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exchanging views, inspiring minds

## A Cumberland Colloquium



**YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED  
BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS CHANGE  
MAKERS IN PREVENTION EFFORTS:  
WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND WHAT ARE THE RISKS**

28<sup>th</sup> September 2015

## Conference Summary

The colloquium was kindly supported by:



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the colloquium was to provide a space to think about the risks and responsibilities, and general ethical dilemmas, which can arise when working in a participatory way with young people affected by sexual violence. The day brought together speakers and delegates with a wealth of experience of working with young people affected by sexual violence from across the UK, Europe and beyond. Participants came from both academia and practice.

The colloquium began with a presentation from Carly Raby on the potential impact of sexual violence on young people. Following this, Gerison Lansdown presented on the connection between participation and protection, arguing that participation can build children's and young people's ability to protect themselves and to challenge a culture of impunity. Helen Cammock then shared learning from 'Having Our Say Too' a participatory photography project with young people affected by child sexual exploitation. Following the break, the next session utilised PechaKucha style presentations to explore a variety of ethical dilemmas and tensions that can arise during participatory work with young people affected by sexual violence. In the afternoon three workshops explored different issues: young people's views on participation; stigma; and anonymity. A plenary session exploring protection and participation online and offline with speakers Dr Tanya Serisier and Dr Kristi Hickle concluded the day's events. The keynote evening lecture was delivered by Professor Jenny Pearce and explored recent research on child sexual exploitation.

Several key themes emerged from the day's events. Firstly, through the presentations and discussions it became clear that the right to protection and the right to participation should not be viewed as at odds with each other. Although those working with young people affected by sexual violence often feel the need to protect young people - which translates into young people often not being involved in decision making about their own care and protection or that of other young people - what the colloquium demonstrated was that young people can develop protective factors through participation and that the two aspects of participation and protection are in fact complimentary.

Secondly, through discussions there was a clear theme that emerged that instead of being 'risk averse' when it comes to involving young people affected by sexual violence in work, professionals need to acknowledge and learn to manage risk rather than avoiding it. It became clear that the benefits of young people getting involved and developing skills and confidence often outweighs the potential risks of their involvement. In line with this, Professor Jenny Pearce called for a move towards strength-based practice. Focussing not only on the potential 'risks' but acknowledging young people's resilience and strengths.

Thirdly, there was discussion around group work. Group work has traditionally been viewed as 'risky' when working with young people affected by sexual exploitation and other forms of violence. Abi Billingham in her presentation clearly demonstrated how risk assessments may not always uncover the connections and networks of the young people involved in groups. Although Abi highlighted the potential risks, she showed that when there are skilled facilitators in place and where the group environment is seen as a safe and respectful space, difficult conversations can take place work and young people can safely navigate through these risks. There was also discussion around the importance of understanding that a group is made up of individuals with different experiences, needs and interests. This means that it will not always be possible to find agreement or consensus amongst group members.

Fourthly, the example of PhotoVoice's creative arts intervention and references to youth-led films and other resources throughout the day, also led to discussions around the need for more creative and visual ways for young people to communicate and share their learning and views. This too was connected to the last presentation of the day by Dr Tanya Serisier which explored the benefits and risks of speaking out on line. Through these presentations issues came up related to anonymity and the need to create 'safe spaces' both online and offline for young people to have their views and voices heard.

## INTRODUCTION

Fifthly, the issue of power was another strong theme that emerged throughout the day. Dr Camille Warrington in her presentation highlighted the difficulties when a multitude of stakeholders are involved in a participatory project. She talked about the many tensions that this can lead to when different stakeholders require different things out of a project.

Lastly, at the end of the day a number of delegates raised a series of gaps that they felt the colloquium had not fully considered and explored. This included the missing voices of certain groups, in particular thinking about specific issues that may arise from working with boys and young men and working with children with disabilities affected by sexual violence.

It was clear in the feedback from the day that participants welcomed the opportunity to have a safe space to talk honestly and openly about some of the dilemmas that this work posed and felt the blend of experience in the room was helpful in thinking through these challenges.

- “Loved the honesty of some presentations in speaking about things that didn’t go so well. We as practitioners also need spaces to talk about the different issues so we don’t repeat but can learn from mistakes”
- “Like the variety of formats and spaces to share mistakes. Felt like room was filled by ‘experts’ who are really doing this stuff”
- “Amazing richness of knowledge and practice”
- “Good space for being vulnerable and talking about unformed ideas openly”

This report records the proceedings, discussions and conclusions from the colloquium ‘Young people affected by sexual violence as change-makers: what are the opportunities and what are the risks’

The colloquium was kindly supported by the Council of Europe, the Oak Foundation and the University of Bedfordshire. Through this funding a number of delegates were able to travel and attend the conference from Europe and across the UK.

The aim of the colloquium was to bring together early career researchers and academics from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, together with those who had experience of supporting young people affected by sexual violence, to discuss lessons-learned on safe and ethical participatory practice with young people affected by sexual violence.

The colloquium aimed to address a number of questions including:

- What are the benefits of, and opportunities for, young people affected by sexual violence engaging in participatory prevention activities?
- What are the ethical challenges that this work poses? This includes issues such as safety, risk of re-traumatisation, anonymity versus acknowledgement, stigma and identity.
- What are the possible legal implications of this work?
- Does social media present new opportunities for engaging young people in participatory projects or simply pose new risks?

The event comprised of a mix of five 20 minute presentations, three one hour workshops and five short PechaKucha style visual presentations with a final session allowing for questions, reflections and feedback. The event was brought to a close with a public lecture delivered by Professor Jenny Pearce on ‘Child sexual exploitation: key messages from recent research’.

## BACKGROUND

The children's rights and participation agenda has expanded over the 25 years since the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This expansion has created more spaces for children and youth to be heard. Young people are frequently asked about their views for the purposes of developing stronger policy, practice and research. These changes are, of course, positive but some children and young people are still being regularly left out of these processes.

Young people who have experienced sexual violence are routinely excluded (Brown, 2006; Warrington, 2013<sup>1</sup>). There is often a tension when it comes to involving these young people in debate and decision-making. This tension relates to a young person's right to participation versus their need for protection. Warrington (2013<sup>2</sup>) explains that young people are often perceived and categorised as either 'victims' or 'agents of change', but rarely both. This means that those who have experienced different forms of sexual violence – 'victims' – are often not included in decisions about their own needs and futures, or discussions about how to help or improve responses for others.

The recent revelations of large-scale sexual abuse and exploitation from Rotherham, Rochdale and elsewhere in the UK have horrifically demonstrated how children and young people – particularly those who might be perceived as 'difficult' – are routinely disbelieved, ignored, silenced and blamed. Providing spaces and opportunities for these young people to exert control and to be heard are therefore critical. Research also indicates that when young people affected by sexual violence engage in activities that aim to raise awareness or improve the situation for other young people, this too can have a therapeutic impact (Batsleer, 2011; Levy, 2012; Capous-Desyllas, 2013<sup>3</sup>).

Although engaging young people in prevention efforts may therefore seem like a good idea, some questions emerge. What are the ethical issues that may arise when survivors speak out or take part in activities that aim to prevent other young people being victimised? Are those who have recently left a violent situation able to make an informed decision to be involved in such

participatory activities? Should this work be overseen by trained therapists? Does the use of social-media provide increased opportunities for participation or simply pose new risks? These are just some of the questions that the colloquium was designed to shed light on.

<sup>1</sup> Brown, K. (2006) 'Participation and Young People Involved in Prostitution', *Child Abuse Review*, 15 (5), pp. 294-312; Warrington, C. (2013) Partners in care? Sexually exploited young people's inclusion and exclusion from decision making in Melrose, M. and Pearce, J. (eds) *Critical perspectives on child sexual exploitation and related trafficking*, England: Palgrave Macmillan

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Batsleer, J. (2011) 'Voices from an edge. Unsettling the practices of youth voice and participation: arts-based practice in The Blue Room, Manchester', *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 19 (3), pp. 419-434; Capous Desyllas, M. (2013) 'Using photovoice with sex workers: The power of art, agency and resistance', *Qualitative Social Work*, (0) (00), pp. 1- 25; Levy, L. (2012) 'Hidden nobodies: female youth in care participate in an arts-based trauma informed empowerment intervention program', *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, 25 (1), pp. 5-19

## THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE

- Carlotta Raby

Carly Raby was invited to provide an overview of the potential impact of sexual violence on young people. The aim of this initial presentation was to set the scene and build the foundation for considering how sexual violence may impact on young people's participation.

Carly talked about her experience of consulting with children in inpatient wards about their experiences of sexual violence. Carly shared the findings which highlighted that some professionals and 'trusted adults' did not believe children when they disclosed their abuse. Her findings also suggested that professionals did not ask 'the question' and did not have the professional curiosity to ask why children were behaving in such a (challenging) way. Instead challenging behaviours were explained away as a symptom of the child's clinical condition rather than due to them experiencing harm. She shared how children talked about the fact that when they were not believed they sometimes chose not to disclose again and in some cases started thinking that they had imagined their abuse or that they were 'mad'. Carly did though show examples of the difference when professionals were emotionally there for young people and when children felt like they were believed and trusted.

Carly also provided an overview of the neurodevelopment of the child's brain. She outlined the difference that experience can have on brain development in terms of developing a learning brain versus a survival brain and the difference this can have on our behaviour. Carly explained that some of the mental health consequences of sexual abuse included anxiety, depression, PTSD and self-harm and often these are 'treated' but the abuse is not identified and addressed. Carly shared some information about Luna's Children's Charity, a charity Carly founded. She then concluded by noting that for health professionals being curious, approachable and having the right training and support were critical.

## BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF PARTICIPATION

- Gerison Lansdown

The next session aimed to introduce the benefits and opportunities of participation for young people affected by sexual violence. The first presentation in this session was delivered by Gerison Lansdown who talked about the mutual reinforcing rights of protection and participation. Gerison drew on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to explore what 'protection' and 'participation' rights entail. She described how the right to participation could enhance protection through: ending impunity through silence, building children's capacity to protect themselves, improving knowledge of children's lives, enhancing skills and confidence and enhancing their understanding of the right to protection. Gerison outlined the different levels of participation ranging from consultative to collaborative to child-led. She noted the requirements necessary for safe and ethical participation - such as the environment being inclusive - and that support is available from trained staff. Gerison talked about the need to guard against both over-protection and under-protection.

- Helen Cammock

Helen Cammock introduced the organisation PhotoVoice, an organisation that utilises participatory photography with marginalised groups. Helen talked specifically about 'Having Our Say Too', a participatory photography project targeted at children and young people in the UK affected by child sexual exploitation. Helen talked about the importance of working in partnership with specialist services and described the project which involved workshops with young people, creating a DVD for practitioners and disseminating the resources. Helen touched on the important issue of safeguarding during this process along with issues of copyright and ownership. Helen showed a number of images taken by the young people and images from the project. Helen finished her presentation by screening a powerful 'rough cut' of one of the digital stories from the new 'Having Our Say 3' project with young people affected by sexual exploitation.

## ETHICAL ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS: LEARNING FROM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

In the second sessions presenters had been asked to prepare PechaKucha style presentations. This format involves 20 slides allowing for 20 seconds per slide which leaves presenters with just under 7 minutes. The presentation slides are therefore more visual and the philosophy behind PechaKucha is to limit presenters and ensure they focus on the most important aspects of their presentation.

- Abi Billinghamurst

Abi Billinghamurst's presentation was the first in this session that aimed to explore different ethical issues that can arise in participatory projects. Abi's presentation focussed on her experience of facilitating a train the trainer programme involving group work with gang-affected young women. Her presentation focussed specifically on the element of confidentiality. Abi provided some background to the project and went on to describe the risk assessment process. Based on the assessment there was an understanding that the young women in the group did not know each other. This was deemed important as there was potential of increasing risk by bringing young women together and exposing them to each other's experiences, vulnerabilities and associates. Abi talked about other preparatory work such as mapping London boroughs and gang conflicts, ensuring a safe space and providing transport for the young women to attend the group. Abi shared that on the first day they found out that despite the understanding that the young women did not know each other they were in fact connected in many different ways.

Abi talked about the challenges of this work but pointed out that if by maintaining a safe space this means excluding those who present the greatest risk, we are excluding the ones we need to hear from the most. She talked about the importance of organisations not perpetuating the patterns of exclusion that young women say they

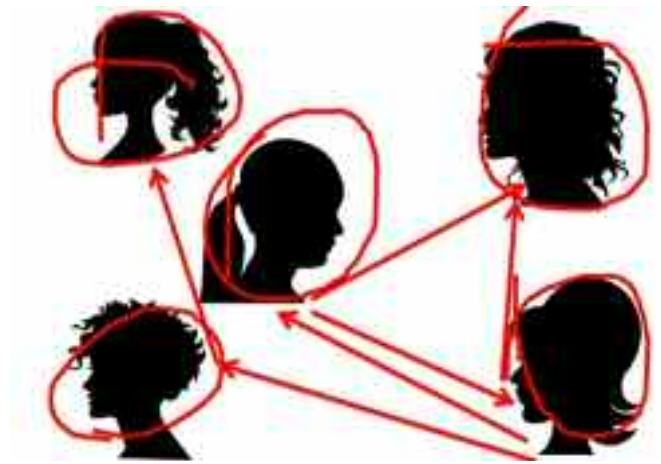


Image 1: From Abi Billinghamurst's Presentation

have experienced from other services. Services, they say, that have been judgmental, blaming, and that don't make allowances for their vulnerability.

Strategies to maintain a safe space were described, such as the girls developing group rules and discussing confidentiality. Abi summed up by sharing the successes of the group and by sharing that many of the women are now engaged in paid work as trainers. She reflected on the fact that professionals can't control the dynamics at play outside of the group or control whether young women break confidentiality.

Dr Camille Warrington in her presentation described a participatory filmmaking project with young people from gang affected communities and reflected on some of the ethical issues relating to outputs and ownership.

Camille talked about the struggle that many organisations face in wanting to present projects as a 'success' to funders but that in reality these same projects, for those involved, can lead to a number of sleepless nights. Camille drew attention to the many different groups who often have a stake in participatory projects. In this particular project this included the national inquiry into gang associated sexual violence, the research team, the partner projects, the filmmakers and the young people who themselves were all individuals with varied experiences and needs.



Image 2: From Camille Warrington's Presentation

Camille talked about the fact that the young people were invited into a set of spaces where many of the terms and agendas had already been set. When it came to the young people's agenda there was no 'their agenda' as the project involved a number of diverse individuals with different experiences and power within the groups. Camille described the balancing act between the process and the product. She noted that having a professional output can mean that the control is taken away from young people (in this case the editing of the films). She emphasised that young people should have ownership through the process and generate their ideas organically resisting external pressure for desired 'outputs'. However, at the same time she noted the importance of products in terms of

providing a focus for the work and instilling a sense of achievement in participants who end up with something of high quality that can be used in dissemination efforts.

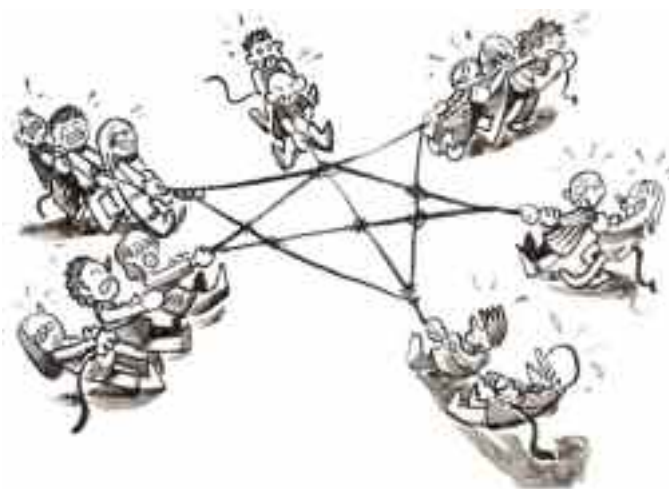


Image 3: From Camille Warrington's Presentation

Camille highlighted the issue around 'invited spaces'. She provided an example where young people were invited to the Houses of Commons to screen their films but were 'hidden' and sidelined in a side room which meant that very few MPs visited the room. She commented on how different this was to the experience of when participants created their own spaces and organised their own dissemination events in their own communities. These events were seen as more successful and as having more impact by the young people involved. Camille concluded her presentation by emphasising the need to map out the different stakeholders present in any given project, their needs and agendas and the power and ownership they hold. She noted the importance of this exercise in allowing us to be more explicit about these agendas in early discussions with young people and to anticipate some of these tensions in advance.



## - Craig Dean

Craig Dean's presentation focused on Plan International's Global Voice for Change project. This project, which currently connects 31 young people from 12 countries, supports them to share information, learning and to advocate and mobilise on the issues they care about. Craig discussed the methodology of the project which was initially tested during the Ebola crisis in West Africa.

The focus of Craig's presentation explored how, as part of the Global Voice for Change project, young people across seven countries in Asia, Africa and South America were supported to produce a joint video "Say NO to sexual violence in schools", and blogs and vlogs, on the issue of school related gender based violence.

Craig spoke about the challenges of coordinating an ethical and meaningful process across multiple countries and explained some of the key steps and considerations taken. Firstly, Craig spoke about the need to identify the issues with the young people and work with advocacy specialists to identify spaces to influence decision makers and communications specialists on how to reach the general public. Secondly, he drew on the importance of advocacy training for young people engaged so that the video could be used as part of their wider advocacy efforts. Thirdly, he spoke about the importance of communication and discussion between those involved including the professional videographers and young people. He also spoke of the essential role that staff in the local communities played in terms of speaking to parents of abuse survivors, the young people who shared their stories for the video, and identifying how their stories could be integrated into wider support programmes and advocacy efforts. Finally, he noted that support needs to be provided to the young people to access the final content by sharing it with them through various channels e.g. via Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and via email and on DVD.

Craig identified the key challenges of such a project. This included that Plan staff are largely programmatic staff and are not media and research specialists so it is a challenge to ensure all the necessary processes and procedures are followed when working with young people to produce films on such sensitive issues. Secondly,

he spoke about the challenges of working for a large organisation where there are competing ideas and initiatives. He noted that it was difficult to monitor and track the impact of the films and that it was hard to know what support was provided to young people involved in the process. However, he noted that Plan's long term presence in the communities and continued support to the youth groups involved helps to ensure a continuation of support and action.

Craig finished by sharing the some of the successes of the project sharing how the film had been utilised at key international advocacy events and across 29 countries reaching 250,000 views in the first week of it being launched.

## - Elsie Whittington

Elise Whittington's presentation focused on the use of distancing methods in participatory and group research when addressing topics such as consent and sexual violence. She started by noting that while sexual violence is an everyday reality for many young people, her work takes a step back from the extremes of sexual exploitation and obvious signs of violence and abuse to focus more on everyday experiences and issues of consent.

The presentation drew on Elsie's experience of running group sessions which explore understandings and experiences of consent with young people. She noted that "*Asking ourselves and young people what we think consent means is revealing*" (NCB 2014:2), but that it is also key to enabling children and young people to navigate relationships.

Practitioners and researchers have to balance risks all the time but she questioned whether our fears around the potential for discomfort, difficult emotions and disclosures (short term risks) currently prevent us meaningfully and collectively engaging with the difficult topic of consent.

She questioned if the use of distancing techniques, in an effort to avoid group disclosures help or hinder longer term aims to break silence and stigma around talking about and sharing experiences of bad, questionable and violent experiences. Elsie considered how we define risk in these situations. She suggested that taking the risk to create spaces in which questionable and bad experiences can be shared within a group will help to disrupt the silence around talking about sex and consent, both the good and the bad, which currently normalises 'less extreme' experiences of sexual violence.

Elsie suggested spaces which can hold discomfort and which allow for sharing, and working through experiences could be an invaluable part of a wider educational project that not only seeks to empower children and young people to have 'healthy relationships' but also to recognise the potential for violence or exploitation before it occurs.

## - Madeleine Askham

Madeleine Askham's presentation highlighted two key considerations that should be made when engaging with young people to advocate on the issue of sexual violence. Her presentation was based on experience gained over the past year in facilitating a process to develop youth-led advocacy campaigns tackling sexual violence. In 2014, World Vision UK supported three youth delegates from Kosovo, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to attend the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. All three delegates participated in the summit's youth policy group - a gathering of 20 young activists from around the world brought together to ensure there was a youth perspective included in the high-level discussions of the summit. Since then, World Vision UK has continued to support the youth delegates to implement action at home including youth-led advocacy campaigns to prevent and end sexual violence in their communities.

Madeleine reflected on two key lessons learnt from her experience in facilitating the advocacy workshops with the young people. The first was the need to spend a significant portion of time working with young people to understand the potential risks associated with conducting an advocacy campaign on the sensitive issue of sexual violence. In all three contexts Madeleine found that the youth participants' enthusiasm to conduct a public campaign often outweighed their consideration and management of the risks involved. World Vision put measures in place for local staff to run risk management sessions with the young groups before every activity was implemented to ensure the young people were campaigning in a safe environment. The second consideration was the necessity to manage the youth groups' expectations for the campaigns and their potential outcomes. Throughout the workshops, it was necessary to reiterate the message that influencing decision-makers to make positive change can be a long process. There was a need to set realistic expectations whilst also keeping the young people interested and motivated in implementing their campaign activities. Madeleine concluded by sharing how with the support of a local expert who already had experience of advocating in their context and the expert could provide insight from their own campaigning efforts and share that with the young people.

## PARALLEL WORKSHOPS ON ETHICAL AND PARTICIPATORY ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Workshop 1: Young people's experiences on the benefits and risks of participation

- CJ Hamilton, Asaybi Snape and Kirsche Walker

In this workshop three Youth Advocates facilitated the group and began by describing their experiences of being involved in three different participation projects focused on preventing sexual violence. After a short warm up and introductions, the facilitators each presented a different example of a project they'd been involved in:

- the AYPH/ University of Bedfordshire 'Be Healthy Project'
- a participatory film-making project addressing gangs and sexual violence and
- a new young people led research project on peer support after sexual exploitation.

The presentations were short and sign-posted participants to related resources – but they sparked a large number of questions. Participants were keen to hear more from the presenters about their experiences of being a participant in these projects and the challenges and benefits for them. Part of this workshop was therefore given over to a question and answer format. This was then followed with some group discussions – focusing on pre-prepared questions suggested by the facilitators. They were: the methods used to involve young people; the benefits for different stakeholders (young people, adults and organisations) and the risks and required preparation when involving young people.

The discussion on methods highlighted the need to consider different options for young people to be involved in different ways and at different 'levels'. Benefits identified included: building confidence and personal development in young people; the opportunity for young people to realise 'it's not just me', the identification of additional opportunities and feeling valued. Meanwhile for practitioners and organisations, identified benefits included: the ability to keep their work grounded and rooted in young people's

realities; the personal learning and increase in motivation for staff; and improved responses which were more likely to be successful when peer led. Risks and responses identified included: issues of stigma, re-traumatisation, the need to create safe spaces, provide follow on support and think carefully about the process;

The session ended with a simple and interactive evaluation exercise which provided some positive feedback

- "Fantastic hearing from young people on their experiences of engaging in prevention projects"
- "Confidently presented"
- "The energy, motivation, commitment of young people"
- "Good to see the projects and the longer term involvement of the young people"

## Workshop 2: Anonymity vs acknowledgement: risks, repercussions and responsibilities

- Fiona Factor, Kim van Laar and Ivet Pieper

The workshop started with some introductory contributions from participants explaining why they chose to join workshop two. Some of the reasons included interest in; representation, unintended consequences, power in decision-making, the impact on victims and consequences of working with the media.

Ivet and Kim then presented brief biographical information about 'Jasmin', an 18 year old service user who wants to advocate for other young people by telling her story in the media and more widely in the public domain. The group were then asked to identify the risks and benefits that supporting her to do this could generate – for Jasmin, for the staff and for the organisation.

Benefits for the young person included: a sense of empowerment, feeling involved, increased confidence, knowledge, personal growth, youth led= youth relevant, realising 'it's not just me', additional opportunities, training skills and links and feeling valued.

For the organisation it was stated that they would get to: 'tick the participation box', get young people to do the thinking for them, that it keeps them grounded and aware of current issues and realities for young people and that peer led activities might be more successful.

For practitioners the benefits discussed included: personal learning about young people, developing skills for facilitating, having that interaction with young people, providing motivation, developing a relational approach and developing confidence through young people's responses.

The participants also explored the risks and this included discussions related to the hierarchy of trauma, not having adequate follow on support, potential repercussions of involvement and the fact that this may lead to young people reliving experiences and being re-victimised.

The group identified some key points that should be considered when supporting young people who are prepared to 'go public' this included:

- Making sure you have plenty of time so that the young person has the opportunity to consider all consequences and is not forced into making a decision too quickly
- Practicing the risks that might be associated with not remaining anonymous and devising appropriate coping strategies – 'what if's'
- Ensuring the door of the project is always open for long-term support even years after the original engagement.
- Ensuring consent to use images and stories is on-going and revisited. Young people must feel able to withdraw this at any time and have images removed.
- Considering the risks of NOT speaking out.
- Offering therapeutic support for the young person before, during and after the process.
- Recognising that young people will respond differently and therefore the importance of considering each individual's wishes in their own right.

Workshop 2: Stigma and representation: how might participatory projects increase stigma and what strategies can be applied to minimise this risk?

- Claire Cody and Mariana Meshi-Muslia

In this workshop the facilitators provided some background about why stigma was an issue they felt was worth exploring. Claire shared some quotes from recent consultations with children and young people affected by sexual violence in the UK, Albania and Bulgaria and shared their concerns about how they felt they might get stigmatised through taking part in actions and activities that focussed on preventing sexual violence.

Mariana shared some of her experiences of working in Albania with young people affected by sexual violence and provided examples of the stigma young people often face by their families and society at large. In small groups participants were invited to share and discuss examples from their own work of where stigma has been an issue and to explain the circumstances surrounding that person becoming 'stigmatised' and any learning from that.

The groups discussed related issues such as some participants' experiences of working in a group context whereby some group members may stigmatise others in the group if they perceive themselves to be different in some way. Others, from their experience, felt this was not an issue in group work. There was discussion over how we as practitioners frame and label young people and the impact on how they are then represented and potentially stigmatised. The importance of thinking through the costs and benefits of participation and the role of donors was also discussed. In groups participants also discussed several case studies involving potentially stigmatising situations to consider and think about strategies that could be applied to minimise the risks.

## THE TENSIONS BETWEEN PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION ONLINE AND OFFLINE

- Dr Kristi Hickle

In Dr Kristi Hickle's presentation she reflected on her experiences of working in the USA with young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE). Kristi talked about a new project she is working on with colleagues in the UK that is looking at CSE in England and particularly, how a child's rights –based framework for addressing CSE is implemented. She touched on the public and political interest around CSE and the impact of this in terms of how we perceive and deal with the issue. She explored the notion of 'moral panics' highlighting that CSE wasn't just a 'moral panic' as it is sometimes described.

Kristi highlighted some of the tensions her and her colleagues are uncovering in their work in England including the pressure on practitioners to gather evidence for court. She noted that when participatory approaches to intervening in CSE are absent, young people are forced to choose from the available narratives, rather than offer up their own more nuanced and complicated narratives. She gave example of disclosures from young people from past work and how disclosures are slow and happen over time and how this is often at odds with the current focus on prosecution.

Kristi described the recent 'See Me Hear Me' Framework adopted in England and the emphasis this provides that prevention and support should be explicitly child-centred. She shared that the children in question must be 'seen' as victims of exploitation and 'heard' as participants in planning their own safety, and sometimes that of others, too. Reflecting on the current research project Kristi mentioned the tensions and difficulties across the sites and throughout the project. She reflected that in each site, the negative consequences of the 'moral panic' were clear. People are very concerned about being perceived as doing enough to protect children from CSE and that this can prevent reflective and critical thinking about this issue. She concluded by highlighting that trusting relationships with practitioners are central to any good and effective work in this area and that it is important to protect that relationship.

Dr Tanya Seriser discussed the risks and benefits for young people of speaking out online. Focusing on the un-facilitated use of social media by young people, Tanya spoke about the differences between different forms of social media and the ways that these impact on young people's decisions to, and methods of, speaking out about sexual violence. She used the example of the hashtag #yesallwomen to draw attention to the growth of feminist activism around sexual violence on twitter, and its appeal to young women particularly. She also discussed the dangers of online misogyny. She described the blurred boundaries that exist between young people's online and offline social worlds, meaning that the decision to speak out online can have consequences offline and vice versa. Finally, she talked about the need for organisations working with young people in online spaces to be aware of the risks and benefits for young people in using these spaces and, in particular, to account for the intersections between online and offline environments.

## CLOSING

In the closing session all the presenters were asked to return to the stage to allow additional questions, discussion and reflection. Questions posed explored some of the gaps that participants felt the conference did not fully explore such as working with boys and young men and working with children with disabilities who were affected by sexual violence and asked presenters to share their views on prevention. To conclude Claire Cody thanked Cumberland Lodge, the Council of Europe, Oak Foundation and the University of Bedfordshire for their support. Claire thanked all the presenters, facilitators and participants for taking part in and engaging in the discussions and debates. Claire summed up some of the main themes that seemed to have emerged during the conference. She noted that what was clear was that there was not one model of participation for young people affected by sexual violence. She noted that it was important to recognise that although group work is clearly valued, that within groups we are working with individuals with their own experiences and personalities and not all young people will want to engage in the same types of activities and actions. She highlighted the clear message that had emerged around the importance of protection for participation and that it was clear that instead of risk aversion there was a need for careful risk management and planning. Claire reflected on the fact that the conference had left a number of questions unanswered and that unfortunately that was the nature of the work but that it was important to start of these important conversations about safe and ethical practice.

In closing the session Claire asked all participants to write a self-addressed postcard to themselves outlining what they would do and commit to following the conference. For example, reaching out to other delegates, reading some of the resources mentioned or exploring participatory practice within their own organisations. Claire also asked participants to provide feedback on the day.

## **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: KEY MESSAGES FROM RECENT RESEARCH**

- Professor Jenny Pearce

Professor Jenny Pearce's keynote address focussed on two themes, that sexual abuse and sexual exploitation can have dramatic impacts on young people's lives, and that young people can be resilient and can 'make change'. Jenny described some recent projects that have been undertaken at the International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking and through these projects demonstrated how young people can be resilient but also the challenges that they face. Jenny explored the global and European context in terms of policies and prevalence and shared research carried out with both young people and practitioners to demonstrate the ways that young people may be disbelieved and blamed for the abuse and exploitation experienced.

Jenny explored some of the impacts of abuse and exploitation drawing from Finkelhor's work on polyvictimisation. The presentation explored risks including the risks for looked after children, children with disabilities and reflected on the research regarding the ethnicity of victims.

Jenny also explored the need for contextual safeguarding and drawing on Firmin's work, emphasized the need to focus on the neighbourhood and community context as well as on 'vulnerable' children. Jenny described her social model of consent and concluded by emphasizing the importance of trying to understand not only the risks for young people but also protective factors and the resilience in young people outlining the need for strengths-based approaches.

## **NEXT STEPS**

In the concluding session Claire noted that the report of the day would be sent to all participants along with the PowerPoint presentations. Claire also informed the delegates that on the following day a smaller group would be meeting to reflect on the conference outcomes and consider potential next steps for building on the conference and continuing the conversations.

## FEEDBACK FROM THE DAY

At the end of the day participants were asked to provide feedback on what they enjoyed about the day, areas where there could be improvements if another conference was to be organised and any 'bright ideas' that came to mind.

### - Positive

- Love the mix of practitioners, researchers and the international attendance
- Learned so much about a variety of things – very, very helpful going forward
- Learning from so many different people
- Diverse line of informative speakers
- Good mix of topics, talks and backgrounds represented
- Like the variety of formats and spaces to share mistakes. Felt like room was filled by 'experts' who are really doing this stuff
- Amazing richness of knowledge and practice
- Good space for being vulnerable and talking about unformed ideas openly
- Refreshing and exciting discussions around the benefits of group work/ Acknowledgement that benefits outweigh the risk when risk is considered and managed
- Great to be part of the conversation and being with people who 'get' the need for but the challenges of participation work with young people affected by sexual violence
- Panel question on 2 preventive areas was excellent
- All interesting presentations – well-chosen speakers
- I am thankful to see what is the experience of other organisations in this area
- Inspirational
- Loved the honesty of some presentations in speaking about things that didn't go so well. We as practitioners also need spaces to talk about the different issues so we don't repeat but can learn from mistakes
- I will draw on resources here today and galvanise our prevention workers ideas and inspiration – easier to form ideas when you've seen living examples
- Loved hearing about creative projects – PhotoVoice
- Interesting discussion on risk management and peer projects
- Good 'start' conference, beautiful place and positive feeling well organised, good way to continue
- Really great conference – enjoyed the longer talks but thought the short 7minute presentations were very engaging and really good way of keeping focus and variety – very positive! Felt very privileged to be around people with such expertise
- Loved learning from everyone's experiences and sharing experiences excellent key themes and learning experience
- Excellent practitioner experience shared
- Really good energy and food throughout the day – the setting is fantastic speakers very positive and general atmosphere of cooperation and enthusiasm
- Amazing location and discussions



## - Improvements for next time

- Not enough time – so interesting didn't want it to end
- Fewer presenters with more time each
- Would like to consider work with young men in more detail
- All great perhaps a change of environment – fresh air! And to see the beautiful venue
- Not enough time would have liked two days – longer presentations
- Not enough focus on working with young men – I also should have mentioned this at the end of the day! Missed opportunity
- Lack of conversation around the participation of boys and young men who are affected by sexual violence
- Too many information for a short time
- Workshop three could have been better structured
- Minimal discussion on actual strategies of having children participate in projects – selection, their role etc.
- Would have been great to have had two days to allow more time for workshops and discussions
- Needed more space for discussion/ questions especially session 2
- Really nothing that hasn't felt good
- More insight from 'survivors' video's etc. could have been used if they didn't want to attend
- More workshops
- More young people!
- Could have been a bit more group work and a bit less plenary
- Too UK centric hard to relate

## - Bright Ideas

- Do it again, hear more of how it is working in practice
- Could think more about education ways of teaching and talking about these things with children
- Do it again next year
- Maintain a network that can carry on communicating online? Facebook group?
- Keep bringing people together learnt a lot ù
- Interested in thinking about a project that explores power, gender and sex before abuse or exploitation is a risk or an experience
- Bring different perspectives and focus
- Keen to explore preventative work linked to attitudinal change on gender and sex in young people
- Could we develop a secure international online forum for participation practitioners to discuss ethical dilemmas and different issues to get peer support?
- A simple format/ template to be able to collate basic information about projects using participation to be shared in one place
- Concrete plan of action! Establish a complaint procedure for our project/ work
- Invite young people to debate with us
- Campaigns more meetings, bring more young people to conferences to be involved in decision making and planning
- Talk about new trends and things that we can do to solve things
- A youth campaign to stop sexual violence to get media to listen and protect young people

## FURTHER RESOURCES

### Short films, digital stories and booklets developed by young people

'AYPH Be Healthy' animated film

<http://www.ayph-behealthy.org.uk/animated-film/>

'Having Our Say Too' digital stories

<http://www.havingoursaytoo.co.uk/digital-stories.html>

Gang associated sexual exploitation and violence films

<http://www.beds.ac.uk/research-ref/iasr/gasev>

'Out of the box: Young people's stories'

[http://www.beds.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/442553/Out-of-the-Box.pdf](http://www.beds.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/442553/Out-of-the-Box.pdf)

Millennium children say no to sexual violence in schools

<http://www.voicesofyouth.org/en/posts/millennium-children--say-no-to-sexual-violence-in-schools>

### Reports and Articles

Cody, C. (2015) 'They don't talk about it enough' Report on the 2014 consultations with Youth Advisors for Our Voices

[http://www.beds.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/481591/ourvoices\\_final\\_web.pdf](http://www.beds.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/481591/ourvoices_final_web.pdf)

Lansdown, G. (2011) Every child's right to be heard: A resource guide on the rights of the child general comment no. 12. London. Save the Children

[http://www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/Every\\_Childs\\_Right\\_to\\_be\\_Heard.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/french/adolescence/files/Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf)

Lansdown, G and O' Kane, C. (2014) A toolkit for monitoring and evaluating participation  
<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/toolkit-monitoring-and-evaluating-childrens-participation>

Pearce, J. (2010) Children's participation in policy and practice to prevent child sexual abuse – Developing empowering interventions  
In Protecting children from sexual violence - A comprehensive approach. Strasbourg: Council of Europe  
<http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/1in5/Source/PublicationSexualViolence/Pierce.pdf>

Taylor-Browne, J. (2002) More than one chance! Young people involved in prostitution speak out, London: ECPAT:  
[http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/more\\_than\\_one\\_chance.pdf](http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/more_than_one_chance.pdf)

Warrington, C. (2010) From less harm to more good: The role of children and young people's participation in relation to sexual exploitation, Youth & Policy No. 104, pp. 62-80 [full paper]  
<http://www.youthandpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/104.pdf>

What Works for Us (2011) What Works for Us: Annual Report 2009-2010, London. Barnardos/ ECPAT/ NWG/ University of Bedfordshire  
[http://www.beds.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/293100/14361\\_PR-and-M\\_WWFU-report\\_v7\\_HR\\_1.pdf](http://www.beds.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/293100/14361_PR-and-M_WWFU-report_v7_HR_1.pdf)

### Websites

The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking  
<http://www.beds.ac.uk/intcent>

'Our Voices'

<http://www.beds.ac.uk/research-ref/iasr/centres/ourvoices>

Abianda

<http://www.abianda.com/>

PhotoVoice

<https://photovoice.org/>

Luna Children's Charity

<http://lunachildren.org.uk/>

Global Voice for Change

<http://www.voicesofyouth.org/en/sections/content/pages/global-voice-for-change>

## ABOUT CUMBERLAND COLLOQUIA

Through the Cumberland Colloquium scheme, Cumberland Lodge offers its expertise and beautiful venue to facilitate interdisciplinary and inter-institutional conferences, run by and for postgraduates and early career researchers. Fully mentored by Cumberland Lodge, organisers will have the opportunity to deliver a well-crafted one-day conference and gain valuable experience in the processes of funding applications, administration, recruitment, networking, publicity, report-writing and press releases.

Find out more at:  
[www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/colloquia](http://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/colloquia)

## ABOUT CUMBERLAND LODGE

Cumberland Lodge is an educational charity which was established in 1947 as an institute dedicated to the betterment of society through the promotion of ethical discussion.

Inspired by the beauty and history of its surroundings, Cumberland Lodge is dedicated to the discussion of ethical, spiritual and topical issues in contemporary society. Preparing young people for their future responsibilities is at the heart of its work, but the Lodge seeks through the enquiring nature of its programmes and the quality of its hospitality to enhance the well-being of people whatever their age or wherever they live.

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Summary report written by Claire Cody  
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