote empowerment. Anti-oppressive practice is:

> A radical social work approach which is informed by humanistic and social justice values and takes account of the experiences and views of oppressed people. It is based on an understanding of how the concepts of power, oppression and inequality determine personal and structural relations.
>
> (Dalrymple & Burke, 2000: 14)

Anti-oppressive practice requires an empowering approach which supports children and young people to take greater control of their lives (Dalrymple & Burke 2006). Thompson (2006) interprets empowerment as, 'helping people gain greater control over their lives and circumstances' (15). Maclean & Harrison (2009) demonstrate how empowerment can be achieved in professional practice and their ideas have been adapted to show how this could be achieved in work with children and young people who have been sexually exploited:

- Children and young people should, wherever possible, be decision makers and having control over their own life
- View children and young people as unique and important
- View children and young people as experts in their own lives
- Provide accessible information to children and young people about their rights and options
- Demonstrate hope that the situation can change

- Separate the person from the problem
- Promote participation
- Address inequalities and power imbalances
- Recognise the value of peer support

(Adapted from Maclean & Harrison 2009: 35-36)

Following these recommendations means that engaging children and young people in partnership working does not reduce the authority of organisations or professionals, but results in better informed decision making, care plans that are more meaningful and promotes buy-in, all of which promote safety (Warrington 2013).

Kitzinger (2015) recommends that to ameliorate the impact of power imbalances these should be discussed with children and young people whilst challenging adult-centric perceptions of children and childhood and recognising children resistors to oppression. Kitzinger (2015) goes further than suggesting this would improve the effectiveness of safeguarding stating that if these recommendations were enacted, children would experience less structural oppression as they would have greater access to social, economic and political resources which would in turn reduce their risk of being abused.

Key Finding 3: Existing safeguarding policies and procedures struggle to address situations of child sexual exploitation and effectively protect children and young people from abuse.

The child protection system is underpinned by the 1989 Children Act which states that child protection enquiries are 'undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm'. However, the chapters '*Children and Young People's Experiences of Service Provision'* and *'Power Dynamics*' recorded incidences where the translation of policy into practice was in ways that were at the very least unhelpful for some of the research participants.

Serious case reviews have recorded how the child protection system failed to protect those subject to child sexual exploitation. Academia has tried to identify why these failings occurred (Firmin 2013, and Pearce 2014). Issues that have

been identified as possible reasons for the child protection system failing to address child sexual exploitation include:

- The system was developed to protect younger children where a victim's agency is not considered, and interventions focus on increasing parenting capacity.
- There is a focus on abuse carried out within the family/home environment.
- The system is riddled with opportunities to give up.

(Compiled from: Holmes 2016, Firmin 2013, and Pearce 2014)

As a result, of these factors the system struggles to deal with the needs of older children who want to exercise choice and agency (Pearce 2014). It also finds it difficult to manage situations where the primary risk/threat is from outside the family environment (Pearce 2014). These problems were identified by professionals quoted in Casey's 2015 report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham:

> "[The] message was that teenagers can run away and babies can't." A police officer.
>
> "There was an attitude that we had to protect the younger children first as they were more vulnerable, and teenagers should be able to make their own decisions. And there was an element of they are choosing to do this, getting into cars in the evening." A former police officer.
>
> (Casey 2015: 42)

The first quote demonstrates that babies were considered at greater risk of abuse because they could not physically remove themselves from a situation of abuse, whereas older children could 'run away' (Casey 2015: 42). The second quote goes a step further and suggests that older children chose to return to their abuser. Both these comments demonstrate that in Rotherham, professionals were encouraged to focus on the needs of young children at the expense of those who were being sexually exploited. The view was that

younger children were more vulnerable and could not protect themselves, whereas exploited young people could protect themselves by choosing not to return to abusive situations. These attitudes fail to recognise the range of additional risks children are exposed to as they get older - social media, grooming, drugs, alcohol and peer pressure.

Suggesting children and young people can choose not to return to an abuser demonstrates a lack of understanding by professionals of the dynamics of grooming and child sexual exploitation. There are a number of explanations for why a child or young person may return to an abuser, including fear, Stockholm syndrome, and betrayal trauma theory as discussed in chapter 4. Stockholm syndrome, or trauma bonding, is where an individual develops and retains an emotional bond with their abuser (Strentz 2012). PACE (2019) has applied trauma bonding to child sexual exploitation. PACE (2019) explains that trauma bonds can result in children and young people seeking comfort from their abusers. This is demonstrated in the quote below:

> ‘The officer described how one girl was punished by being taken to a wood and humiliated and raped in different ways by seven men. Left alone, hurt, crying, naked and covered with semen, the person she called for help was not the parents, social worker, police or ambulance but one of the abusers who had just raped her’
>
> *(*Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 39).

To most people, it would be inconceivable that the young person would seek support from one of the men that had abused her, but the psychological impact of child sexual exploitation meant that she wanted to be comforted by one of the perpetrators.

Another possible explanation is betrayal trauma theory. In cases where the victim is, or perceives themselves to be, dependent on the abuser, the victim’s awareness of the abuse may be impaired (Foynes et al. 2009). This enables the child or young person to return to the abuser. These theories may also provide an explanation for non-disclosure, another common aspect of child sexual

exploitation (Foynes et al. 2009). Without an understanding of the potential psychological impacts of child sexual exploitation, professionals may incorrectly view the children and young people as choosing to return to their abuser.

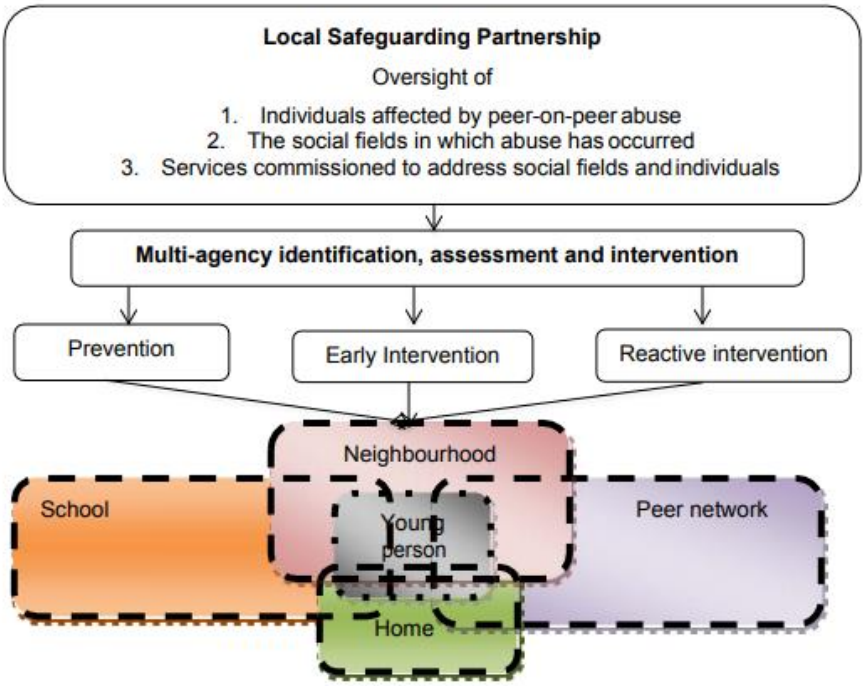
Research carried out by the Department of Education (2016) considered social worker decision-making in three local authorities. In two out of the three authorities, referrals were less likely to result in further action being taken the older the child. In these local authorities, an additional 5 years of age resulted in roughly a 4.8% reduction in the probability of a case progressing to further action. In the third local authority, an additional 5 years led to a 1.8% increase in the probability of a case processing. The reasons for this are unclear from the research.

In reality, the range and nature of risks facing young people are different to those faced by younger children. Dez Holmes speaking at the Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Conference in 2016, suggested that young people should be seen as having a 'constellation' of issues. Many of these issues are extra-familial and, as discussed, the current safeguarding system has found it difficult to protect children and young people from risks outside their home.

Contextual safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding acknowledges that vulnerabilities and risks to children and young people exist in a range of social contexts, not just the family home (Firmin 2017). The approach was developed in recognition of the increasing amount of time children and young people spend without their family as they get older (Firmin 2017). Contextual safeguarding is identified as an approach to safeguarding that can respond more effectively to the vulnerabilities, needs and risks that arise and/ or increase as a child gets older (Firmin 2017: 3). Figure 15 presents the contextual safeguarding framework:

Figure 15: Contextual safeguarding framework



(Firmin 2015: 298)

This framework could be used in situations of child sexual exploitation where the primary risk is extra-familial. It enables professionals to consider contexts and relationships that are extra-familial and the impact of these on a parent or carer's ability to be protective (Firmin 2017). Taking this approach would addresses the difficulties professionals have experienced trying to respond to child sexual exploitation using existing safeguarding policies and procedures (Casey 2015). The Contextual Safeguarding team at the University of Bedfordshire are continuing to develop and test this framework (Firmin 2017).

Difficulties transferring policy into practice were found in another important area of safeguarding, the criminal justice system. In chapters 7 and 8, Chloe's experience of disclosing abuse to the police is outlined. Chloe complained that when she took part in a police interview, despite not wanting anyone other than the police present, a member of staff from the hospital where she was an inpatient was allowed to watch the interview. The Ministry of Justice (2011) guidance on achieving best evidence (ABE) in criminal proceedings, advises that the witness (or in this case, victim) should be the person who makes the

decision about whether they want another person to be present during their interview. If this guidance had been followed, the staff member from the hospital would not have been allowed to observe the interview without Chloe's consent. The police may well have had a justified reason for wanting the nurse to be present, but this was not explained to Chloe.

When Chloe disclosed abuse, she did not want to tell her mother. However, Chloe understood that to proceed with the case, her mother had to know. Guidance from the Ministry of Justice (2011) states that in most circumstances, the parent or carer of a child should be informed before an interview is undertaken. However, the guidance also identifies a number of exceptional circumstances where the parents or carers may not need to be informed. One of these circumstances is where 'the child in question did not wish the parent to be involved at that stage, and is competent to take that decision' (The Ministry of Justice 2011: 19).

The ABE guidance promotes participation and gives professionals the ability to use their discretion. However, in Chloe's case, she felt that her voice was not heard, and her preferences were not taken into consideration. If the ABE guidance had been followed, Chloe may have had a more positive experience. Chloe's experiences are not isolated incidences; Gekosk et al.'s (2016) literature review found that the police consistently do not follow the ABE guidance in most cases of inter-familial sexual abuse. This mirrors the experience of the young people in Beckett & Warrington's (2015) report 'Making Justice Work', who also felt that they had little or no control over the criminal justice process. These experiences could dissuade people from engaging in the criminal justice system or result in re-victimisation (Warner 2009). Both outcomes would fail to protection children and young people from abuse.

Pearce (2014) notes that there are some excellent policies which promote good practice in the field of child sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, these are not consistently implemented. The outcome is that some children and young people have poor experiences of organisations and professionals involved in safeguarding. Pearce et al. (2013) found that child sexual exploitation policies

and procedures were ineffective without the support and supervision of staff. However, Kwhali et al. (2016) found that training, support and supervision are often overlooked for practitioners in the field of child sexual exploitation.

Key Finding 4: The bureaucratic nature of some corporate parent arrangements can result in a more dehumanised relationship between the professional and the child or young person.

The principle of The Children Act 1989 is that in some circumstances, the state becomes a corporate parent. The Local Government Association defines corporate parenting as:

> 'Being a corporate parent means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care – and every care leaver – to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults – and supporting them when they get there.'
>
> (Local Government Association 2017:2)

In reality, that means 'doing the things you'd do for your own children' (Local Government Association 2017: 2). Appendix 12 summarises *The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families Dimensions of Parenting Capacity* (Department of Health 2000). Reflecting on the experiences of the research participants, it appears that legislation and policy does not consistently facilitate good corporate parenting as described by The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health 2000).

Research participants described how involvement with professionals appeared to have increased their vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. Zoey was removed from her parents' care as a child but believed that her vulnerability to child sexual exploitation was increased by her involvement with Children's Services. Zoey reported that she had 64 placements whilst in local authority care, despite placement stability being a key principle of the Children Act (1989) (Coy 2009). Coy (2009) highlighted how multiple placement moves could

increase a young person's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. Coy (2009) explained that this was the result of multiple placements leading to difficulties forming bonds with adults, a desire to please and a sense of powerlessness. Coy (2009) suggests that these factors can lead young people to form bonds with predatory men, to be passive even when they disagree and to look for opportunities to exercise agency. These factors can be exploited by perpetrators of abuse. Zoey explained that she was moved to a children's home despite not wanting to move there:

> **Zoey**: 'But then week after funeral they moved me again, which I didn't want to move to this certain kids' home because I'd not heard good things about it…Erm but they ended up having to close the kids' homes down, that kids' home, cos all the staff left, they used to lock themselves in office and just completely ignore us'

Zoey described being powerless to affect the decision that was made about where she was going to live. A participant in Coy's (2009) study described being moved from one placement to another as being 'moved around like bags of rubbish nobody wants' (254). This quote demonstrates the feelings of worthlessness that can be created when a child or young person feels as though no one cares about where they live or, indeed, cares about them at all.
In Zoey's and Chloe's situations, their experience of Children's Services and being looked after children created a need and vulnerability that could be exploited by perpetrators. This sentiment was echoed by a police officer who took part in Hallet's (2017) research, '…these LAC kids, are vulnerable because they are looked after children…' (49). Ultimately, Chloe's and Zoey's needs were met, and their vulnerabilities exploited, by perpetrators of abuse rather than by the care system.

These findings are consistent with Serious Case Reviews that have been undertaken into cases of child sexual exploitation. For example, take the experience of a young person who shared their experience as part of the Bristol Safeguarding Children Board's (2016) serious case review; the authors of the

review explained how being placed in accommodation where she felt frightened and alone, made the protection offered by a perpetrator seem attractive.

> ‘The young person concerned has also told the review of her shock at being left all alone in such an area [one known for street crime and drug dealing] as a 16 year old, how frightened she felt and the consequent attraction of coming under the protection of the perpetrators of Brooke 1.’
>
> (Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016: 19)

The irony in these situations is that rather than acting as a corporate parent, engagement with professionals can increase vulnerability to child sexual exploitation.

Zoey’s experience is just one of the many examples shared by research participants of corporate parenting being a poor replacement for a functioning family. These experiences are not unique. Indeed, in 2016 Louise Casey commented, ‘if parenting of corporate parenting was assessed it would be found wanting’ (n.p).

Tensions between corporate parenting and the role of safeguarding professionals and organisations have been identified in other research. The following quote by a youth worker in Hallet (2017), highlights difficulties experienced by practitioners acting as *loco parentis* who are also required to maintain professional boundaries:

> **‘Matthew (youth worker): ‘**…they do sort of try to hug you, and you just have to put your hand on their forehead and sort of push them away and go um just make a joke out of it, and say look, no touching, not hugging, that’s not allowed, and make a joke out of it’’
>
> (Hallet 2017: 134)

If we were considering these actions in relation to parenting capacity (Appendix 12), questions would be raised about whether the parent had the capacity to provide appropriate emotional warmth. On the other hand, if the youth worker

had hugged the young person, his ability to maintain professional boundaries is likely to be called into question. This highlights one of the many tensions those involved in corporate parenting have to navigate.

Research participants differentiated between their engagement with statutory and non-statutory services. As with other studies (Berelowitz et al., 2013 and Gilligan 2016), voluntary sector agencies were spoken about more favourably by research participants:

> **Emily**: 'It's just that they were there no matter what…Like safe, yeah, it felt safe and like the first time I came in here I was brought into this room, like it was completely safe what I talked about, I felt safe and secure which I think is very important. With other professionals I haven't felt like that in the past, so to feel that, I felt actually, I can speak to these people, I can actually, finally, just release. All of my demons really, that's what I put it down to. I call them my demons because they're something that's affected my past. And has effects on my future.'

Particularly within the focus group sessions, there was an undercurrent of 'them' (statutory services) versus 'us' (research participants and the voluntary sector organisation supporting them). Both the voluntary sector and the statutory sector workers have the same driver, to promote the well-being of others. The difference is the organisational structures within which they work. Those working for the statutory sector are restricted in the support they can offer by targets, codes of practice and resource restraints (this is discussed further in the following section on the political environment). In comparison, voluntary sector professionals and organisations have greater autonomy and can be more flexible with what they offer and how they offer it.

Anna and Amy also reflected that professionals in the statutory sector were limited in what they could do by organisational policies, management decisions and resource limitations as documented in the chapter '*Children and Young People's Experience of Service Provision*'. Indeed, Kwhali et al. (2016) found that social workers were committed to supporting children who experience

sexual abuse, but they faced challenges. These challenges were imbedded in the structures that social workers work within; these are time constraints, resource limitations, inadequate supervision and managerial support, and a lack of training (Kwhali et al. 2016).

Key Finding 5: Neoliberalism and managerialism have hindered the professional's ability to respond effectively to child sexual exploitation.

Neoliberalism was introduced by the Conservative Government between 1979 and 1997 (Rogowski 2011). Neoliberalism sees the market as being the most effective way of resolving society's problems (Spolander et al. 2015: 9). In line with this, neoliberalism focuses on reducing the role of the state, public spending and welfare provision (Harris 2009). The introduction of neoliberalism in the U.K. led to an increase in managerialism in the public sector to promote efficiency and accountability (Harris 2008, Rogowski 2011 and Spolander et al. 2015). To monitor efficiency, targets, audits and inspections have been introduced (Harris 2008). Success in social work is largely measured in terms of meeting targets, often the completion of actions within a specified timescale rather than the increase in well-being of service users (Rogowski 2011). This was illustrated by the focus group who were aware of these targets and saw them as being the priority for some practitioners.

> **Amy**: 'They're not bothered, they think they've ticked box by moving her into a different house'

Amy described a situation where a woman was supported to escape her abusive partner. The woman was reportedly relocated by professionals to an area where her ex-partner's associates, and perpetrators of sexual exploitation, lived. On paper it would appear that the individual in this case has been safeguarded; however, in reality she has been moved from one risky situation to another.

> **Amy**: 'They are watching her like a hawk, but they've put her in an area where she's gonna struggle to even walk out her front door'

A box may have been ticked and the intervention viewed as successful, but in reality, she continued to be at risk. Kwhali et al. (2016) found that social workers, working in child sexual exploitation, felt conflicted because 'they were unable to offer the time or resources that were required' (2222). In the situation Amy describes, professionals may have wanted to do more but were restricted by the organisational structures they worked within. Indeed, social workers in the Kwhali et al. (2016) study called for reduced regulation and managerial direction.

In response to an increasing awareness of child sexual exploitation, many local authorities implemented a child sexual exploitation risk assessment. This assessment was in most cases, a list of indicators of abuse. Brady (2018) interviewed professionals who had experience of using the risk assessment. One interviewee reflected:

> ''when you're feeling vulnerable the easiest solution is to be about a compliance focus and a compliance focus is about a process and in a process you lose the child' (LSCB Chair)'
>
> (Brady 2018: 9)

The professional recognised that taking a tick-box approach to safeguarding was not child-centered and focuses on fulfilling requirements and duties rather than the child's welfare. Another professional commented on the impact this assessment had on professional judgement:

> ''I'm getting delegates saying the toolkit comes out medium risk but they are absolutely sure the child is currently being exploited and they're writing on the bottom of it 'This is what I think is happening, this is my professional judgement [...]', they're getting emails back saying 'Do not write on this tool, I've taken off your comments' (CSE Trainer)'
>
> (Brady 2018: 9)

The quote suggests that reliance on the risk assessment has left children who are at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation without an appropriate

response because enough boxes have not been ticked. The quote demonstrates how the tick-boxes on the risk assessment have in some cases replaced professional judgement. Arguably, the introduction of tick-boxes as a result of managerialism has challenged the 'use of professional discretion and has been deskilling from a casework perspective' (Dustin 2007: 9).

Another aspect of neoliberalism and managerialism is the standardisation of tasks (Spolander 2015). This has translated into the implementation of codes of practice and national minimum standards (Spolander 2015). The outcome of this is that these rules and procedures have limited practitioner discretion (Rogowski 2011). Harris (2008) comments 'social work has become more constrained and calculative' (677). This is reflected in Anna's experience of working with professionals:

> **Anna:** 'They go by a text book, they've ticked, they've ticked the box what they've had to do but the emotions, I think that's why our social workers leaving 'cos she wants to give more to us but she can't, and even she's sat there, it's not about your parenting, you've done brilliant with your daughter it's about your mental health but because mental health's not helping me…'

Anna highlights the constraints that are in place for professionals. Anna refers to professionals having to 'go by a textbook'; the textbook is likely to represent the policies and procedures that underpin, and restrict, practice. Anna makes reference to her social worker's frustration with the system and, presumably, her lack of discretion. Anna refers to her social worker wanting to give her more but being unable to do so. Chloe also believes that statutory sector professionals are constrained by policies and their job roles:

> **Chloe**: 'Exactly, I haven't got 'victim' tattooed on my head. It's just when, like, I think some people they read too much into their books and like read procedure too much and they follow procedure like rather than actually following humans, what humans do. Like what we as a society would do. If you were a kid you wouldn't follow bloody procedure, like,

> you wouldn't go through a book, actually, this is what I should do first, this is what I should do second. You treat the kid like you would treat your kid.'

Chloe believes that procedures restrict professionals from responding to situations as human beings rather than 'just robots'. Spolander et al. (2015) found that targets, codes of practice and national minimum standards reduce an individual practitioner's ability to use their discretion (Spolander et al. 2015).

Codes of practice and ethics have created a structure where professionals will be punished if they do not meet behavioural expectations. These codes establish norms for professionals that must be adhered to (Weinburg 2015). The consequence of not following these codes is that the individual could be de-registered by their profession. This reduces the likelihood that professionals will challenge existing norms and/or use their discretion. Indeed, managerialism 'reduces space for the moral agency of social workers and diminishes the role of personal and emotional engagement' (Banks 2016: 46). This is reflected in Anna's quote which suggests ticking boxes is prioritised over emotional engagement.

Codes of practice are written by professionals for professionals (Weinburg 2015). Professionals have the privilege of defining what is considered ethical practice (Weinburg 2015). Weinberg (2015) argues that these codes have a wider impact than just establishing norms for professionals. Weinburg (2015) believes the creation of 'standards of behaviours and norms extends beyond the codes and actions of professionals, to that of the general population' (231). Spolander et al. (2015) reviewed the impact of neoliberalism on social work and found that it has promoted individualism and blame, whilst discouraging collectivism and social justice. If Weinburg's (2015) argument holds, the attitude of social work promotes individualism and a blame culture within society as a whole. This makes it even more problematic, in that professionals who continue to hold Victorian attitudes in relation to child sexual exploitation can influence society's view of the issue.

Wilful blindness

Wilful blindness is a situation where people in leadership roles, consciously or unconsciously, ignore an issue because they consider it better not to know (Heffernon 2012). Jay (2017) identified this as one of two concepts that led to child sexual exploitation being ignored in Rotherham (groupthink is discussed in key finding 1).

Wilful blindness was referred to by Zoey in relation to disclosing sexual abuse.

> **Zoey**: 'When you are saying something to them, they need to do something about it not just brush it under the carpet and think, she's not going to mention, no one's going to believe her, she'll not mention it again and, I don't know.'

Zoey referred to a situation where her disclosure of abuse was ignored. Zoey believes that the professionals she spoke to hoped that she would not raise the issue again. Examples of wilful blindness can be found in other serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation. Below, a victim of child sexual exploitation explains what happened in Oxford.

> 'People were reluctant to see what was clearly in front of them'
>
> (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 13)

A study by Pearce et al. (2009) found that in situations where the necessary resources were not available to support young people, some professionals ignored or downplayed the seriousness of the situation. This is especially concerning in today's climate of austerity where there was £1.4 billion funding gap for children's services in the financial year 2017/18 which is predicted to increase to £3 billion by 2025 (Children's Services Funding Alliance 2019). Ways to address wilful blindness are explored in key finding 1.

Key finding 6: Despite the UK's longstanding international commitment to Children's rights, and the rights-based approach being firmly embedded in legislation and policy, research accounts suggested the rights of child and young people subject to child sexual exploitation were frequently undermined.

As the chapters '*Changing Narratives of Child Sexual Exploitation'* and *'Rediscovery of Child Sexual Exploitation'* document, since the Victorian era there has been increasing acknowledgement of children's rights. However, as the chapters *'Young People's Experience of Service Provision*' and '*Children and Young People's Experience of Power Dynamic*' show, these rights do not appear to be consistently valued. This section will consider why children's rights are not consistently respected in practice.

Construction of Childhood

As documented in chapter 3, the new sociology of childhood advocate for children to be viewed as experts in their own lives, who should be active participants in the construction and determination of their own lives (James & James, 2004). The view of children as active social agents has been incorporated into policy and legislation, which advocate for children and young people's participation in decisions made about their lives (Children Act 1989, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989). In reality, research participants did not feel consistently listened to or part of the decision-making about their own lives. For example, Anna requested a female mental health worker; however, Anna's request was not respected:

> **Anna**: 'Well it's taken me a while to trust my mental health worker. I asked to have a female worker, but I was given a male worker and they said it was to challenge me. So I've still not, he's getting better with listening, but I can't open up to him.'

Despite Anna recognising that she would find it difficult to work with a male worker, her request for a female worker was not met. She was told being allocated a male worker was to 'challenge' her, suggesting the professionals making this decision believed they were more competent at assessing Anna's

needs than she was herself. In contrast, Anna was expected to live on her own at 16 years old. Professionals' assessment of Anna's competency appears to change with the needs of the organisation and/or professional.

This is not an isolated example. The chapters '*Young People's Experience of Service Provision*' and '*Power Dynamics*' present numerous examples where research participants have felt voiceless and as having no control over their situations. Failures to listen to and consider the views of young people have also been highlighted in research (Franklin & Smeaton 2018 and Warrington et al, 2017).

There is another aspect of the construction of childhood that impacts on children and young people affected by child sexual exploitation. Children and young people subject to child sexual exploitation often fall into the category of 'adolescence'. Pearce (2010) suggests the neglect of adolescents within the child protection system is because adolescence is not considered part of childhood. In addition, adolescence, the time between childhood and adulthood, is a period that is often demonised (Green 2015). Below is a quote from a young person sexually exploited in Oxford:

> 'I turned up at the police station at 2/3am, blood all over me, soaked through my trousers to the crotch. They dismissed it as me being naughty, a nuisance. I was bruised and bloody'
>
> (Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 14)

In this example, rather than seeing the young person as in need of help, she was dismissed as being 'naughty'. The young person was not listened to, not because she was viewed as incompetent, but because she was believed to have misbehaved. Misbehaving links with two moral panics; deviant children in the Victorian era and the development of youth culture since the end of World War 2 (Cohen 1973 and Hendrick 2015). In both these periods, children and young people who did not conform to the norm were viewed as a threat to the morals and interests of society (Critcher 2006), as outlined in key finding 1.

The paradigm shift from viewing children as passive and incompetent and therefore socially inadequate, to seeing them as active social agents is yet to be fully achieved, despite being written into policy and legislation, such as the Children Act 1989 and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* 1989 (James & Prout 2015). As this section demonstrates, 'age exerts a powerful and constraining force on the daily activities of children' (James & Prout 2015: 204). In child sexual exploitation cases, children are viewed as both competent and incompetent; both constructions are problematic and, as discussed in key finding 1, create dilemmas for professionals in practice. A more nuanced understanding of children and young people is required to ensure children's rights are respected and their needs are met. The following section considers whether research participants perceived that their rights were respected by professionals.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Practice

As discussed in '*Changing Narratives of Child Sexual Exploitation'*, in 1991 the UK Government ratified the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). The convention placed a legal obligation on the Government to ensure that children can exercise their rights. This obligation has been incorporated in policy and statutory guidance on child sexual exploitation. This section will consider whether research participants perceived their rights were respected in practice in the context of child sexual exploitation. An exploration of each of the 45 articles is beyond the scope of this thesis, therefore the discussion is limited to the articles most relevant to this study (see Appendix 1 for a list of all 45 articles).

Article 3: Best interest of the child: *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) states that 'the best interest of the child must be prioritised' (UNICEF n.d. a). Achievement of the best interest of the child should be compatible with the achievement of the other articles. However, there are occasions where professionals use the best interest principle to justify not being able to respect a child's other rights. The chapters '*Young People's Experience of Service Provision*' and '*Power Dynamics*' include experiences where research participants believe that the actions of professionals have had a

negative impact on their well-being. Most worryingly, participants have spoken of not being protected from abuse, and of becoming more vulnerable to abuse, as a result of their involvement with professionals; see key findings 2, 3 and 4.

Article 12: Respect the views of every child: Article 12 provides children with the right to 'express their views, feeling and wishes in all matters affecting them, and for them to have their views considered and taken seriously' (UNICEF n.d: n.p). The chapters '*Young People's Experience of Service Provision*' and '*Power Dynamics*' present numerous examples where research participants were either not included in decision making about their lives, or where they were consulted their opinions were then ignored. This is supported by the Children's Commissioner who found 'the realisation of children's Article 12 UNCRC rights in UK law and practice is highly variable.' (2015: 12)

Article 13: Freedom of expression: This is the right to express thoughts and opinions and to access information (UNICEF n.d. a). A common theme in research participants' experiences was that they lacked information about decisions that were made in relation to their care and their rights and entitlements. The chapter '*Power Dynamics'* presents examples of situations where research participants have not been given relevant information. This information includes policies and procedures, rights and entitlements, and details of support services available to them.

Article 34: Protection from sexual exploitation: Governments must do everything in their power to protect children from all forms of sexual abuse, including exploitation (UNICEF n.d. a). The chapter '*Young People's Experience of Service Provision*' provides examples of situations where research participants felt professionals ignored the abuse they were subjected to. The chapter '*Power Dynamics*' documents the impact of being involved with services and the potential for this to increase an individual's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation; see key findings 2, 3 and 4.

Article 39: Recovery from trauma and reintegration: In addition to protection from sexual exploitation, the UNCRC states that children who have been

abused or neglected, ‘must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life’ (UNICEF n.d. a: n.p). Support to recovery from abuse is something that appears to have been missing from the services offered by statutory services. However, most research participants spoke about being able to access services to support them to recover via voluntary sector organisations.

This section considered five articles from the convention; these include two of the five guiding principles. The chapters ‘*Changing Narratives of Child Sexual Exploitation’* and *‘Rediscovery of Child Sexual Exploitation’* documented situations where these rights were undermined or eroded, by the very people who should be protecting children and young people. This is consistent with the Children’s Commissioners (2015) report on the implementation of the UNCRC.

<u>Children and young people’s attempts to assert power can lead to them being at greater risk of harm.</u>

Sheedy (2013) suggests where people cannot exercise power within mainstream avenues, for example within the safeguarding arena, they may attempt to exercise power in other ways. This study found, where participants did not have their needs met or rights respected, that some took matters into their own hands in an attempt to take control over their lives (Sheedy 2013). For example, Chloe expressed her desire to remain in hospital on a children’s mental health ward following her disclosure of sexual exploitation; however, she was discharged. In order to access support from the hospital, a place she felt safe, Chloe overdosed on medication:

> **Chloe**: ‘In the end, if I was feeling crappy, I’d overdose and while I finished taking tablets, before I called the ambulance, I’d pack my bag. That’s how much it came into a routine. Like people who overdose and go into hospital don’t pack a bloody bag. People don’t do that; people don’t pack a bag.’

Chloe explained that she did not consider taking an overdose a risk, but rather saw it as a way to access the service she required. She demonstrated that the

overdose was not intended to end her life, as she had a bag ready to take to hospital with the items she need during her stay. Although Chloe did not believe that she was at risk as a result of an overdose, it is likely that her body was being damaged, and there was always a chance that she could have accidentally died. Chloe estimates that she had overdosed 19 times since disclosing sexual exploitation.

Hallet (2017) came across similar examples in her study. She found that children and young people looked for ways to exert agency, which in some cases led to them controlling 'how out of control they can get' (63). This behaviour was then misinterpreted as risk-taking behaviour rather than attempts to regain a sense of control (Hallet 2017). Defining these actions as risk-taking behaviour is another way to pathologise children and young people. Failing to view their actions as attempts to gain control and to get their needs met, [the system] fails to see their behaviour as a symptom of a system that is not working.

Kitzinger (2015) explored children's ability to exert control in relation to perpetrators of abuse. Kitzinger (2015) suggests that children and young people who are being abused, use the strategies of the 'most oppressed, disposed and victimised' to try and exert power and control (149). Kitzinger (2015) described situations where children had induced illness or had accidents to avoid abuse. Again, we can see similarities between how children attempt to exert power, through self-harming, in both their relationships with professionals and perpetrators.

Summary

Despite progress being made within legislation, policy and academia, this has not been universally experienced in practice by children and young people who have worked with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation and were involved in this research. The social construction of children affected by child sexual exploitation and their ability to exert power and control over their own lives, has been explored as potential reasons for poor practice.

Social constructions do not exist in isolation. Children and young people experience multiple inequalities that co-exist and intersect. Inequalities are wide ranging and can include age, gender and social status (including victimhood), all of which impact on someone subject to child sexual exploitation. These inequalities have a cumulative effect and contribute to powerlessness. Powerlessness has been seen in relation to children's relationships with professionals, and in relation to professionals and the systems within which they work. These unequal power dynamics limit children's ability to control their own lives, and also constrain professionals' working practices.

The outcome of unequal power relations and judgemental attitudes towards those affected by child sexual exploitation has been safeguarding failures. Professionals have failed to recognised abuse, ignored abuse and blamed children and young people for their own abuse. Some of the interventions aimed at safeguarding or providing corporate parenting have resulted in children and young people becoming increasingly vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. This has particularly been the case when children and young people have not been consulted about decisions made about their lives. In addition, children and young people have experienced re-victimisation as a result of both feeling disempowered and having to relive their abuse. This has been compounded by feeling forced to take particular actions by professionals and/ or choosing to take actions to gain power that have put their well-being at risk.

This thesis has demonstrated that children's rights are not consistently respected or promoted in the context of child sexual exploitation. This has contributed to powerlessness, marginalisation and safeguarding failures. The effective implementation of children's rights would address these issues. Respecting children's rights would mean that children are listened to, included in decision making and protected from abuse. Children's rights would help to address power imbalances, increase service-user buy-in and make safeguarding more responsive. As the research participants in this study have shown, children and young people are experts in their own lives and more than capable to support professionals and organisations to develop both their practice and services. The likely outcome of the meaningful implementation of

children’s rights would be more effective safeguarding and corporate parenting systems.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

In the introduction, the thesis was defined as an exploration of how children and young people perceive their interaction with professionals, in the context of safeguarding and supporting children and young people who have experienced sexual exploitation.

This chapter brings together what has been learnt in each stage of the research process. The chapter begins by revisiting the study's aims and objectives to review whether these have been met. Overarching themes and insights from the key findings are then presented. Consideration is then given to the value of using children's rights as a conceptual framework to underpin the study. From these discussions, the studies key contributions are identified, and recommendations are made for practice. The chapter concludes by suggesting areas for further research to develop the understanding of this topic.

Revisiting the Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study was to critically analyse the perspectives of children and young people in relation to their experiences of professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation, and the research objectives were as follows:

1. To examine the changing narratives of child sexual exploitation.
2. To critically analyse the contemporary voices of victims of child sexual exploitation in relation to their experience of working with professionals.
3. To discuss how victims of child sexual exploitation perceive they are viewed by professionals and the perceived impact of these attitudes.
4. To promote children's rights by using a participatory narrative approach and child-centred methods.

The following subsections summarise how each of these objectives were met.

Objective 1:

Chapter 2 presented a historical analysis of the changing narratives of child sexual exploitation for the Victorian era to the beginning of the new millennium. In the Victorian era, the dominant discourses identified as relevant to this study where those relating to prostitution; at this point in history, child sexual exploitation was not recognised. Women and girls involved in prostitution were considered by society to be promiscuous temptresses who threatened the morality of society (Walkowitz 1980). Children were constructed by the middle and upper classes as passive asexual innocents and those who did not fit with this notion were viewed as deviant (Walkowitz 1980). The view of children involved in prostitution being a threat to society was strengthened during the Edwardian era. This period saw the advancement of child psychology, psychiatry, anthropology and criminology. These fields promoted behavioural norms for children, and children who did not fit with these, including those involved in prostitution, were considered deviant and delinquent (Cunningham 2005).

Alternative constructions of children involved in prostitution began to emerge around 1915. Campaign groups began to consider the role of the 'purchaser' as being one of a predatory abuser (Brown 2004). However, this reconceptualising of the problem did not penetrate the dominant discourse. Britain was focused either on fighting a World War or rebuilding society as a result. The issue came back into focus again in the 1970's. During this decade stories emerged of vulnerable girls being enticed into prostitution (Brown 2004). This time, society was more sympathetic to the children involved, and there was a wider recognition of the role of the perpetrator in coercing and manipulating the child (Brown 2004).

However, little changed until the issue was taken up by two national charities - Barnardo's and The Children's Society. These charities published reports that firmly placed children in this situation as victims and not criminals (Lee & O'Brian 1995 and Kelly et al. 1995). Barnardo's stated that children involved in prostitution were sexually exploited and that this was a form of child abuse (Kelly et al. 1995). This was also the view taken by the *United Nations*

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The Government adopted this understanding in its statutory guidance Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution: supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department of Health 2000). However, children could still be prosecuted for crimes associated with prostitution (Ministry of Justice 2006).

Chapter 3 considered developments in child sexual exploitation from 2009 onwards. In 2009, the Government adopted the term child sexual exploitation in the statutory guidance Safeguarding Children and Young People from Child Sexual Exploitation: supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Children, Schools and Family 2009). This document was underpinned by a set of key principles including taking a child-centred, proactive approach and promoting children's rights. In 2011 it became clear that this guidance was not being consistently followed. Barnardo's (2011) and Jago et al. (2011) published reports that highlighted the prevalence of child sexual exploitation and the poor local implementation of the new guidance. In the same year, child sexual exploitation hit the headlines due to articles published by *The Times* (2011) which exposed failures by statutory agencies to address child sexual exploitation.

This was the beginning of a decade littered with serious case reviews, criminal prosecutions and public reports in the area of child sexual exploitation (Jay 2014, Casey 2015, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013, Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015, Bristol Safeguarding Children Board 2016). These found that government guidance had not been followed and professionals had failed to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation. One of the factors that contributed to safeguarding failures was professionals' attitudes towards children and young people who had been exploited. Children and young people were considered by some professionals to have consented, be making a lifestyle choice, and to be rebellious and challenging. Over a century later, dominant Victorian discourses continued to be present. The dichotomies innocent versus deviant and coercion versus choice prevailed but were expressed using different terminology.

Chapter 4 explored the dichotomies identified in chapters 2 and 3; innocent versus deviant and choice versus coercion. The chapter considers the nuances of agency, power and consent that if understood, challenge the persistent narratives of child sexual exploitation that have led to safeguarding failures. The chapter explains that children can have agency and also have their ability to consent eroded. A child's capacity to exercise agency and to consent is affected by their position of power. In situations of child sexual exploitation, children have agency, but this is impacted by the control and domination of perpetrators (Warrington 2013). The chapter highlights another aspect to be considered by professionals, that is the power imbalance between them and the child or young person that can mirror the power imbalance experienced with the perpetrator.

Data analysis in chapter 6 explored how children and young people interpreted the terminology used by some professionals. Members of a Young Person's Project Board (YPPB) commented on terms used or views expressed by professionals about children and young people who had been sexually exploited. The terms or views presented were taken from serious case reviews. The YPPB found the terms and views problematic. They perceived the views and attitudes as judgemental and felt that they blamed children and young people for their abuse. The board felt the terms and views suggested professionals lacked an understanding of child sexual exploitation, including the concepts of consent, choice and force. The YPPB hypothesised that children and young people would be reluctant to engage with professionals who held judgemental attitudes. This highlights the importance of universally changing the narratives of child sexual exploitation.

The experiences of the children and young people who took part in this study corroborated that dominant Victorian discourses continued to be present in the attitudes of some professionals. Evidence for this is presented in the data analysis chapters 7 and 8: these chapters will be discussed next.

<u>Objective 2 and 3</u>

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 addressed these objectives. Chapters 7 and 8 presented the experiences of research participants in relation to their experience of

working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. Chapter 9 brought together the key findings from the data analysis; these will be considered in the following section.

Chapter 7 explored how research participants experienced service provision. Participants spoke positively about professionals they felt were non-judgemental, listened to them, shared information and were considered to have gone the extra mile. However, participants also shared stories of times when they had felt voiceless, ignored and ignorant to what was happening to them. Participants described incidences where they felt that professionals had blamed them for their abuse, labelled them and expressed rape myths. In addition to identifying problematic professional practice, the research participants commented on how wider organisational structures affected the service they received and impacted on professional practice.

Chapter 8 considered research participants experience of power dynamics in relation to their engagement with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. Unsurprisingly, participants described a power imbalance between them and the professionals they worked with. Two issues came to the fore that were of particular concern. First, was the discovery that participants felt this power imbalance mirrored the power imbalance within their relationship with their perpetrator. Second, was that participants described attempts at gaining power that led to them being at risk of harm. Participants highlighted that wider structures such as legislation and policy contributed to the power imbalance.

<u>Objective 4</u>

This subsection explains how the study used a participatory narrative approach and child-centred methods to promote children's rights:

- Participation: A Young Person's Project Board (YPPB) provided consultation for the study. They advised on the methods used to collect data, terminology and the accessibility of research documents. The research participants in the study were all individuals who had been subject to child sexual exploitation. The YPPB and the research

participants were given space to express their views, and their contributions were listened to and acted upon (Lundy 2007).

The study could have promoted the participation of children and young people further by working with the YPPB to identify the topic of the study, and to analyse the data collected. Unfortunately, the Programme Manager for the group was made redundant during the research, preventing further consultation with the group. This is another example of the negative impact of austerity on children's rights.

There were limitations to participation. The study was affected by sampling bias; restrictions were placed on who could take part in the research (Whitley et al. 2013). Children and young people experiencing child sexual exploitation or not linked with a specialist organisation could not take part. This decision was made to ensure that those who took part in the study were not put at risk through their involvement and had support in place. This is consistent with taking a children's rights approach where protection and participation are balanced to promote article 3; best interest of the child (UNCRC 1989).

- Narrative approach: This study spoke to children and young people who had historically been subject to child sexual exploitation. Data collection sessions explored their experiences of working with professionals. Individuals told their stories in their own words as part of either 1-2-1 data collection sessions or a focus group. After the initial session, the researcher met with the participants a second time to member check the stories they had shared.

- Child-centred methods: The YPPB supported the development of child-centred methods. As mentioned previously, the board advised on the methods used to collect data, terminology and the accessibility of research documents.

Data collection sessions were designed so they were participant-led. Participants were given information about the study beforehand and had an opportunity to ask questions before consenting to take part. Participants chose where data collection sessions took place and who was present. Refreshments were provided and participants were encouraged to take breaks.

In 1-2-1 data collection sessions, individuals had the option to create a timeline of their engagement with professionals (craft materials were provided). No participants chose this option, instead they all chose to tell their story verbally. With the focus group, as an icebreaker, the researcher attended the group before the data collection session and took part in their weekly craft session. In both the 1-2-1 and the focus group sessions, the discussion was led by the participants with the researcher asking open-ended questions where appropriate. The participants chose what they shared. Following the data collection sessions, the researcher met with participants again to check they were happy with what they had shared.

This approach and these methods were all consistent with taking a rights-informed approach. Children and young people were listened to (article 12), encouraged to express themselves (article 13) and led the data collection sessions (article 14). Information was provided about the study (article 17), contributions were anonymised (article 16) and member checked (article 36). To ensure the best interests of the child (article 3), those who took part had to be linked and put forward for the study by a specialist organisation (article 5).

Key Findings

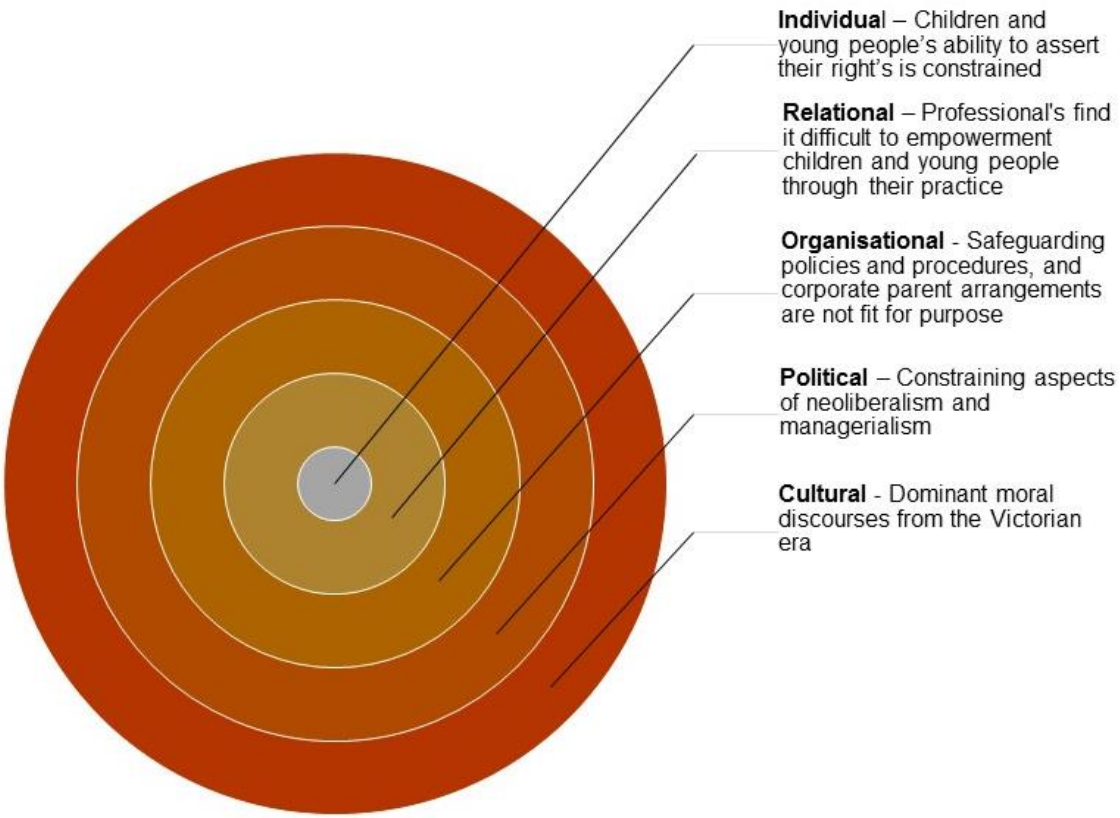
The key findings for this study were discussed in chapter 9 and restated below:

1. Dominant discourses from the Victorian era continue to be drawn on heavily by practitioners in the context of child sexual exploitation.

2. Practitioners need to develop a hypersensitivity as to how they wield their positions of power, given how central abuses of power are within child sexual exploitation.
3. Existing safeguarding policies and procedures struggle to address situations of child sexual exploitation and effectively protect children and young people from abuse.
4. The bureaucratic nature of some corporate parent arrangements can result in a more dehumanised relationship between the professional and the child or young person.
5. Neoliberalism and managerialism have hindered professionals' ability to respond effectively to child sexual exploitation.
6. Despite the UK's longstanding international commitment to children's rights, and the rights-based approach being firmly embedded in legislation and policy, research accounts suggested the rights of children and young people subject to child sexual exploitation were frequently undermined.

This section considers how these findings relate to each other and explore an overarching theme that emerged; power. Figure 16 illustrates the connection between the key findings.

Figure 16: Process of disempowerment for children and young people in the context of child sexual exploitation and safeguarding



This diagram illustrates how disempowerment flows from wider structures (cultural, political and organisational) into interpersonal relationships (relational) to impact on the individual child or young person. Each of the layers in Figure 16 are explained below:

Cultural: Dominant discourses from the Victorian era continue to be found in practice. Children and young people affected by sexual exploitation have been viewed as deviant, consenting and promiscuous. These attitudes have result in children and young people being blamed for their abuse and being disempowered as a result.

Political: This layer refers to the problematic aspects of neoliberalism and managerialism. Managerialism, which developed out of neoliberalism, introduced targets, tick-boxes and practice standardisation. These management

tools have dehumanised children and young people who are sexually exploited and turned them into a homogenous group. These outcomes of managerialism result in children and young people disempowered further.

Organisational: Safeguarding and corporate parenting are underpinned by legislation and statutory guidance which are translated into organisational policies and procedures. The safeguarding system has been developed to respond to the needs of young children abused by a family member or someone known to the family. Organisations have struggled to adapt the system to respond to the needs of children and young people affected by child sexual exploitation. In addition, the corporate parenting system has struggled to keep children and young people safe from abuse when in their care. The disempowering impact of this is twofold, on one hand, children and young people are not being protected from abuse and on the other, they are becoming more vulnerable to exploitation.

Relational: Professionals are constrained by the policies, procedures and practice standards they work within. As a result, professionals are limited in the ways they can use their practice to empower children and young people. Another aspect of this layer is that some professionals are reticent to redress the power imbalance between them and those they work with and actively disempower children and young people.

Individual: The outcome of these multiple layers of discrimination is that children and young people are disempowered and their ability to asset their rights is constrained. The result of this is that in some circumstances, children and young people take actions in an attempt to exert power that can be considered problematic. If children's rights were respected, they would empower children and young people and challenge the multiple layers of disempowerment.

Layers of disempowerment in practice

In 1979 the Conservative government introduced neoliberalism and the 2008 financial crisis was followed by the implementation of austerity measures

(Martinelli 2017). The combined impact of neoliberalism and austerity has been to reduce the money provided by the government for welfare (Martinelli 2017). In response to neoliberalism, managerialism was adopted by the public sector in an attempt to promote efficiency and fulfil statutory duties in the face of budget cuts (Harris 2008, Rogowski 2011 and Spolander et al. 2015). Managerialism introduced targets, audits and inspections to monitor efficiency which in turn led to the standardisation of tasks (Harris 2008 and Spolander 2015). In the context of welfare services, this meant that success was measured in terms of meeting targets through the completion of standardised tasks rather than increasing the well-being of service users (Rogowski 2011). For example, an assessment under the 1989 Children Act must be completed within 45 days working days from the receipt of the referral regardless of the time it takes for a child or young person to build up enough trust in a professional to disclose abuse. As Dustin (2007) asserts, in social work promoting social justice and human rights has been overwhelmed by measures created to ensure efficiency and reduce costs. Local authorities and individual practitioners are powerless to use their discretion to adjust timescales. In addition, the implementation of austerity measures meant the services provided to children and young people by local authorities contracted in line with their budgets (Pope 2016). In reality, many local authorities moved towards providing only what they had a statutory duty to provide.

Where there was a need for a child to be taken into local authority care and provided with corporate parenting, professionals were again disempowered by policies, procedures and codes of practice. One aspect of parenting identified in Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education 2018) is emotional warmth. There is some tension between this and, for example, social workers' code of ethics which says that they need to maintain professional boundaries (BASW 2012). Professional boundaries are important to ensure children and young people are not harmed, but professionals' interpretation of this requirement can result in them failing to provide emotional warmth. Concerns about breaking professional boundaries can disempower professionals from meeting the emotional needs of children and young people.

The result of these power dynamics is that professionals are limited in the service they can provide children and young people by the political climate, legislation, policies and procedures and codes of practice (Dustin 2007). Statutory sector professionals are empowered to work within these systems but not to operate outside of them. Professionals working in the statutory sector are restricted by the structures they work within; they can only offer the service they are employed to provide and are the gatekeepers, regardless of whether the service meets the needs, wishes and views of children and young people (Dustin 2007). This may explain why children and young people in this study spoke so favourably about voluntary sector organisations. Voluntary sector organisations are, on the whole, less restricted in what they provide which gives them a degree of flexibility to integrate a value base into their working practices. In most situations, these organisations are not in place to provide statutory services and therefore are not bound by legal duties. This gives the voluntary sector more flexibility in their service provision and more control over what they offer. Accordingly, they can be more responsive to individual need. Organisations in the voluntary sector are commonly considered to be value-driven and more trustworthy (than private or public sector organisations) (The Open University 2018).

Another factor that must be considered is that these power relationships operate in a culture where dominant discourses from the Victorian era continue to be present. These dominant discourses affect how organisations and professionals have implemented legislation and policy. Where children and young people have been blamed for their abuse or viewed as consenting, organisations and professionals have failed to adhere to statutory guidance and, therefore, failed to safeguard. In these circumstances, children and young people have been powerless to challenge these decisions.

Figure 16 illustrates how children and young people are disempowered by professionals, who are in turn themselves disempowered by organisations, who are in turn disempowered by the structures within which they operate. The result of these multiple layers of disempowerment is that children and young people's rights are not consistently respected in the context of child sexual

exploitation; key finding 6. These findings suggest that to promote children's rights in the context of child sexual exploitation, we must address the personal, cultural and structural dimensions that influence power dynamics (Thompson 2006).

Moving forward

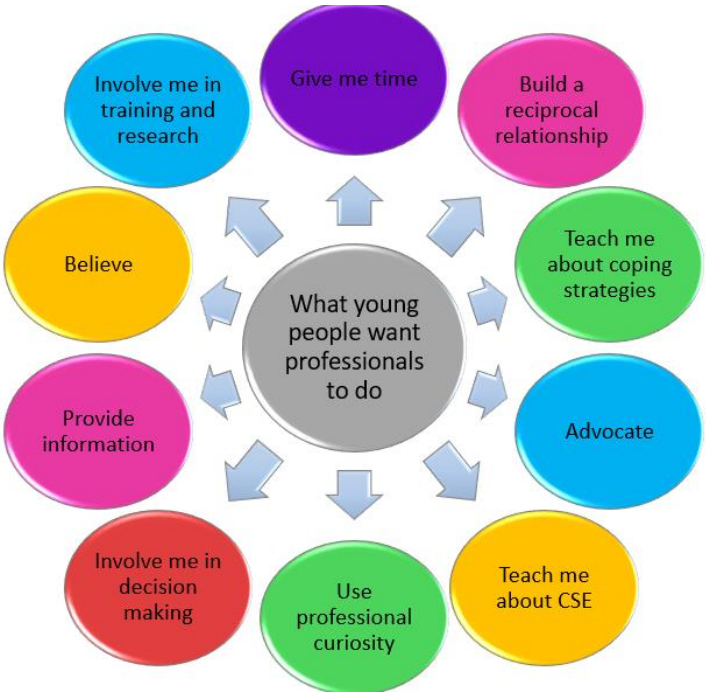
Research participants described the type of professional they would have liked to work with them. They identified the characteristics and knowledge they would like professionals to have, and the actions they would like them to take. These are shown in figures 17-19. These are characteristics, knowledge and actions people would typically expect professionals to be, to have or to take. However, research participants' experience of professionals was mixed. Some professionals were identified as meeting expectations, but others were found lacking. The following section demonstrates how consistent good professional practice will promote children's rights in accordance with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).

Figure 17: Professional Characteristics

Adopting these characteristics would support taking a children's rights approach to practice. Being an active respectful listener who is warm and empathic, would contribute towards achieving article 12, respect the views of every child. Being honest is required to provide children and young people with information about their situation, rights and entitlements, which is necessary for article 13, freedom of expression (UNCRC 1989). Empowerment is a key part of recovery; article 39, recovery from trauma and reintegration. Lastly, being non-judgemental means the professional would not discriminate against the child or young person; article 2.

The research participants also identified the actions they valued, or would have liked, in a professional. These are presented in figure 18.

Figure 18: Professional Actions



Again, these actions would promote taking a children's rights approach to practice. Many of the actions research participants identified contribute to relationship-based practice namely belief, time, reciprocity and involvement. These actions also promote children's rights. For example, to respect a child's views (UNCRC 1989: article 12), a professional must give them time and

involve them in decision making. Article 12 is also promoted by meaningfully involving children and young people in training and research about child sexual exploitation (UNCRC 1989).

Research participants wanted professionals to advocate on their behalf. In chapter 7, Amy spoke positively of a project worker advocating for her in a meeting with professionals, and in chapter 8 Sonia attributed the advocacy she was provided with as enabling her to participate more fully with children's services. Advocacy on an individual basis helped research participants get their voices heard (UNCRC 1989: article 12), accessed information (UNCRC 1989: article 13) and challenged perceived discrimination (UNCRC 1989: article 2). However, when providing advocacy professionals must be mindful not to create dependency (Thompson 2009).

Research participants also wanted professionals to provide them with information about child sexual exploitation (e.g. grooming and consent, see chapter 4) and coping strategies (see chapter 7). Children and young people identified what they thought would be helpful for professionals to know for them to achieve this; see figure 18.

Figure 19: Professional Knowledge

Research participants wanted professionals to provide them with knowledge of grooming, trauma and mental health for three reasons. Firstly, children and

young people wanted professionals to see their behaviour in the context of child sexual exploitation and its impact on their well-being. For Zoey and Anna, this may have prevented them from being labelled as 'attention seekers' by professionals, and consequently enabled them to access appropriate support earlier. This feeds into articles 2, non-discrimination, 34, protection from sexual exploitation and 39, recovery from trauma and reintegration (UNCRC 1989).

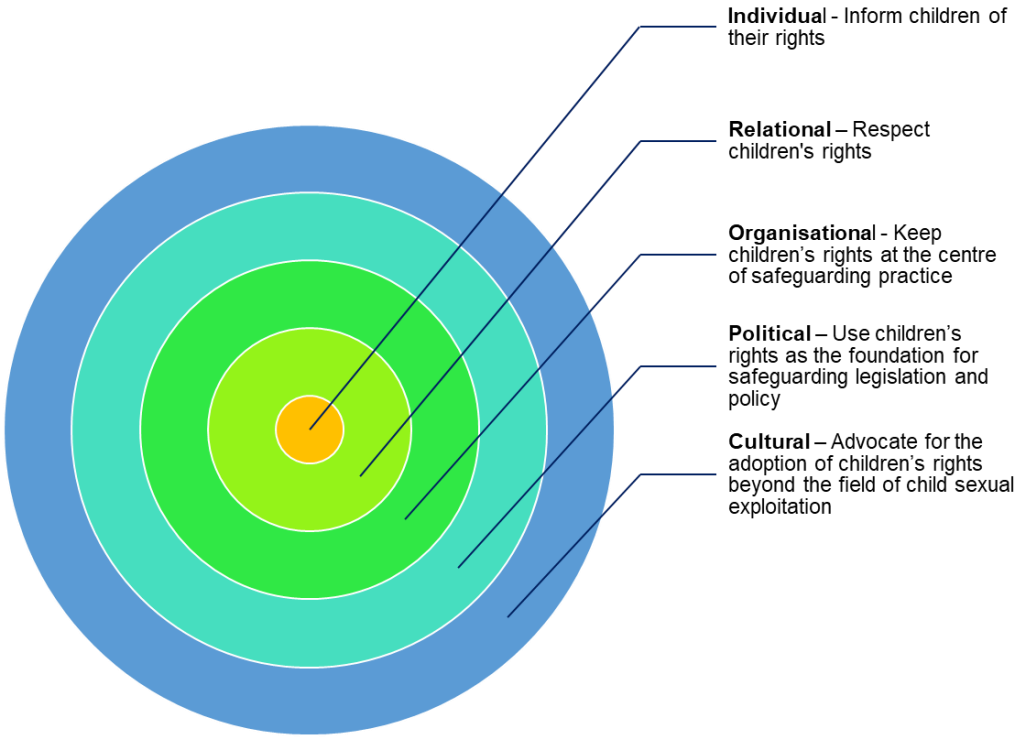
Secondly, participants wanted professionals to be able to explore the relationship they had with their perpetrator in order to move towards recovery. In chapter 7, Chloe spoke about not understanding the feelings she had about her perpetrator, and this left her feeling still under his control. A professional with knowledge of the dynamics of CSE could have explained these to Chloe in order to help her understand these feelings, which would have been a step towards recovery; sharing information in this situation would be in line with articles 13 and 39 (UNCRC 1989). Research participants also wanted professionals to understand about trauma, and to be able to support them to learn coping strategies; see figure 18 and 19. Indeed, the importance of this was seen in action during a data collection session when Anna had a panic attack, and project workers were able to support her, so enacting article 39; recovery from trauma (UNCRC 1989) (see chapter 5).

Thirdly, research participants wanted professionals to be able to share knowledge of grooming and perpetrator behaviour in prevention work; for example, the different ways that perpetrators operate. In Chloe's case, there was one individual perpetrator whereas in Amy's situation there were multiple perpetrators operating together. Chloe explained in chapter 7 that she felt the teacher responsible for telling her class about child sexual exploitation did not know enough about the topic. Without this knowledge, the teacher was unable to answer the pupils' questions, or make the video shown relevant to their lives as described in chapter 7. For a professional to support article 13 by providing information, they themselves need to understand and communicate effectively on the topic and its nuances to children (UNCRC 1989). When providing children and young people with information about child sexual exploitation and

the related topics, practitioners must use their professional judgement to assess what material is appropriate to share, how it should be shared and by whom. Chloe's and Sarah's experiences of being provided with information about child sexual exploitation demonstrate two different ways that this imparting of information was done, one by a teacher showing a video and one by specialist practitioners undertaking direct work, neither of which was effective (see chapters 7). These experiences demonstrate that a generic approach cannot be taken to the provision of information, and that each individual situation should be assessed before delivery.

The discussion so far has focused on professional practice on an individual level. However, Amy, Anna and Chloe all recognised that the problems they had experienced went beyond the individual to the organisational or political levels (see figure 16). Chloe recognised that professionals need to advocate for changes in practice at an organisational (see chapter 7). Indeed, for children's rights to be meaningfully adopted within the field of child sexual exploitation, professionals need to advocate at all levels; individual, relational, organisational, political and cultural. Figure 20 illustrates how professionals can advocate for children's rights at each of these levels to promote children's rights and empower children and young people.

Figure 20: Promoting children's rights in practice in the context of child sexual exploitation



Professionals can advocate at each layer because of the power they hold (Thompson 2009). As discussed in this chapter and chapters 4, 8 and 9, practitioners have greater power than the children and young people they work with because they are both adults and professionals. In society, professionals are considered experts with specialist knowledge about the field in which they work (Maclean & Harrison 2015 & Raven 2008). This is legitimised by the authority they are given in law (Maclean & Harrison 2015). It is this power that enables professionals to advocate for children's rights beyond the individual and relational levels.

Within organisations, professionals can challenge groupthink and wilful blindness to ensure children's rights are respected (see chapter 9). Professionals can achieve this by challenging the status quo, introducing colleagues to new knowledge, and role modelling the desired attitudes (Jay 2017). In turn, organisations that work in line with the UNCRC (1989) can promote children's rights at an organisational level by ensuring policies and

procedures are consistent with this approach, manager's act as role models and practitioners receive related training from experts in the field (Jay 2017). In addition, professionals and organisations can advocate at a political level when, for example, responding to government consultations. This will encourage the government to create legislation and statutory guidance that is consistent with children's rights, and to address contradictions that exist which cause difficulties in practice; for example, children and young people being afforded different protection in law according to their age and care status (see chapters 3 and 9). Changing the attitudes of professionals and those in government will hopefully result in the prevailing judgemental and negative attitudes within society, which undermine children's rights, such as victim blaming, being challenged and, hopefully, in time eradicated.

However, professionals and organisations must be mindful that they will have a decreasing level of influence from the individual to the cultural layer (see figure 20). To tackle these issues at a political and cultural level, professionals and organisations will need to advocate as a collective to have the greatest chance of success (Thompson 2009).

The Conceptual Framework

Taking a children's rights approach to this study guided how the research was designed, implemented and analysed. It provided the rational for using a participatory narrative approach and a YPPB for consultation. This approach promoted children's rights by engaging articles 12, 13, 14; children and young people were listened to, encouraged to express themselves and led the data collection sessions.

The children's rights approach also informed the methods and sampling framework. Participants were given information about the study that had been developed with the YPPB to aid accessibility (article 17). Participants who chose to take part had their contributions anonymised (article 16) and had the opportunity to member check their data (article 36). In addition, to ensure the best interests of the child (article 3), those who took part had to be linked and put forward for the study by a specialist organisation (article 5).

If this study had not taken a children's right approach, the voices and experiences of the research participants may not have been heard, and their stories may not have remained at the centre of the study. There may have been less focus on the potential impact of the research on participants and, subsequently, on the measures put in place to ameliorate these risks. If this was the case, the study could have itself become exploitative.

As discussed in chapter 5, whilst this study has been underpinned by children's rights, it cannot claim to be fully compliant with the approach. Queens University Belfast (2012) state that studies taking a children's rights approach should build the capacity of children as rights holders. This research did not fulfil this aspect and, therefore, a more accurate description would be that the study was rights informed.

A children's rights approach enabled the thesis to be inductive. Research participants shared their experience of working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation free of any pre-existing hypothesis. Once the data was analysed, existing frameworks or theories were used to explore the data and derive meaning. For example, the economic theories of neoliberalism and managerialism were used to explore the actions of safeguarding organisations, and French and Raven's social theory of power underpinned the analysis of the power dynamics between professionals and children and young people in the context of child sexual exploitation. This highlights another benefit of using a children's rights approach, in that it can successfully underpin research that integrates a range of theories and frameworks. Children's rights provides an effective conceptual framework to explore the lived experience of those affected by child sexual exploitation which is then strengthened by linking it to other relevant theories to support the derivation of meaning from these experiences.

Key Contributions

This section identifies the key contributions to research that have been made by this study.

Historical Overview

This study presented an historical overview of the changing narratives of child sexual exploitation from the Victorian era to today. The overview brought together knowledge from different disciplines (history, politics and sociology) and data sources (academia, media and practice reports). This overview explained how attitudes towards child sexual exploitation developed over time and provided context for our current understanding of the phenomena.

Empirical Findings

This thesis provided an in-depth insight into the experiences of research participants in relation to working with professionals in the context of child sexual exploitation. The study highlighted the impact of power dynamics on children and young people subject to sexual exploitation and supports existing literature on professional-service-user power imbalances.

The study identified two consequences of power imbalances that were particularly concerning. Research participants shared experiences where professional practice mirrored the power imbalances within sexually exploitative relationships and where their attempts to exert power led to them being at risk of harm.

Together, the key findings have been used to develop a model of disempowerment; see Figure 16. This model shows how research participants were subject to multiple layers of disempowerment. Children and young people were disempowered by their interactions with professionals, professionals were disempowered by the organisations they worked within, who were disempowered by statutory duties and ultimately the political environment of neoliberalism.

Children's Rights Approach

This thesis confirmed that a rights-informed approach can be used in research with children and young people who have experienced child sexual exploitation. The study identified many positives associated with taking this approach.

Children and young people were listened to, their views were respected, and their contributions provided evidence for the study's key findings. Taking this approach also enabled the research to balance protection with participation, something which may have previously deterred some researchers from talking directly to children and young people.

However, as discussed in chapter 5, to fully explore all aspects of the findings, other theories were used. This highlights another benefit of using children's rights as the conceptual framework. Children's rights is compatible with other theoretical frameworks that can help to explore particular features of child sexual exploitation. For example, the feminist theories of victim blaming and rape myths can explain the judgemental attitudes held by some professionals.

Incorporating elements of these other approaches supports Franchino-Olsen (2019)'s suggestion that researchers use an integrated approach when researching child sexual exploitation.

Positionality

Prior to undertaking this research, I worked as a social worker with those affected by child sexual exploitation. As a practitioner, I witnessed first-hand how professionals and organisations operated, and how this impacted on children and young people. It is rare for social workers to be able to engage in research and being able to do so gave me a unique lens through which to interpret the research participants' contributions.

Knowledge of practice informed the development of the study, and practical experience of working with children and young people gave me the skills to develop rapport, and to manage unexpected situations that arose during data collection sessions; for example, being able to explain to Chloe the concept of grooming and how this impacts on how individuals view their perpetrators.

In addition, links to practice kept me abreast of changes, debates and dilemmas.

Research Period

This research was undertaken during a period of rapid change as a result of some very high-profile cases. As such, this research was uniquely placed to observe and comment on the lived experiences of research participants during this period of change. A period that began with the Prime Minister declaring child sexual exploitation a national threat, saw the government introduce a new definition of child sexual exploitation, and made money available to develop knowledge and understanding (HM Government 2015 and Department for Education 2017). This provided a unique opportunity to bring together theory and academic and practical knowledge with the experiences of the research participants.

The following section makes recommendations for practice in the light of the key findings from this study.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

This research brought together research participants' lived experience, a children's rights approach, and academic and practice knowledge, and analysed it through the lens of a researcher with practical experience. The findings of the research suggest that organisations and professionals need to consider agency, consent, power dynamics and the use of appropriate terminology to ensure that children and young people's rights are consistently respected. They also highlight the complexity of the issue and some of the dilemmas that professionals face. The recommendations presented are aimed at supporting professionals to unpick these complexities, and successfully navigate the dilemmas they encounter to improve the experience for the children and young people they work with. The understanding and professional practice concerning child sexual exploitation is still evolving, which provides an ideal opportunity for this research to suggest new ways of working to improve practice. The recommendations below are one of the significant contributions this thesis makes to the field:

1. Promotion of children's rights – children's rights must be respected and promoted by organisations and professionals working with children in all

contexts, including those experiencing child sexual exploitation. Children and young people are experts in their own lives and should be treated as such, whilst ensuring they are not put at harm (James & Prout 2015). However, key finding 6 (see chapter 9) found that the rights of children and young people subject to child sexual exploitation were frequently undermined. This is consistent with the Children's Commissioner's 2015 report which found the implementation of article 12 of the UNCRC was extremely variable in UK law and practice.

This research has shown that professionals who work in a child-centred way that respects children's rights, develop a better working relationship with those subject to child sexual exploitation (see chapter 7). Most safeguarding professionals' training will have covered individual's rights and a person-centred approach; however, as this thesis demonstrates, they are not consistently put into practice (British Association of Social Workers 2012 and College of Policing 2014). To support professionals to remain child-centred and to respect children's rights in practice at an individual and relational layer (see figure 20), they should be provided with supervision sessions where they are encouraged to reflect on their practice to ensure that children's rights remain at the forefront of planning and implementing interventions. Indeed, the Children's Commissioner (2014) identified supervision as a principle of effective practice. These supervisions could be undertaken as part of a group where dissent thinking, and challenge is encouraged so new thinking can be developed and promoted (Beddoe & Davys 2016, Jay 2017 and Thompson 2009).

Another way to promote children's rights in practice is to involve children and young people in developing services and training staff. Emily has taken part in research and presented at conferences (see chapter 8). She felt these opportunities had a positive impact on the professionals involved who gained a greater understanding of her experiences and what she found worked in practice (see chapter 8).

2. Increased awareness of agency, power and consent – key finding 2 (see chapter 9) reflects on the power professionals hold in the context of child sexual exploitation, and the negative impact that this can have on children and young people. This research has shown that where professionals work towards mitigating imbalances of power, children and young people are more responsive to them and their interventions (see chapter 8). Whereas when children and young people have tried to address power imbalances independently, this has in some circumstances led to them being put at greater risk of harm (see chapters 8). These findings are consistent with serious case reviews into child sexual exploitation (Derby Safeguarding Children Board 2010, Jay 2014, Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015 and Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013)

   For professionals to address the power imbalance, this thesis suggests that practitioners adopt anti-oppressive practice (see chapter 9). This includes practitioners recognising children and young people as agents in their own lives, mitigating power imbalances, informing them of their rights and including them in decision making (Maclean & Harrison 2009).

3. Trauma informed practice – research participants felt that professionals did not always understanding trauma or the psychological impact of grooming (see chapter 7). Rotherham and Derby serious cases reviews also found that children and young people's behaviour was not considered in the context of trauma (Derby Safeguarding Children Board 2010 and Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013). Key finding 1 found that symptoms of trauma were commonly misunderstood (labelled/ terminology) by professionals, which led to children and young people being labelled and judged. Developing professionals' understanding of the psychology of child sexual exploitation would mean that children's and young people's behaviour was more accurately assessed and interpreted. To achieve this, it is recommended that organisations adopt trauma informed practice that take account of the physical and psychological impact of child sexual exploitation (Muraya & Fry 2016). Organisations would need to ensure that policies and procedures were consistent with this approach, staff at all levels were

trained in the physical and psychological impacts of trauma, practitioners were supported to reflect on their practice and staff well-being was promoted (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland 2018).

4. Policies and procedures – key finding 3 found that existing safeguarding policies and procedures struggle to address situations of child sexual exploitation. The child protection system was created in response to the abuse of children within the family, for example Jasmine Beckford and Tyra Henry (see chapter 2). As a result, existing child protection policies and procedures have struggled to respond effectively to child sexual exploitation which is more commonly linked to extra-familial abuse (Casey 2015, Holmes 216 and Firmin 2017).

   Chapter 9 introduced an approach that can address the limitations of the current system; contextual safeguarding (Firmin 2017). This approach allows professionals to assess the impact different contexts (extra and inter-familial) have on children and young people, and on their parents' and carers' ability to be protective (Firmin 2017). To implement contextual safeguarding, organisations would have to commit to move from a child protection system, which focuses on inter-familial abuse, to a contextual safeguarding system that considers both, inter and extra-familial abuse (Firmin 2017). The benefit of doing so would be that organisations and professionals could respond more effectively to situations of abuse regardless of the context in which they occur.

5. Professional support – Key findings 1, 2, 4 and 5 (see chapter 9) commented on professional practice and found:

   a. some professionals held judgemental attitudes;
   b. the power that professionals hold can oppress children and young people;
   c. some professionals' relationships with children and young people had become dehumanised; and

d. neoliberalism and managerialism had reduced a professional's ability to use their own professional judgement.

These findings are consistent with the findings of serious case reviews (Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013, Jay 2014, Casey 2015 and Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). In cases where professional practice was consistent with these findings, children and young people were less likely to be safeguarded and for those that were, the negative attitudes of professionals meant interventions were less effective (see chapters 7, 8 and 9, Derby's Safeguarding Children's Board 2010, Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board 2013, Jay 2014, Casey 2015 and Oxford Safeguarding Children Board 2015). When professionals were non-judgemental, compassionate, addressed power imbalances, and acted as advocates research participants felt supported and interventions were more effective (see chapters 7 and 8).

Jay (2017) linked poor professional practice to groupthink and wilful blindness (see chapter 9). To address these practice issues, organisations need to support professionals to manage the emotional demands of working in child sexual exploitation, encourage critical thinking and promote the use of evidence-based professional judgement (Jay 2017). This can be achieved through personal development activities such as training, engagement with new research and best practice, reflection and supervision (Beddoe & Davys 2016). For this to be effective organisations need commit to supporting these activities, by for example, giving professionals time for personal development, facilitating peer supervision and commissioning training (Beddoe & Davys 2016). As with recommendation 1, professionals must also be provided with safe spaces where dissent and challenge are encouraged, and new thinking is disseminated (Beddoe & Davys 2016, Jay 2017 and Thompson 2009).

Implementing these recommendations would address issues that have led to safeguarding failures, including professionals holding judgemental attitudes;

limited understanding of the nuances of consent/ agency; disempowerment of children and young people; corporate parenting and managerialism dehumanising organisational responses; and failure to consistently respect children's rights. Addressing these issues would increase the effectiveness of safeguarding and improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people who have been subject to child sexual exploitation.

Implementing the recommendations, would not solve all the issues identified in this thesis immediately; as chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, change takes time. However, implementing these recommendations would be another step in the right direction, building upon the positive changes that have already been achieved.

Areas for Further Research

Several areas have come to light during this study that would benefit from further research:

1. Professional attitudes – this thesis has highlighted that professional attitudes have not universally changed in line with an increased understanding of child sexual exploitation. Research into how to promote attitudinal change could provide organisations with strategies they can use to address problematic attitudes within their workforce.

2. Research with children and young people – there is limited literature on the impact of being involved in research on children and young people, particularly those affected by abuse. Extending this area of knowledge could encourage more researchers to undertake research with children and young people if the impact of being involved in research is found to be positive.

3. Research dissemination – this thesis has drawn upon a growing body of literature on child sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, there appears to be a limited understanding by some professionals of the findings and recommendations that have come from research. This could be explored

by researching the most effective ways to translate research into practice.

4. Vicarious trauma within academia – research in this area would raise awareness of the issue and identify strategies that researchers can use to protect their own emotional well-being.

With regards child sexual exploitation, there is a growing body of literature on the topic, but to date not all of it has been effectively adopted in practice. Equally, there is considerable knowledge and experience in practice that has not yet been utilised by academics. The bridge between academia and practice needs to be strengthened to ensure research is relevant and findings inform practice. One way this can be achieved is by supporting practitioners to undertake research or embedding researchers in safeguarding organisations.

Concluding comment

Emily: 'They're [professionals] not all bad at all and there can be a difference if they're willing to change'

Appendices

Appendix 1: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

A SUMMARY OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

unicef
UNITED KINGDOM

ARTICLE 1 (definition of the child)
Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

ARTICLE 2 (non-discrimination)
The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

ARTICLE 3 (best interests of the child)
The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

ARTICLE 4 (implementation of the Convention)
Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.

ARTICLE 5 (parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities)
Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up, so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child's increasing capacity to make their own choices.

ARTICLE 6 (life, survival and development)
Every child has the right to life.
Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

ARTICLE 7 (birth registration, name, nationality, care)
Every child has the right to be registered at birth, to have a name and nationality, and, as far as possible, to know and be cared for by their parents.

ARTICLE 8 (protection and preservation of identity)
Every child has the right to an identity. Governments must respect and protect that right, and prevent the child's name, nationality or family relationships from being changed unlawfully.

ARTICLE 9 (separation from parents)
Children must not be separated from their parents against their will unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting or neglecting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this could cause them harm.

ARTICLE 10 (family reunification)
Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit and keep in contact with both of them.

ARTICLE 11 (abduction and non-return of children)
Governments must do everything they can to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally by their parents or other relatives, or being prevented from returning home.

ARTICLE 12 (respect for the views of the child)
Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

ARTICLE 13 (freedom of expression)
Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

ARTICLE 14 (freedom of thought, belief and religion)
Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.

ARTICLE 15 (freedom of association)
Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

ARTICLE 16 (right to privacy)
Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life, including protecting children from unlawful attacks that harm their reputation.

ARTICLE 17 (access to information from the media)
Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

ARTICLE 18 (parental responsibilities and state assistance)
Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.

ARTICLE 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect)
Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

ARTICLE 20 (children unable to live with their family)
If a child cannot be looked after by their immediate family, the government must give them special protection and assistance. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion.

ARTICLE 21 (adoption)
Governments must oversee the process of adoption to make sure it is safe, lawful and that it prioritises children's best interests. Children should only be adopted outside of their country if they cannot be placed with a family in their own country.

ARTICLE 22 (refugee children)
If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention. Governments must help refugee children who are separated from their parents to be reunited with them.

ARTICLE 23 (children with a disability)
A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.

ARTICLE 24 (health and health services)
Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 25 (review of treatment in care)
If a child has been placed away from home for the purpose of care or protection (for example, with a foster family or in hospital), they have the right to a regular review of their treatment, the way they are cared for and their wider circumstances.

ARTICLE 26 (social security)
Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance.

ARTICLE 27 (adequate standard of living)
Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

ARTICLE 28 (right to education)
Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 29 (goals of education)
Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

ARTICLE 30 (children from minority or indigenous groups)
Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

ARTICLE 31 (leisure, play and culture)
Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

ARTICLE 32 (child labour)
Governments must protect children from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development or education. Governments must set a minimum age for children to work and ensure that work conditions are safe and appropriate.

ARTICLE 33 (drug abuse)
Governments must protect children from the illegal use of drugs and from being involved in the production or distribution of drugs.

ARTICLE 34 (sexual exploitation)
Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

ARTICLE 35 (abduction, sale and trafficking)
Governments must protect children from being abducted, sold or moved illegally to a different place in or outside their country for the purpose of exploitation.

ARTICLE 36 (other forms of exploitation)
Governments must protect children from all other forms of exploitation, for example the exploitation of children for political activities, by the media or for medical research.

ARTICLE 37 (inhumane treatment and detention)
Children must not be tortured, sentenced to the death penalty or suffer other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. Children should be arrested, detained or imprisoned only as a last resort and for the shortest time possible. They must be treated with respect and care, and be able to keep in contact with their family. Children must not be put in prison with adults.

ARTICLE 38 (war and armed conflicts)
Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces. Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war and armed conflicts.

ARTICLE 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration)
Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

ARTICLE 40 (juvenile justice)
A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to legal assistance and a fair trial that takes account of their age. Governments must set a minimum age for children to be tried in a criminal court and manage a justice system that enables children who have been in conflict with the law to reintegrate into society.

ARTICLE 41 (respect for higher national standards)
If a country has laws and standards that go further than the present Convention, then the country must keep these laws.

ARTICLE 42 (knowledge of rights)
Governments must actively work to make sure children and adults know about the Convention.

The Convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43–54 are about how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights, including:

ARTICLE 45
Unicef can provide expert advice and assistance on children's rights.

OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS
There are three agreements, called Optional Protocols, that strengthen the Convention and add further unique rights for children. They are optional because governments that ratify the Convention can decide whether or not to sign up to these Optional Protocols. They are: the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on a complaints mechanism for children (called Communications Procedure).

For more information go to unicef.org.uk/crc/op

Appendix 2: Information Sheets

CENTRE FOR TRUST, PEACE & SOCIAL RELATIONS

Coventry University

Young Person Information Sheet

What is the study about? How young people, who have been affected by child sexual exploitation, found working with professionals (social workers, police, teachers, youth workers).

Do I have to take part? No, it is your choice whether you would like to take part.

What will happen if I take part? You will be asked to take part in two sessions. Each of these sessions will last about 1 hour. I will ask you to tell me about the professionals (police, social workers, teachers etc.) you worked with. You can take breaks during the session and end it at any time. There will be snacks and drinks.

Can I change my mind? Yes, you can stop the session at any time. If you change your mind after the session, you can contact me up until 31/12/2017 to tell me not to use what you told me. I will need me your participant number (_____) to be able to delete your information.

Why should I take part? Your views will help professionals working with young people to know what to and what not to do.

Are there any risks? For some people, talking about people that they have worked with might bring up memories that could be upsetting.

Will other people know what I said? No, everything you tell me will be kept confidential and your name will not be used within my research. However, if you tell me that you or someone else might be in danger I will need to share this with other professionals. Your support worker may also have to share some of the things you tell me, we will talk about this at the start of the sessions.

Audio recordings and photographs of drawings made in the session(s) will be kept on Coventry University's computer system. This is password protected. Your participant number will be used to make sure no one can find out what you said in the session(s).

What will happen to the results? I will write a report as part of my PhD thesis (this is a report I have to write as part of my university studies). I will give you and the organisations I am working with copies of the results. I will also give presentations and write articles about the research.

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Appendix 3: Benefits of taking part in research

Appendix 4: Coventry University Ethics Approval

Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Emma Stephens

Project Title:

Narratives of child sexual exploitation: a children's rights perspective.

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:

24 November 2016

Project Reference Number:

P42924

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Appendix 5: Coventry University Sponsor Details

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Appendix 6: Data Collection Topic Guide

Topic Guide

Session 1:

The aim of session 1 is to encourage participants to create a timeline documenting their interactions with professionals. This timeline will then be used as a guide for discussing the following topics:

- Identification of the professionals they encountered (using job titles rather than names)
- Interventions provided by these professionals and their outcome
- Helpful/ unhelpful practice
- Attitudes of professionals in relation to the research participant/ CSE
- Impact of professionals' attitudes on the research participant
- Impact of professionals' attitudes on the interventions offered/ provided
- Suggested improvements in relation to professional practice
- Advice for professionals working with children and young people affected by CSE

Research participants may want to put these discussions in context by sharing information about the abuse they were subjected to. If this occurs, I will sensitively steer the conversation back to the topics above.

Session 2:

The aim of session 2 is to check whether the research participant is happy with the information they shared in session 1 (member checking) and to encourage them to reflect on their experience of being involved in research.

Member checking:

- Identification of information the research participant would like to add/ remove from the account they gave in session 1
- Research participant's experience of reviewing their account from session 1

Engagement in research:

- Research participant's experience of being involved in research
- Suggested improvements in relation to the research methods used
- Thoughts about whether researchers should engage with young people

Appendix 7: DBS Check

Appendix 8: Indemnity and liability insurance information

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Appendix 9: Informed consent form participants

CENTRE FOR TRUST, PEACE & SOCIAL RELATIONS

Coventry University

Informed Consent Form
Participants

This research study is going to investigate how people affected by child sexual exploitation perceive they are viewed by professionals.

		Please tick if you agree
1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop at anytime without giving a reason.	☐
3.	I understand that the information I give will be treated in confidence.	☐
4.	I understand that if I tell the researcher something that suggests I, or another person, is in danger this information will be shared with other professionals.	☐
5.	I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about taking part in the study for a period after the session (31/12/2017).	☐
6.	I agree to be audio recorded as part of the research project.	☐
7.	I agree for a photograph to be taken of work produced as part of the session and reproduced for education/ publication purposes.	☐
8.	I agree to taking part in the research project.	☐

Name of participant: .....

Signature of participant:..... Date .....

Name of witness (Project Worker): .....

Signature of witness: ..... Date .....

Name of Researcher: .....

Signature of researcher: ..... Date .....

Participant Number: _____

Appendix 10: Informed consent form project workers

CENTRE FOR TRUST, PEACE & SOCIAL RELATIONS

Coventry University

Informed Consent Form
Project Worker

This research study is going to investigate how people affected by child sexual exploitation perceive they are viewed by professionals.

		Please tick if you agree
1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2.	I confirm that I will maintain the confidentuality of the research participant in line with the confidentuality policy of my employer (_____).	☐
3.	I confirm that I will act on any safeguarding issues that arise within the data collection sessions.	☐
4.	I agree to be audio recorded as part of the research project.	☐
5.	I agree to taking part in the research project in a support capacity.	☐
	Your employer (_____) will be acknowledged as supporting this research study in all published materials.	

Name of project worker:.....

Signature of project worker:..... Date .....

Name of Researcher: .....

Signature of researcher: ..... Date .....

Participant Number: _____

Appendix 11: Support organisations information sheet for young people

Appendix 12: Dimensions of parenting capacity

DIMENSIONS OF PARENTING CAPACITY

'Basic Care Providing for the child's physical needs, and appropriate medical and dental care. Includes provision of food, drink, warmth, shelter, clean and appropriate clothing and adequate personal hygiene.

Ensuring Safety Ensuring the child is adequately protected from harm or danger. Includes protection from significant harm or danger, and from contact with unsafe adults/other children and from self-harm. Recognition of hazards and danger both in the home and elsewhere.

Emotional Warmth Ensuring the child's emotional needs are met and giving the child a sense of being specially valued and a positive sense of own racial and cultural identity. Includes ensuring the child's requirements for secure, stable and affectionate relationships with significant adults, with appropriate sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's needs. Appropriate physical contact, comfort and cuddling sufficient to demonstrate warm regard, praise and encouragement.

Stimulation Promoting [the] child's learning and intellectual development through encouragement and cognitive stimulation and promoting social opportunities. Includes facilitating the child's cognitive development and potential through interaction, communication, talking and responding to the child's language and questions, encouraging and joining the child's play, and promoting educational opportunities. Enabling the child to experience success and ensuring school attendance or equivalent opportunity. Facilitating [the] child to meet challenges of life.

Guidance and Boundaries Enabling the child to regulate their own emotions and behaviour. The key parental tasks are demonstrating and modelling appropriate behaviour and control of emotions and interactions with others, and guidance which involves setting boundaries, so that the child is able to develop an internal model of moral values and conscience, and social behaviour appropriate for the society within which they will grow up. The aim is to enable the child to grow into an autonomous adult, holding their own values, and able to demonstrate appropriate behaviour with others rather than having to be

dependent on rules outside themselves. This includes not over protecting children from exploratory and learning experiences. Includes social problem solving, anger management, consideration for others, and effective discipline and shaping of behaviour.

Stability Providing a sufficiently stable family environment to enable a child to develop and maintain a secure attachment to the primary caregiver(s) in order to ensure optimal development. Includes ensuring secure attachments are not disrupted, providing consistency of emotional warmth over time and responding in a similar manner to the same behaviour. Parental responses change and develop according to child's developmental progress. In addition, ensuring children keep in contact with important family members and significant others.'

(Department of Health 2000: 21)

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