Review of the Wales Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Statutory Guidance

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Glossary

ABUHB	Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
APPG	All-Party Parliamentary Group
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CSERQ4	Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Questionnaire (4-question version)
CSERQ15	Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Questionnaire (15-question version)
CSSIW	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales
DA	Domestic Abuse
DfE	Department for Education
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
MACE	Multi-agency Child Exploitation meetings
MACSE	Multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation meetings
MASM	Multi-agency Strategy Meeting
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NWG	National Working Group (for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People)
PPU	Public Protection Unit
RSB	Regional Safeguarding Board
RSCB	Regional Safeguarding Children's Board
SERAF	Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework
SHB	Sexually Harmful Behaviour
SRE	Sex and Relationship Education
SREC	School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
TPV	Teenage Partner Violence
UHB	University Health Board
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WPYOG	Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group
YOS	Youth Offending Services

1.   Introduction

1.1   In January 2017, Welsh Government commissioned a review of the Wales Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Statutory guidance, embedded definition and associated SERAF (Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework) protocol.

1.2   The aim of the review was to evaluate how the statutory guidance is working in practice and to review the guidance, embedded definition and SERAF to ensure they are fit for purpose. To that end, the study addressed the following research questions:

- Do the different professional groups (police, social care, health, schools, and voluntary sector) know about the Statutory CSE guidance and understand it?

- How effective and 'fit for purpose' do professionals from the range of agencies involved consider the guidance to be in terms of:

    o defining CSE;

    o identifying and referring children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and;

    o accessing support and interventions for young people in a multi-agency context?

    o What examples are there of problems and good practice?

- How effective and 'fit for purpose' do professionals from the range of agencies involved consider the guidance to be in terms of:

    o preventing and intervening early in child sexual exploitation;

    o protecting children and young people who are at risk of abuse or are abused through sexual exploitation and;

    o disrupting and prosecuting those who perpetrate this form of abuse?

    o What examples are there of problems and good practice?

- What changes are required to:

    o the guidance;

    o the definition of CSE and;

    o the protocol (SERAF) to make the guidance more effective in terms of the above?

1.3   This review is timely. Wales has been at the forefront of UK research informed CSE policy and practice. The introduction of policy and practice guidance in 2009 created a single national protocol for how to identify young people at risk of this form of abuse (WAG, 2009; 2011). We are almost ten years on from the development of that guidance and the SERAF, and in the intervening years CSE has received much attention in terms of research, developments in practice and in public awareness. It is no more a 'hidden issue' (see Coles, 2005). The introduction in 2016 of the National Action Plan to Tackle CSE (Wales) (Welsh Government, 2016) is a further step in Wales to ensure a coordinated response across multi-agency working to prevent, intervene and safeguard against CSE in Wales.

1.4   The relatively recent introduction of CSE to social care policy and practice means there has been little opportunity to consider the effectiveness of assessment tools, new interventions and service responses, and the outcomes for young people experiencing these harms. It is clear there is a need to review the Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation statutory guidance, including the embedded definition of CSE and the protocol, to ensure the guidance remains an informed, useful and practical document that contributes to the effective safeguarding of vulnerable children, across all agencies. It should be noted there are still vital gaps in knowledge about the effectiveness of responses employed to prevent and intervene in the problem (see chapter 3); about the factors that might have a role in protecting young people against increased risk, and of the significance of these factors in reducing risk and vulnerability to CSE. Developing understanding of how best to equip practitioners to identify and respond to young people is of paramount importance.

Structure of the report

1.5   This report begins by outlining the research methodology undertaken in the review, before moving on to the first of two findings chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of key literature relating to CSE in terms of definition, identification and assessment, and responses. The second presents key themes and findings from the research, including conclusions from the review. The report finishes with a number of recommendations, organised under key themes.

2. Methodology

2.1 This project was designed as a qualitative inquiry that sought to explore the perspectives of key stakeholders working in the area of CSE, professionals involved, and care-experienced young adults. The aim was to understand how the statutory guidance is working in practice, and identify ways in which it could be improved to ensure a coherent guidance, definition and protocol that is fit for purpose across all agencies. In addition, a desk-based review brought together information from the relevant academic and policy and practice literatures on how definitions of CSE, risk assessment frameworks and multi-agency protocols operate in practice, to ensure that learning from across the UK is embedded within the recommendations.

Literature review

2.2 The literature review focussed on research from within the United Kingdom, excluding most international work on CSE. This is due to the widespread inconsistencies in defining and understanding what constitutes CSE that exist globally, which make it difficult to derive comparable data from work in other countries (see Section 3.3). Similarly, because of the relatively recent and substantial shifts in UK policy and understanding around CSE, the review mainly focusses on research since 2000, when the Department of Health's legislation 'Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution' first established a policy framework in which children involved in the exchange of sex could be recognised as victims of abuse (DoH, 2000). Search parameters were set from 2000 to the present, and search returns were, where possible, set to peer review and mapped to keyword search terms. Databases searched include the Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, Cochrane Library, Social Services Abstracts and Sociological Abstracts. Supplementary searches were also undertaken of key journals such as Children and Youth Services Review, the British Journal of Social Work, Children and Society, Child Abuse Review and Critical Social Policy. Additionally, 'grey literature' was identified from a variety of sources including but not limited to: Welsh Government website; National Assembly for Wales website; Department of Health (for England); National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE); and the Social Care Institute for Excellence and a number of Children's Charities websites. Within this primarily UK-based and relatively recent research, the review did not identify a significant body of seminal texts, but rather a substantial field of

research which, while relevant and of high-quality, mostly comprises small-scale, localised, and/or specialised studies. The lack of larger scale work is identified by Bovarnick, Scott and Pearce (2017) who point to Scott and Skidmore (2006) as the only study to undertake a large-scale evaluation of outcomes for CSE intervention services. However, one area in which key texts are easy to identify is research which incorporates the voices of CSE-experienced young people, because there are very few studies which take this as their focus. Key texts identified in the review which address this vital topic are Smeaton (2013), Gilligan (2016), and Hallett (2017).

Sample

2.3   Purposive sampling, based on Welsh Government recommendations and the researchers' expertise, was used to ensure we included and captured the different perspectives of the professionals and agencies involved, including those of a strategic and 'frontline' nature. This approach to sampling also ensured we included inputs from different areas across Wales, e.g. urban, rural, valleys, and Welsh speaking areas.

2.4   The Welsh Government's specification set out a list of the professional stakeholders to be included in this review, which included Regional Safeguarding Children's Boards (RSCBs), social services lead officers for CSE, the police, designated lead officers in schools, designated doctors and nurses, and leads from a range of national bodies.

2.5   We secured focus groups (N=21) and interviews (N=6) with nominees from the most relevant national bodies in Wales. This included the RSCBs, enabling us to involve a full range of professional stakeholders, managers and practitioners from all agencies in their area working with CSE. In addition to this we involved representatives from a range of projects and services working directly with children and young people affected by CSE. In order to ensure we engaged sufficiently with the practitioner perspective, we were also able to take up three opportunities to run dedicated focus groups with practitioners from a range of different agencies and with different roles including: the police, social workers, youth workers, local authority corporate safeguarding officers, education social workers, and teachers. Some of the focus groups organised by the RSCB's also included practitioners as well as service managers and co-ordinators. A full list of the individuals, bodies,

organisations and focus groups represented in the review can be found in Annex A.

2.6   In total, we gathered the views of 163 professional stakeholders working from across the key fields of health, policing, education, the third sector and social care, including those operating at senior and frontline levels. Some 58 percent of the sample can be described as managers and 42 percent as practitioners working directly with children and young people. Figure 1 illustrates the different agencies represented in the sample. (The category of 'other local government' in Figure 1 includes Youth Offending Services (YOS), Youth Work, Corporate Safeguarding and Housing Officers.)

Figure 1: Professional stakeholder sample by agency type
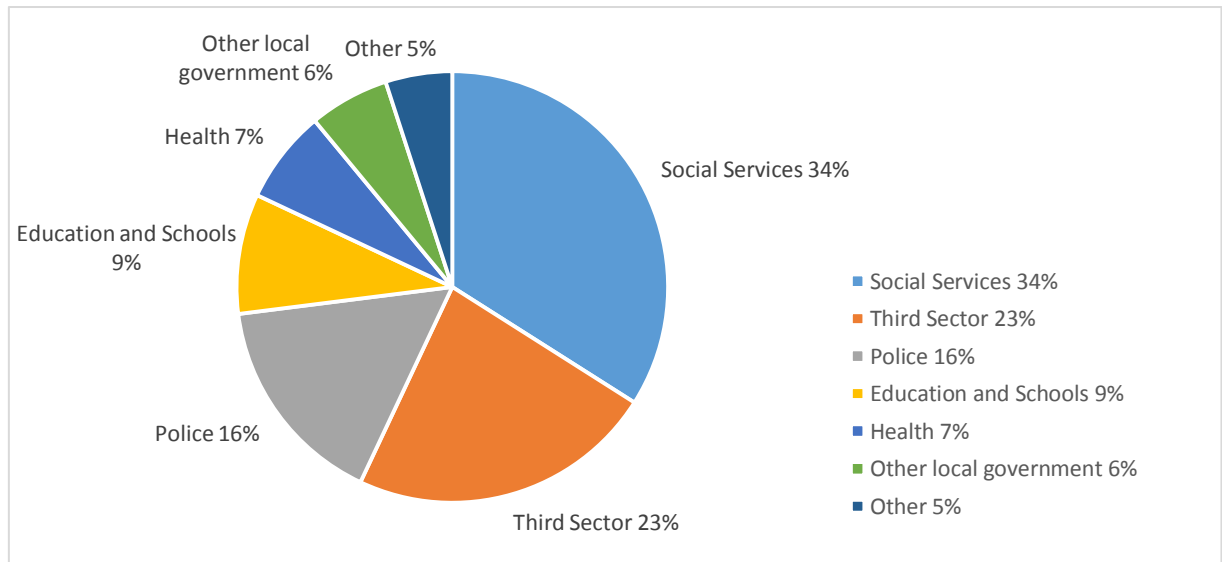
2.7   We also ensured that perspectives from the different areas of Wales were included, e.g. urban, rural, valleys, and in predominantly Welsh speaking areas in north and west Wales. Figure 2 illustrates the geographical spread of the sample.

Figure 2: Professional stakeholder sample by region of Wales (NB. 'national' means those who have a national remit or responsibility not limited to a region.)

Western Bay 11%

National 14%

South East 41%

North 17%

Mid and West 17%

- South East 41%
- Mid and West 17%
- North 17%
- National 14%
- Western Bay 11%
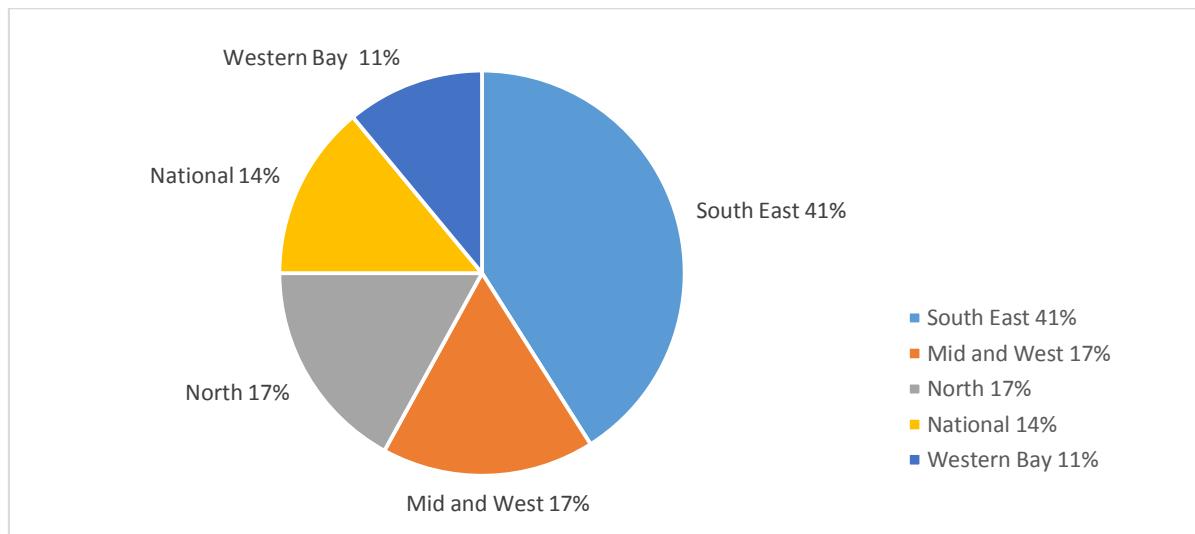
Including the views of young people

2.8   The actualities and consequences of CSE belong to the domain of children and young peoples' lived experiences. As such, ideally, we would have liked to be able to assess the operation of the statutory guidance from the end user's perspective, i.e. young people. However we know from our experience it is often very difficult to gain ethical approval and access to those who have experienced CSE. Further, it would have been very difficult to identify enough young people who were available and willing to be interviewed within the relatively short timeframes proposed. Further, we do not think it is ethically acceptable to put the responsibility of assessing the operation of the statutory guidance from a young person's perspective on just two or three young people through a single interview. While it was not possible to gain extensive views and experiences of young people affected by CSE, it was decided that the views of young people would nevertheless be an important feature of the review – not to comment on awareness of the guidance but to explore broader aspects such as risk and vulnerabilities, assessment and responses. Young people's perspectives were sought in two ways:

i. We ran two focus groups with care-experienced young adults who may or may not have experienced CSE but who hold very relevant and pertinent experiences as vulnerable young people in the care system. Focus groups were held with CASCADE Voices – a trained and supported user-led advisory group of care-experienced young people/adults with whom we work in partnership on a number of research projects. The participants in the first workshop comprised three young women and two young men. In the second workshop the group was made up of two young women and six young men. One participant in the second workshop was from a BME background, all other participants were white. Participants were aged 16-25 years.

ii. We have made use of existing empirical research on young people's views and experiences of the interface with professionals. This included drawing on research involving young people in Wales with experiences of sexual exploitation, and which is especially pertinent to the definition of CSE and the framework for assessment, referral and associated safeguarding responses[1].

Data collection

Professional stakeholders

2.9 Qualitative data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Interviews are used in social research as a way of unearthing the background assumptions and grasping the taken-for-granted sense-making that underpins social action (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997). The use of a checklist of topics will allow interviews to move beyond a predefined set of questions and explore sensitively and flexibly the ways in which participants make sense of, 'theorise', and articulate their perspectives (Flick, 2002). The use of focus groups, with multi-agency partners in particular, provided the means to tease out valuable reflections on the intricacies (including difficulties and successes) of the use of the guidance in multi-agency working practices across Wales – allowing us to consider what is working well and not so well in terms of identifying, referring and supporting young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

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[1] See Hallett, 2015; 17.

2.10   The focus and content of the interviews and focus groups was guided by the research aim and research questions outlined above, and by issues arising through the multi-level analysis. A semi-structured schedule (see Annex B) was developed based on the main areas contained within the research questions. This included:

- The definition of CSE and how well CSE is understood;

- Identification of CSE and referral – including the use of the SERAF tool and multi-agency strategy meetings;

- Responses to CSE – including prevention, interventions, working with young people towards positive change, disruption and pursuit of perpetrators;

- Multi-agency working;

- Strategic issues – including monitoring, learning and the sharing of good practice and lines of accountability.

Young people

2.11   To support the participation of the CASCADE Voices group in the study, creative methods were incorporated into the research design. When identifying the group's perspectives on the risks and vulnerabilities currently included on the SERAF, and whether this might need to be amended, cards were created with each of the categories of risk and vulnerability. The group split into two and each ranked the top, or most significant, nine cards. The discussion around this activity was recorded and transcribed. In the second session of the focus group, we considered themes emerging from this review relating both to the definition and young people's involvement in CSE strategy meetings. We created two vignettes of possible examples of CSE, designed to elicit discussion around consent and characteristics such as age of the young person, learning difficulties, ethnicity and sexuality, which we set alongside three definitions of CSE for comment and contrast. In the second part of this focus group we used cards with various professional or service user titles written on, to arrange around a table to explore a child or young person's involvement in a strategy meeting and aid further discussion about this. These activities were used as accessible and 'fun' ways of eliciting narratives (Mannay, 2015) around CSE. As this is a sensitive subject area

that some of the young people may have had direct experience of, or may have known others who have been affected by it, it was important to make the activity accessible so we could elicit narratives without alienating or upsetting any of the participants or discouraging them to talk. NB: Whilst creative and participative methods were included in this way, these activities were primarily used in order to aid participation and elicit narratives in line with ethical principles informing the research, and were not incorporated as data themselves.

2.12   We also held two workshops, one with a representative group of 11 participants from the main professional groupings working with CSE (social services, police, health, education and the voluntary sector), and a second with seven young adults from the CASCADE Voices group. The aim of these workshops was to share emerging findings and to discuss and debate some of the key recommendations emerging from the Review for Welsh Government to consider when updating the guidance. This helped to provide ethical and analytical rigour to the research. The discussions held in these workshops have helped to inform and elaborate on the recommendations arising from the review. However, the views of the group have not significantly altered the recommendations where it is at the expense of the analysis arising from the other elements of the review.

Data Analysis

2.13   All interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and transcribed by an established and reputed transcriber who works regularly with CASCADE. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data has been led by the principal investigator and the lead co-investigator and undertaken throughout the research process by all members of the research team. In terms of our theoretical framework, the purpose was not to test a particular theory or hypothesis. Instead our approach was explorative, both inductive and deductive – data-driven and theoretically informed, linking data to conceptual frameworks (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), drawing primarily from relevant literatures and theories, allowing for a detailed exploration of the research area to enable us to answer the research questions. Our analytical strategy has been thematic and conducted primarily using NVIVO software. Overarching thematic categories and analytical themes arising from coding and categories across the data sets have been created (Schmidt, 2004). Initial codes were formed, related codes grouped and merged from across each data set to create a

coding framework of coding themes and sub-themes. This coding framework has been guided by both the research questions and the data. This was accompanied by an iterative process of reviewing and cross checking these emerging themes and interpretations with relevant literature, research and theory (Flick, 2002). After some initial analysis we were able to discuss the emergent findings with key stakeholders at two separate workshops, as mentioned above, so providing an additional element of rigour to the analysis and the associated recommendations.

Ethical considerations

2.14   High levels of assurance, security and ethical conduct were adhered to. An ethics application was submitted and approved by Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (SREC). Information sheets were provided to all of those interviewed or who have taken part in focus groups and consent for the qualitative research with participants was sought in both written and verbal form prior to their being interviewed or in a focus group.

2.15   Interviews and focus groups were recorded, with the permission of participants. All data was anonymised at the earliest opportunity and anonymization keys stored securely and separately. All data, including transcriptions and electronically recorded researcher reflexive notes from each interview/focus group have been stored securely on a password protected University computer on the University network, along with hard-copies of interview transcripts and accompanying notes which are securely stowed in a lockable cabinet on university premises, and has been accessed only by members of the research team. Data analysis was conducted on software on a University password protected computer on the University network, and will be held for up to 5 years and then securely destroyed, in accordance with SREC requirements.

2.16   Data has been presented in this report to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for all participants. Extracts from focus groups are referenced by number rather than identifiable grouping. It has not been possible to reference professional background in these instances, in part because attributing speech to individuals when there were multiple speakers was not possible for the transcriber within the remit of this review. Where the focus group consisted of a specific team this would risk making participants identifiable and so the same principle as with the mixed focus groups was followed. For quotations from individual or group interviews we

have provided the generic professional context and sought permission for this at interview. We have endeavoured to present material from across the range of focus groups and interviews held.

3. Findings – Review of the Literature

This section of the report provides an overview of literature relating to the policy, practice and research background of this review. It provides important context, outlining the historical and current practice context within which this review takes place, as well as providing evidence which informs the analyses, conclusions and subsequent recommendations. The literature review draws from academic as well as policy and practice research and theory, and particularly focuses on how CSE is defined, understood, and responded to in policy and practice across the UK.

Defining CSE

3.1 Although the term 'Child Sexual Exploitation' has existed in UK policy-making for nearly a decade, and in research and campaigning for much longer, there is still variance among definitions of CSE. There are aspects of CSE that make it particularly difficult to define it clearly, and in a way that can be easily translated into policy and practice. This has important implications for understanding the problem and implementing responses, as this review addresses.

Historical context[2]

3.2 The formal introduction of the term 'Child Sexual Exploitation' into UK social policy in 2009 signalled a shift in understanding of what had previously been termed 'child prostitution'[3], although the evolution of CSE as a descriptor of this phenomenon can be traced over a much longer period of social care research and campaigning[4]. The 2009 policy in Wales[5] followed on from the earlier social care legislation in place for England and Wales - 'Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution' (DoH, 2000), which had for the first time created a clear distinction between children and adults involved in prostitution and sex work. This was supported by the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which further regulated against adults purchasing sex from children or facilitating sexual exchange with children. However, until 2009 children and young people could still be subject to criminal justice responses if they were judged to be exchanging sex without being forced

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[2] For a lengthier discussion of the developments and changes in policy and practice related to CSE see Hallett, 2017 – chapter one.
[3] See Department of Health (2000) Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution. London: DoH
[4] See, for example, Coles (2005); Ennew, J. (1986) The Sexual Exploitation of Children. Cambridge: Polity Press
[5] Separate policy for England was developed and published in 2009 by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

(see Clutton and Coles, 2008; Pearce, 2009; Hallett, 2017). The 2009 developments around CSE shifted such ideas of responsibility further away from young people, and established in policy and practice that CSE is a form of child sexual abuse and is not something for which a child or young person can be held responsible. Until these policy changes, children and young people could be subject to convictions for prostitution-related offences if they were over the age of criminal responsibility (ten years), even when they were under the legal age of consent to sexual activity. This was primarily because the element of exchange involved in CSE put children and young people in the position of being viewed as criminally culpable for what in another context would be understood as child sexual abuse (Hallett, 2017).

Current Policy Context

3.3   There is no single definition for CSE across the four constituent countries of the UK (see Annex C), reflecting the global disparity in the definitions and understandings of the issue[6]. The Welsh, UK (pertaining to England) and Scottish Governments and the Northern Ireland Safeguarding Board each has their own definition and guidance for CSE, and all four of these definitions differ to some degree (Annex C lists each definition together for ease of reference)[7]. The devolved and non-devolved cross-over between England and Wales means attention to the recent developments in CSE policy and guidance in England is given here.

Recent Developments in England

3.4   The recent consultation undertaken in England in 2016 was a high-profile response to the need to further develop the definition of CSE and its associated guidance (HM Government, 2017a). As a result of the consultation, the definition of CSE in use in England now reads:

> *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*

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[6] For discussion of the global context, see Cameron G. et al (2014).
[7] See Scottish Government (2016), Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (2014)

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 (HM Government, 2017a: 5).

3.5   In addition to the definition itself, the UK Government's report on the consultation provides an important snapshot of contemporary understandings of CSE and related issues. The consultation highlights what respondents thought were the critical components of a definition of CSE; among these are issues of consent and exchange (HM Government, 2017b). We will return to discuss the importance of these issues in more detail in sections 3.29-3.32.

Wales

3.6   Wales has traditionally been at the forefront of UK research-informed CSE policy and practice. The introduction of guidance in 2009 created a single national protocol to identify young people at risk of this form of abuse (WAG 2009, 2011). Wales is set apart from England in that the all-Wales protocol exists to provide national guidance on how CSE fits within the broader All Wales Child Protection procedures (WAG, 2009). This guidance and embedded definition and SERAF framework was the outcome of research in Wales conducted by Barnardo's in 2005 and 2006 (see Coles, 2005; Clutton and Coles, 2007) which was undertaken to determine the scale of CSE in Wales, as well as establish a research-informed mechanism for identifying children and young people who may be at risk. The SERAF operates on the basis of identifying established vulnerability and risk factors which correlate to a risk score[8]. The score determines the risk category and its associated child protection action. This framework assists professionals to assess a young person's risk level and also to identify areas in which they need support (see for example Clutton and Coles, 2007). In January 2011, to support the SERAF and multi-agency practice to respond to CSE, the Welsh Government produced the Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation guidance. The guidance sets out the developments in understanding CSE since 2000 and outlines the multi-agency arrangements that should operate in Wales.

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[8] These categories were built from Coles' (2005) study in Wales, which outlined four categories of risk, on the basis that some young people's actual involvement might not be known, these were: not at risk; at mild risk; at moderate risk; and at significant risk of sexual exploitation.

3.7   The guidance and protocol include a statutory definition of CSE which has been adopted by multi-agency partners. The guidance aims to assist practitioners in preventing child sexual exploitation, protecting children and young people who are at risk of abuse or are abused through sexual exploitation, and disrupting and prosecuting those who perpetrate this form of abuse. The text of the Wales definition as set out by the All Wales guidance reads:

> *Child sexual exploitation is the coercion or manipulation of children and young people into taking part in sexual activities. It is a form of sexual abuse involving an exchange of some form of payment which can include money, mobile phones and other items, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, 'protection' or affection. The vulnerability of the young person and grooming process employed by perpetrators renders them powerless to recognise the exploitative nature of relationships and unable to give informed consent (WAG 2009: 4).*

3.8   As we will discuss throughout this literature review, the language of any definition is related to broader understandings of CSE, and raises further questions about these understandings, and how best to act to safeguard children and young people from this type of abuse.

Other Definitions

3.9   In addition to the four nations' policy definitions, there are prominent definitions in use from Barnardo's and the NSPCC, both of which are derived from work with young people. The Barnardo's definition is used by the Real Love Rocks team, a unit within Barnardo's which provides training and resources on CSE. The definition reads:

> *Child sexual exploitation is when a young person is used, by being made or tricked into doing something sexual, sometimes receiving something in return like love, affection, money, gifts, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay. It can be done in person or online (Barnardo's, 2015[9]).*

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[9] Barnardo's (2015) 'What is CSE?' Real Love Rocks. [Accessed 31 July 2017]. Available from: http://www.barnardosrealloverocks.org.uk/what-is-cse-young-person/

3.10   The NSPCC definition reads:

Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them (NSPCC, 2017[10]).

3.11   These two definitions are also informing practice. They cover much of the same territory as the definitions in policy, however they contribute to the proliferation of slightly-differing definitions in simultaneous use around the UK.

3.12   The National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (NWG), a UK level organisation, uses both the newly introduced England definition alongside two definitions derived from work with young people. One is derived from the Young Women's Group: New Horizons (NIA Project and Children's Society 2008: quoted in Shuker, 2013:19):

Someone taking advantage of you sexually, for their own benefit. Through threats, bribes, violence, humiliation, or by telling you that they love you, they will have the power to get you to do sexual things for their own, or other people's benefit or enjoyment (including: touching or kissing private parts, sex, taking sexual photos).

3.13   The other definition used by the NWG comes from Out of the Box: Young People's Stories, a publication from the University of Bedfordshire which includes young people as co-authors. This young people's definition is short but still refers to some of the key concepts identified across definitions of CSE (see sections 3.28-3.33): '*It's when you don't know your choices that other people have all the power*' (Pearce 2015: 16). Prior to these, the NWG had an alternative definition that was also in use by agencies across the UK.

3.14   All of these definitions cover related topics, mostly in similar ways, however the use of multiple definitions with even slight differences is important considering the variance that exists within this field. Awareness and understandings of CSE is still very much in development, and the many definitions in use speak to this.

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[10] NSPCC (2017) 'What is child sexual exploitation?' NSPCC. [Accessed 31 July 2017]. Available from: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/

CSA and CSE

3.15 As is foregrounded in the England and Wales definitions, CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Bringing CSE under the umbrella of CSA was an important part of the move toward recognising CSE as abuse. However, this has given rise to potential confusion because there are inevitably overlaps between what is known as CSE and CSA. Some evidence of this confusion is visible in the relationship between the Office of the Children's Commissioner reports on CSE in gangs and groups and on CSA within the family (Berelowitz et al., 2013; Horvath et al., 2014). The earlier enquiry found evidence of children experiencing both what is traditionally understood as intra-familial CSA and CSE by networks of organised exploiters, which led to the commissioning of the second report specifically looking into intra-familial abuse, but without much further attention to the direct links found in some cases in the first inquiry. As we will discuss in section 3.24, there is a common misconception, related to this, that CSE takes places outside the family and CSA within it, which is unhelpful in addressing cases where there are overlaps between these types of abuse.

3.16 These ambiguities may have to be addressed on the ground in developing policy and practice guidance. The York Safeguarding Board guidance on CSA and CSE is one example of such work (City of York SCB, 2014). The York guidance provides detail about national guidance on CSA and CSE while also addressing overlaps between, and confusion about, topics including CSA, sexually harmful behaviour (SHB) by children and young people, CSE in organised groups, CSE in other forms, internal and international sex trafficking, and the distinction between abuse within and outside the family (or the lack of such a distinction). This guidance is an example of a local effort to address these overlaps and ambiguities in England, where there is no national protocol for responding to CSE.

Understanding CSE

3.17 As mentioned in section 3.2, the move away from the language of 'child prostitution' was aimed at dispelling the idea that children and young people can be culpable for the sexual abuse they experience if they can be perceived to gain from it in some way (Pearce, 2009; Hallett, 2017). The legacy of this intentional policy shift can be seen in contemporary UK policy definitions of CSE, such as in the Scottish definition's reference to the irrelevance of 'perceived consent' and

even more prominently in the Wales definition which holds the view that CSE-experienced young people are unable to perceive the exploitative nature of their experiences and therefore unable to consent. The Scottish definition also specifically links this aspect of CSE to other forms of child sexual abuse, but the need to specify the irrelevance of consent or perceived consent acknowledges CSE was not historically recognised as abuse[11]. Differentiating CSE from other types of CSA can go some way toward addressing the complexities of CSE, however this is not always straightforward, and the variations among the four nations' CSE definitions are indicative of these complexities.

Misconceptions

3.18   Whilst there is an increasing awareness of child sexual exploitation within professional contexts, and amongst the general public, there is evidence to suggest this understanding is limited. There are some common misconceptions and misunderstandings surrounding child sexual exploitation which are evident across the research literature (see also Hallett, 2017). These include:

- *'*Grooming is another term for describing child sexual exploitation'. 'Grooming must always occur in instances of sexual exploitation';

- 'Victims of sexual exploitation do not display personal agency';

- 'Victims are female';

- 'Abusers are always male';

- 'Abusers do not act in isolation';

- 'Abusers are adult';

- 'Child sexual exploitation occurs outside of the family'.

The following sections address each of the above misconceptions, as well as other issues around CSE that are sometimes lost in broader discussions of the problem.

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[11] Questions around the idea of consent will be discussed in further detail in Sections 3.29-3.31.

Grooming

3.19   Grooming, sometimes perceived as an integral part of CSE, was removed from the England definition after the recent consultation, although one of the key findings of the consultation was that many respondents specifically wanted grooming to remain in the statutory definition of CSE (HM Government 2017b). Grooming happens but is not present in all cases of CSE and the over-emphasis of this model can lead to inadequate responses (HM Government, 2017b; Cockbain, 2013; Hallett, 2017). The assumption that grooming and CSE are interchangeable is problematic for the simple reason that it can interfere with recognition of different manifestations of CSE (Melrose, 2013; Hallett, 2017).

Personal Agency

3.20   The question of personal agency[12] is one of the most complex aspects of CSE, and it has far-reaching consequences for understandings of CSE in research, policy and practice. It is clear from the development of CSE as a term just how important this concept is; the redefinition of 'child prostitution' to 'child sexual exploitation' is in part aimed at stopping young people from being treated as offenders if they are perceived as consenting to exchanging sex (see Hallett, 2017). This is represented in the policy language, including, particularly starkly, in the language of the Wales definition. However, it is important to recognise that the personal agency of CSE experienced young people is not a straightforward question, as we will discuss further (see section 3.29-3.32).

Gender

3.21   It is a myth that only girls can be sexually exploited, although the majority of CSE experienced young people are female and the majority of perpetrators are male. Coy (2016) makes the important point that avoiding the gendered nature of the majority of CSE cases can interfere with efforts to tackle CSE as a social problem. Recognising that there is a gendered pattern to the majority of CSE cases is not, however, to say that boys cannot be sexually exploited, nor that women cannot sexually exploit. From the perspective of efforts within social care to identify CSE and develop interventions to help individual young people, it is important to

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[12] Personal agency is our capacity and our understanding of our ability to comprehend, initiate, to make decisions and choices and to act. An understanding of children as social actors holding agency is what underpins the new sociology of childhood and the principles of the UNCRC (see James and Prout, 1997).

recognise that boys and young men can be, and are, sexually exploited, and there are also many reasons why sexual exploitation of boys may be underreported (see Lilywhite and Skidmore, 2006). In addition, boys and young men may not be such a small minority of CSE cases as is sometimes assumed; Barnardo's research from 2014 finds that across the UK around one-third of CSE service users were male, a much higher proportion than found in previous, smaller-scale research (Cockbain, Brayley and Ashby, 2014).

Gang/Group and Individual Exploitation

3.22   The association of CSE in the public mindset with high-profile cases such as Rochdale and Rotherham has resulted in assumptions that CSE is committed largely by gangs or otherwise organised groups. However, sexual exploitation can, and does, occur at the hands of individuals with no ties to broader groups (Cockbain, 2013; Hallett, 2017). This is another area in which overreliance on misconceptions about the nature of CSE can prevent cases from coming to light and receiving an appropriate response.

Peer Exploitation

3.23   Since the introduction of CSE to policy and practice, there have been increasing reports of peer exploitation (see Barnardo's, 2013). The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England's Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups found that 29 percent of perpetrators were under the age of 19, and that gang- or group-related exploitation in particular is more likely than sole perpetrator exploitation to involve younger perpetrators (Berelowitz et al., 2013). The complex nature of some organised CSE can involve young people (who may or may not themselves be subject to sexual exploitation themselves) involved in exploitation or facilitating exploitation (Barnardo's, 2013). Additionally, there are clear parallels between some forms of CSE and teenage/peer partner violence (Pearce 2009). However, research also suggests that both CSE frameworks and adult-focussed domestic abuse frameworks may be insufficient to address the complexities of violence within relationships between young people (Jago et al., 2011; Firmin, 2013). Still, the realities of CSE's many manifestations means it is necessary to challenge the assumption that CSE is uniformly identifiable as the exploitation by

an adult of a child. Perpetrators who are themselves children should secure a response in line with policy and guidance on sexually harmful behaviours[13].

Family

3.24   The prominence of the grooming model has led to a misconception of the lone or gang-involved adult perpetrator who is outside of the family. Child sexual exploitation can, and does, take place within families. The context of where the abuse occurs is not what distinguishes between CSA and CSE, and is not what should direct the appropriate practice response. However, for example, this misconception can lead to a social services response being denied to cases where there is CSE because it is not viewed as a family issue. The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England commissioned a report on child sexual abuse within families as a result of the findings of the Office's earlier inquiry into gang and group-led sexual exploitation (Horvath et al., 2014; Berelowitz et al., 2013). One difficulty identified in the enquiry into CSE in gangs and groups was that where sexual exploitation was taking place outside the family it was in some cases difficult to provide justification for social services involvement, because of protocols that are focussed on protecting children from risk within the family (Berelowitz et al., 2013). At the same time, this emphasis on extra-familial abuse can interfere with recognition of CSE cases that do involve exploitation within or by the family (Harper and Scott, 2005). It is important to recognise that children and young people can be sexually exploited by anyone, and that this can also be directly related to other forms of sexual abuse.

Additional Areas of Concern

3.25   As these misconceptions indicate, there is a stereotypical idea of who is sexually exploited, which does not represent the full range of CSE as it occurs. Fox (2016) identifies the idea of victims being predominantly white, heterosexual young women. There are many children and young people who experience sexual exploitation, but who are not represented by this stereotypical victim. In addition to the above misconceptions, sexually exploited children and young people may be missed because they are categorised in the following ways:

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[13] Defined as harmful sexual behaviours in England.

Ethnicity

High-profile CSE cases involving organised groups of men of Asian descent have led to a popular perception of CSE as something that involves Asian predators and white victims (Cockbain, 2013). This does not represent the true scope of CSE however, and both perpetrators and victims can be of any ethnicity. Fox (2016) reports that among Barnardo's CSE service users in 2014-2015, white British children and young people were the majority (64 percent), but this group makes up 86 percent of the wider population.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

3.26   For young people who are gay or bisexual who lack a supportive family or community where they feel their sexual identity can be accepted, vulnerability to CSE can come from seeking community through web and mobile dating services for adults or through frequenting areas known for public sex among men (Fox, 2016; Hallett, 2017). Professional responses to girls being exploited by older women may be lacking because of a lack of recognition or understanding of the exploitative nature of lesbian relationships, which likely arises from stereotypical views of sexuality, women, and the lesbian community (Fox, 2016). On the other hand, practitioners have reported that exploitative relationships between older women and young lesbian or bisexual women may often be characterised by extreme isolation from community or other forms of support, which can make identification and intervention difficult (Walker, 2014; Fox, 2016). Although there is little clear guidance relating to transgender children and young people and CSE, it is generally assumed that trans identity, especially for those without a family who supports their gender identity, can be a vulnerability that adults could exploit (Fox 2016).

Disability

3.27   Disabled children and young people are known to be overrepresented among abused and exploited populations, although there is limited research on this link and there are likely to be many contributing factors (Fox, 2016). Some children with learning difficulties may have trouble disclosing abuse (Murray and Osbourne, 2009). Signs of abuse may also be missed because of the child's disability and/or

the difficulty adults may have in addressing the idea that a disabled child could be abused in such a way (Barnardo's, 2015b; Franklin and Smeaton, 2017).

Key Concepts

3.28   In the following sections we discuss some of the issues which are central to understanding CSE. These concepts are each represented in most of the definitions of CSE currently in use, but there are complexities to these ideas which are not always addressed.

Consent and Agency

3.29   The issue of consent is central to definitions of CSE, in part because the policy framework for CSE was developed to replace the policy context of 'child prostitution', which allowed minors to be viewed as offenders if they were compensated for sexual activity. The construction of CSE as prostitution-related offending behaviours[14] on the part of the child or young person hinges on the idea that they consented to, and were therefore complicit in, their own abuse; and were therefore culpable and not so much victim than offender. This view is evidenced in Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution:

> *"The Government recognises that there may be occasions, after all attempts at diversion out of prostitution have failed, when it may be appropriate for those who voluntarily and persistently continue in prostitution to enter the criminal justice system in the way that other young offenders do ...Nothing in this guidance decriminalises soliciting, loitering and importuning by children on the street or in public places" (DoH, 2000: 10, cited by Hallett, 2017: 20)*

Even after the development of CSE as a policy and legal framework, perceptions that young people are 'consenting' to exploitation (and therefore somehow not quite victims of abuse) have persisted.

3.30   However, the issue of consent is not as straightforward as this, and the idea of CSE as something that happens in the complete absence of personal agency on the part of the young person is problematic. It is true that CSE-experienced young people can fail to recognise their experiences as exploitative (Munro, 2004, Fox

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[14] "between 1989 and 1995 nearly 4000 police cautions [for prostitution related offences] were given to young people aged between 10 and 18" (Hallett, 2017: 16 – see also Ayre and Barrett, 2000).

2016), and it is important to acknowledge this. However, many young people do perceive the exploitative nature of situations and relationships they experience – yet they may still struggle to disclose or ask for help (Beckett, 2011). They may also understand they are being exploited but still perceive the exploitation as the best option available to them within the context of a range of limited choices (Hallett, 2015; 2017). They may also perceive their experiences as exploitative but have a troubled sense of agency, meaning they feel the abuse is expected or acceptable (Hallett, 2017). Acknowledging young people's (sense of) personal agency is an important part of recovery. At the same time, however, the need to emphasise that under-16s cannot legally consent to sex is important, and a lack of recognition of this by practitioners can lead to safeguarding failures (Jago et al., 2011).

3.31 Rather than focussing on consent/non-consent, authors have suggested that a focus on 'conditions of consent' may be more appropriate (see Pearce, 2013; Coy 2016; Hallett, 2017). Hallett (2017) argues that child sexual exploitation is intimately bound up with other problems and difficulties young people are experiencing. Central to an understanding of sexual exploitation is that underpinning the exchange of sex is the meeting (and exploitation) of unmet needs. Sexual exploitation is rarely devoid of complex circumstances and difficulties. Psycho-socio-economic factors such as sexuality, attitudes towards sex, and material, emotional and economic needs can all feature in the reasons behind children and young people's involvement. A child or young person's risky behaviours and sexual exploitation must be understood in the context of their everyday lives and circumstances and the vulnerabilities and risks that can lead a person to feel vulnerable and also seek ways to respond to those feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness.

Exchange

3.32 The concept of exchange[15] is fundamental to understandings of CSE. This is what makes it both distinct from other forms of child abuse and what makes it abusive even in cases where, as discussed above, the young person may appear to be or consider themselves to be 'consenting' to the exploitation (see Hallett, 2017).

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[15] Examples of this could be the exchange of some form of sexual activity for a place to stay, money, alcohol or drugs – see also Green, 1992.

Understandably, some idea of exchange appears in each of the definitions of the four nations and the third sector organisations discussed earlier, although not all of them use the word. Hallett (2017) particularly emphasises that in young people's accounts of sexual exploitation, the element of exchange is what makes sexual exploitation unique and helps provide a framework for understanding the individual experiences of sexually exploited young people. This is also raised in the young people's definitions discussed earlier (see sections 3.9-3.14).

Power

3.33   Power is an important concept in the England, Wales and Scotland definitions of CSE, as well as in the two young people's definitions used by the NWG. The English and Scottish definitions focus on how someone can take advantage of an imbalance of power which may already exist between an exploiter and a child or young person[16]. In the Wales definition, the focus is on how the young person is rendered 'powerless' to understand they are being exploited, which as discussed in sections 3.50-3.56 is problematic in light of research on young people's perceptions of their own exploitation. It is notable then that the concept of power is raised differently in the two NWG definitions; the young people who contributed to these definitions have situated the imbalance as something that results from the exploitative situation itself rather than something that necessarily exists outside of it[17].

Identifying and Responding to CSE

3.34   We now move to consider literatures relating to identification and responding to CSE.

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[16] The inclusion of power differentials in these definitions of CSE may also be helpful in identifying cases where the exploiter is not significantly older and/or is a minor themselves, which is important considering evidence that peer-on-peer CSE is being increasingly reported (Barnardo's, 2013).
[17] For example, the imbalance of power may not necessarily arise just because the person is a child or young person. Young people have reported that if there was nothing to be taken advantage of – no need that left them in a position of powerlessness toward those who could meet (and abuse) that need – then there would be no exploitation (see Hallett, 2015).

Assessment

3.35 Since the introduction of CSE into policy there have been many developments in terms of assessment tools, most notably the development of the SERAF tool itself. CSE-specific assessment tools were originally created due to the lack of awareness of CSE and the hidden nature of the abuse – assessment tools could bring together concerns that could not be explained through existing social care related mechanisms, whilst also facilitating people to 'think CSE' (see Clutton and Coles, 2007). While Wales has a nationally-used assessment tool in the SERAF, the rest of the UK does not have unified national tools in place. In England, there are many different risk assessment protocols, but, unlike Wales, these are not tied to national guidance[18].

3.36 In addition to social care, CSE can be identified at multiple points – youth workers, policing practitioners and those in the education and health sectors are well-placed to identify CSE. The Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group has developed internal guidance related to CSE (Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group, 2015). Another recent example of developments in assessment tools in Wales is the Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Questionnaire (CSERQ15 or CSERQ4) (Cook, 2016). The CSERQ is used in Wales by healthcare practitioners as a more agency and role relevant tool than the full SERAF framework, allowing them to assess CSE risk in patients quickly and without reference to information to which they would not have access. The police, a non-devolved agency, have a 'CSE Flag' for officers to use as part of their assessments.

3.37 In responding to CSE, the focus within social care has largely been on identifying young people and the nature of risk and vulnerability in cases of CSE. There is a lack of research on resilience factors and how these can influence a child or young person's risk of CSE[19], although the importance of building resilience is recognised (Berelowitz et al., 2013)[20]. Research in Wales on identifying protective factors and

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[18] At the time of finalising this report, the NWG launched an assessment tool for use in England, however this is not formally tied to any guidance.
[19] It is important to note here that in its development, the Wales SERAF did make reference to what could be considered as protective factors as part of the assessment process. This element of the tool was lost through various edits and as such does not feature in the final agreed version of the current SERAF.
[20] Research on child sexual abuse points to strong relationships with non-abusing family members and peers as potential resiliency factors. See Chandy, Blum and Resnick (1997), Lalor and McElvaney (2010).

their connection to interventions and outcomes for young people at risk of CSE is due for completion in November 2018[21].

3.38   There is limited evaluative research on the use of assessment protocols. There is currently an ongoing project from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse on 'use of tools and checklists to assess risk of child sexual exploitation', which is looking at what is in use across England and Wales. Findings from this study are pending, and the publication is due by November 2017. This follows on from earlier work for the Early Intervention Foundation which looked at the evidence base for risk assessment tools for CSE and CSA and found a scarcity of research evidence (Brown et al., 2016).

Prevention

3.39   Prevention efforts can be viewed in two ways: larger scale efforts to prevent CSE by awareness-raising and education at a population level, and individual efforts to prevent CSE in cases where a child or young person is particularly vulnerable. Appropriate sex and relationship education is identified in research as an important prevention tool, and recent developments in sex and relationship education (SRE) in England are aimed at expanding this provision (HM Government, 2017c). In Wales, in March 2017, a new expert group was announced to develop guidance on expanding and improving healthy relationships and sex education in schools (Welsh Government, 2017). Research indicates that many groups are unlikely to receive sexual health and relationship information that is appropriate or relevant for them through statutory SRE provision, especially those with learning difficulties and LGBT individuals (Fox, 2016). The advisory group in Wales is intended in part to address these gaps as well as to improve overall outcomes from SRE in Wales. This work will be ongoing throughout 2017/18.

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[21] *'Keeping Safe? An analysis of the outcomes of work with sexually exploited young people in Wales'* is a research project funded by the Welsh Government through Health and Care Research Wales, conducted by CASCADE (Children's and Social Care Research and Development Centre) in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. The research builds on the unique opportunity to track over ten years one of the first cohorts of young people in the UK to be formally identified as being at risk of CSE. The overarching aim of the project is to provide much needed empirical evidence into the outcomes for children and young people identified as being 'at risk' of CSE, in order to address our gaps in knowledge in relation to prevention, intervention and solutions to this complex problem.

3.40   There is also work from the Police on issues of 'sexting' and what is termed 'youth produced sexual imagery', which illustrates some of the ambiguities around prevention efforts (College of Policing, 2016)[22]. Guidance around 'sexting' raises issues relevant to CSE prevention, such as consent and individual agency, and these issues are complicated by the fact that such issues can be difficult to evaluate when young people take naked photos of themselves. The guidance also explicitly references CSE prevention in that 'sexting' may be a manifestation of sexual exploitation in some cases. While the guidance does stress the need for treating children and young people with consideration and sensitivity, this illustrates some of the difficulties in contemporary discussions of CSE and other forms of troubling youth sexual behaviour. Consensual 'sexting' and exploitative solicitation of sexual imagery from a minor are two very different things, yet they are to some extent being collapsed together in current guidance. It may be more appropriate to understand these phenomena as potentially overlapping.

3.41   There is less clarity in research in terms of prevention where CSE is known to be a risk. Ideally, assessment measures such as the SERAF tool should be a prompt for prevention to take place, where children and young people are returning high scores but are not yet experiencing sexual exploitation. However, there is limited guidance about how to specifically work toward prevention. Successful strategies for prevention likely need to be highly individualised, addressing many factors in the individual young person's life (Hallett, 2015:17).

Intervention

3.42   Intervention strategies take many forms and this report will not be able to address all of those in use or which have been studied. However, there is limited evidence on the successes of intervention strategies for CSE, with only one large-scale quantitative evaluation of intervention outcomes specifically related to CSE (Bovarnick, Scott and Pearce, 2017; Scott and Skidmore, 2006). This evaluation of Barnardo's CSE services finds that on the whole, young people who engage with Barnardo's CSE services have positive outcomes. There is an absence of such clear data for other interventions.

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[22] It is worth noting that this brief references the disconnect between how the term 'sexting' is used in research and policy, and how it is used by children and young people, who may use 'sexting' as a more general term referring to mobile communication which is sexual in nature or even just flirtatious.

3.43   There is a tendency in responses to CSE to deemphasise perpetrators and focus instead on how to quickly and effectively remove the child or young person from danger of exploitation; which can result in having the child or young person placed in secure accommodation (Jago et al., 2011). However well-intentioned these efforts are, the literature indicates that secure accommodation has significant drawbacks. For one, it can leave young people with the perception that they are to blame for their own abuse because they are confined while perpetrators are not (Jago et al., 2011; Beckett, 2013). Also, research finds that physical safety without supportive relationships and therapeutic support is not ultimately effective in helping children and young people who have experienced CSE (Shuker, 2013; Roesch-Marsh, 2014). Additionally, physical safety may not be ensured in secure accommodation, in part because perpetrators can and do target secure accommodation, for the very reason that the young people housed there are known to be especially vulnerable (Munro, 2004).

3.44   The key messages from the literature are focussed mainly on direct work with children and young people, and the need to provide supportive, consistent, durable relationships for children and young people (see Clutton and Coles, 2007; Pearce, 2009; Hallett, 2015; 17). Direct work with children and young people who are considered to be at very high risk of exploitation, or who have already been exploited, is found to be most effective if there is a time commitment of at least eighteen months (Barnardo's, 2012). This works against a resource and practice context in which results are needed quickly and which favours shorter term provision. That said, shorter term interventions lasting a few months have also been found to show positive results (DfE, 2011).

3.45   There has been significant success reported with specialist foster placements for extremely high-risk CSE-experienced and/or trafficked young people (Shuker, 2013). There is also literature on the potential for successes with harm-reduction approaches to CSE (Hickle and Hallett, 2016). Interventions are often assigned to specialist organisations such as with Barnardo's Seraf service in Wales. In general, however, there is limited evidence around interventions for CSE. Despite the All Wales guidance, intervention strategies and available services vary across regions and Local Authorities.

Prosecution

3.46   There is no specific offence of child sexual exploitation as defined in policy, so prosecutions must happen under various related offences including rape, sexual assault, offences around commercial exchange for sex with a minor and the production of child pornography, and trafficking, all of which are defined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Amendments to this Act from the Serious Crime Act 2015 adapted the language to reflect the policy shift from 'child prostitution' to CSE, and defined sexual communication with a child under 16 as an offence. However, the offence of sexual communication with a child has only come into effect as of 3 April 2017 (see Ministry of Justice, 2017), and details of enforcement are still scarce. Ultimately, police need to work within existing guidelines in order to respond to CSE, and for the most part these guidelines are not purpose-built.

3.47   The ambiguities of legal recourse for prosecutions of CSE are one of several factors that contribute to the rarity of successful prosecution in CSE cases. Another factor is the emphasis on clear and strong intelligence in order to secure convictions; surveillance techniques can raise practical and ethical concerns and balancing the need to safeguard vulnerable young people against the need to compile evidence against perpetrators can be difficult (Jago et al., 2011). Ultimately, CSE cases largely rely on testimony from the young people involved, and this can be problematic for many reasons, including professional perceptions of young people's testimony as unreliable or unlikely to secure a conviction (Jago et al., 2011).

3.48   The experience of the criminal justice system can also be extremely negative for young people, including in some cases experiencing open disregard for their abuse from professionals (Children's Society 2014) and experiencing aggressive questioning and attacks on their character from perpetrators' defence teams (Barnardo's, 2014). Even in better circumstances, the experience of police and court involvement after disclosing exploitation is very difficult for young people, and can feel like further abuse (Jago et al., 2011). There is a need for professional support, and attention to individual young people's views, to ensure that young people are able to be involved with a criminal prosecution without it taking too much of a toll on their own well-being (Plotnikoff and Woolfson, 2009). Work on enhancing police responses to CSE was undertaken through a two-year funded

project lead by The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, completed in April 2017, of which a number of tools were developed, including briefings from police led research projects[23].

3.49   At the same time, the police have to work with the limited tools available to them in responding to CSE from a safeguarding perspective. For police to intervene in some cases of CSE, existing measures which are not purpose-built, such as cautions, are often their clearest recourse. Research from HMIC on the role of the police in safeguarding children indicates that in areas such as CSE, where there is a lack of clear national guidance specifically for police response, the quality and appropriateness of responses varies greatly between regions (HMIC, 2015). All of the relevant policy developments related to CSE are relatively new, and knowledge of them on the ground is likely to be inconsistent and dependent on local training and information sharing protocols.

Young People's Voices

3.50   As the differences between these definitions indicate, there is likely much more to be learned from what young people have to say about CSE. There is relatively little research addressing what CSE-experienced young people have to say about how exploitation can be best understood and addressed. From the limited research available, several themes emerge.

Services

3.51   Young people speak positively of intervention or support services that allow them to both feel safe and to have a sense of control over their use of the service. Examples of this include drop-in centres and services that provide both group and individual settings in respect of varying individual needs and comfort levels (Gilligan 2016). They also report appreciating interactions with social workers or related professionals that have a relational aspect rather than focussing solely on the young person's problems (Hallett, 2017), and where the practitioner is perceived as displaying 'personality' (Gilligan, 2016).

3.52   Young people speak positively with regard to learning about relationships and safety but also emphasise that it can take time to develop the trust necessary to

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[23] For further information on the project and the tools and briefings produced visit:
https://www.uobcsepolicinghub.org.uk/

accept educational interventions, especially when it relates to changing their perception of what they have experienced (i.e. from a 'relationship' to 'abuse') (Gilligan, 2016). They also stress the need for time and flexibility in order for positive relationships and trust to develop between them and service providers (Gilligan, 2016). Hallett (2017) includes examples given by young people of practitioners meeting with them in informal settings and developing rapport unrelated to discussion of the exploitation or intervention, which the young people report improved their willingness to engage with services. At the same time, young people speak negatively of practitioners who seem to focus solely on 'doing their job', which the young people can perceive as the worker not engaging with them personally, making practitioners seem uninterested and unreliable (Hallett, 2017; Smeaton, 2013; Gilligan, 2016).

3.53   The terminology used by professionals can be uncomfortable for young people ('child sexual exploitation' or 'sexual abuse'), especially when they are beginning to access services and may not recognise their experiences as abuse (Gilligan 2016). Another concern raised about terminology is discomfort with labels being applied to a young person as a result of things that have happened to them. One of Hallett's (2017) respondents describes this as saying 'you're like that because of this', which the young person perceived as practitioners failing to engage with them as individuals. Related to this, young people perceive some practitioners to focus on the factual information in their cases at the expense of listening to or understanding their individual experiences. This can interfere with efforts to engage with the young person (Hallett, 2017).

Policing

3.54   Young people report concerns about police involvement (Gilligan 2016), or specifically about the repeated disclosure of their experiences that is required when police or the courts are involved (Hallett, 2017). This includes, in some cases, the difficulties caused by disclosures providing more reasons for young people running away/going missing, either because of the experience of disclosure itself (in one report, because of the discomfort associated with disclosing sexual abuse to male police officers), or because of the family response to police involvement (Smeaton, 2013).

3.55   Many young people raise concerns around feeling unsupported or even invisible both before and in response to their experiences of exploitation. This is raised repeatedly among the participants who took part in Hallett's research (2017), one of whom reports a parent potentially witnessing, but not noticing, exploitative behaviour happening online. Smeaton (2013) similarly reports young people speaking of familial desire to ignore or 'sweep under the rug' their experiences of sexual exploitation, or feeling like parents would not 'look' at them. Smeaton reports in these cases that the associated feelings of isolation led these young people to engage in risky-coded behaviours like staying out late and running away.

Feeling 'Normal'

3.56   Young people in care speak of a lack of feeling of stability or normalcy that contributes to behaviours perceived as risk factors, such as running away or staying out late (Hallett, 2017; Smeaton, 2013). The reality of day-to-day life for a child or young person in care can make them feel alienated from what they perceive as normal childhood experiences, and young people perceive those experiences, which they lack, as having protective factors against the risk of exploitation (Hallett, 2017). Young people in residential care especially perceive the lack of a 'normal' family structure as having a negative impact on their wellbeing and as being a factor in their vulnerability to exploitation, especially through not feeling protected or cared for, their behaviour being monitored, etc. (Hallett, 2017).

Summary

3.57   This review has detailed both the historical and the contemporary landscape of policy and practice around CSE, while also examining how particular areas of concern are represented in current discussions in this field. With particular attention to common misconceptions around CSE, gaps in knowledge and policy, and research about and with young people, this review underscores the urgency of continued research in this rapidly developing policy and practice area. It is important to keep in mind that in reviewing this field it is still very much in flux, with new knowledge emerging all the time.

4. Findings – Qualitative Research

4.1 This section of the report considers the findings from the qualitative research element of the review. It is split into five sections:

- Key messages

- Knowledge of the guidance

- Definition and understanding

- Identification and assessment

- Responding to CSE

Key messages

4.2 The overarching finding is the view held by all participants across the sectors that knowledge and understanding surrounding CSE, including how to respond, has progressed to such an extent since the current Wales guidance, definition, and associated protocol were developed, that they are no longer 'fit for purpose' in their current form. Amendments and additions are clearly needed. Participants also referred to other policy and practice developments in the broader social care context in Wales and made reference to the recently changed CSE guidance in England. CSE guidance needs to be updated in line with these developments, incorporating relevant changes where appropriate.

4.3 There were also strong views about where the guidance and protocol are working well. Participants talked about the CSE protocol and guidance as something that had been needed, and has seen positive change in practice and in terms of raising awareness of CSE. It was in the spirit of the need to build on this good practice in Wales that many of the focus group discussions and interviews were framed. A key theme that threads throughout this review is despite the development of local protocols there is a need for renewed consistency – across geography and sectors – indicating an appetite to ensure the continuation of an All Wales approach.

These messages are considered in further detail throughout the rest of this chapter of the report[24].

Knowledge of the guidance

4.4   Basic knowledge and awareness of the CSE guidance and protocol was expressed by all participants in this research. Familiarity with the guidance in terms of how regularly participants might access it or be required to act in accordance with it differed, as may be expected with the varied roles of those taking part in this review. However, there were many examples evidencing the different ways in which the guidance is being used to inform day-to-day frontline and more strategic practice, such as:

> *"Having been, as I say a reviewer for two child practice reviews, I have relied quite heavily on the guidance when it came to writing up the report and writing up the learning issues from it, to be able to refer back to the guidance so that we had the evidence base to make recommendations I have found useful.[25]"* *(Focus group 3)*

4.5   However, participants from across all sectors commented that whilst they had knowledge of the guidance and protocol, they had concerns about the lack of awareness or familiarity with the guidance amongst many of their colleagues. This view was held by those in both frontline and strategic roles:

> *"I think everybody knows it exists, whether they're aware of all of the elements of it that's the question. I think there's a general understanding of kind of the overall process and what it aims to achieve but not necessarily some of the kind of finer detail." (Interview: CSE lead coordinator)*

> *"I'm not convinced through having done the child practice reviews that all of the people that were involved with the reviews were aware of the guidance." (Focus group 3)*

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[24] Findings and messages from our research with young people have been presented throughout the chapter in the appropriate sections. Where these appear, they have been marked out in separate boxes to make them prominent.
[25] All quotes have been reproduced verbatim with minor edits made where necessary for readability.

4.6   The potential for the outcomes of this review to raise awareness and provide an opportunity for refreshing people's knowledge and understanding about working to respond to CSE was suggested in some of the focus groups. The need to ensure all practitioners working with children and young people are aware of the guidance and protocol was also firmly expressed.

Definition and understanding

4.7   This part of the report considers the data in terms of how effective and 'fit for purpose' the participating professionals considered the guidance to be in terms of defining CSE.

4.8   The current definition of CSE used in Wales is not being used consistently. Participants drew upon the new definition in England, the Northern Ireland definition, the definition used by the National Working Group, 'child friendly' definitions produced by third sector organisations, and definitions used by CEOP and within organisations. This reflects the number of policy and also practice definitions in use in the UK, and this proliferation of definitions was something expressed by participants:

> *"Well, when you're having a strategy discussion you want to be starting at the same standpoint in terms of what those child protection issues are, so if you're working from two different definitions invariably that's going to create difficulties in coming to any decision-making, because you're working from two sets of definitions around what that case of CSE is." (Focus group 13)*

4.9   This also closely relates to understandings of CSE. The data evidences that there is a lack of clarity for professionals about CSE, and the analysis suggests that professionals are still uncertain about what constitutes CSE, what doesn't and also about what 'makes' something CSE or not. An example of this confusion can be seen in the following extract from one of the focus groups:

> *"Participant 1: I don't know the definition with regards to like putting the taking part in sexual activity I don't know…do you have to take part in sexual activity to be exploited? I don't think you do.*
> *Participant 2: It like kind of says that you're a willing participant, where they're not." (Focus group 16)*

4.10   There is data evidencing similar confusion amongst professionals over issues such as consent and informed consent, peer sexual exploitation, whether something is CSE if there is no grooming evidenced, where issues such as sexting might fit in with CSE, as well as problems distinguishing CSE when it occurs online. The need to establish that CSE occurs online and offline was raised consistently by participants, as was the need to emphasise that CSE can occur amongst peers, and that CSE happens to boys and young men as well as girls and young women. Participants working both in frontline and more strategic roles spoke of how boys and young men are very likely to be missed in assessments of CSE, and that this is linked to a misunderstanding amongst professionals about what CSE is and how it occurs.

4.11   In addition, linking issues of definition with the focus of the protocol and guidance, some participants raised concerns about connected non-sexual forms of exploitation which occur to similarly vulnerable young people who are not easily recognised in the current definition and how work with these young people does not fit easily into the CSE protocol. Boys were talked about as being more likely to be exploited as drug carriers and this may or may not incorporate some form of sexual exploitation. The problem of females being exploited as 'facilitators' for sexual exploitation (having been sexually exploited themselves) was also raised.

> *"One last thing that I forgot to mention is whether consideration could be given to removing 'sexual' to leave child exploitation. There is a danger to labelling people as it causes professionals to focus on specific areas and not look at vulnerability and risk holistically. This is particularly relevant to boys and one way in which we could identify and support more of them. In the absence of any disclosures of sexual abuse the risk indicators on SERAF for boys are often associated with drug supply and the case closed. As you are aware the barriers to disclosure are often greater for boys and therefore this scenario is far more likely to happen with them.*
>
> *Children being involved in drug supply is a form of exploitation in itself and in my experience this is never recognised as a child protection concern. Whether the exploitation is sexual, drug supply or forced labour, the support should be the same with the ability to identify the type of exploitation so that the service intervention can be tailored to meet the needs of the young person. This approach will lead to more boys being managed under the guidance and with*

the additional support the sexual element of the exploitation may become apparent." (Interview: Detective Inspector, Force lead for Child Sexual Exploitation)

4.12   Whilst this suggests the Wales definition is no longer fit for purpose in that it does not seem to provide the clarity and understanding that professionals need, there was no consensus about whether alternatives should be adopted. Many participants referred to the recent changes in England, but there was no clear consensus about adopting this version. The analysis indicates it has not resolved the lack of clarity, with participants expressing dissatisfaction with it. Any calls for adopting it are mainly driven by the desire to reduce the number of different definitions in use.

> "Participant 1: *Well I think the Wales is too lengthy and I find it very difficult, when I am teaching, to use it. And I know England have just revised theirs February '17 and I would keep it simple and ideally consistent with other areas of the UK.*
> Participant 2: *And mine would be the same, I think that the difficulty is it's because there are different definitions but we need a UK-wide definition."* *(Focus group 1)*

4.13   When we asked about difficulties for the non-devolved sectors to work across and within different definitions, the response was that there was no difficulty, and the real problems come from devolved directions in practice and the need to work across different frameworks for assessment and responses.

Defining CSE – young people's perspectives

We showed young people definitions of CSE, including those that had been devised either in consultation with young people or using the words of young people, and showed them to the group for discussion. None of these definitions were particularly popular with the group although the Barnardo's definition was most liked as it contained references to being exploited online, or via drugs and/or alcohol. The young people felt that words such as 'being used', 'controlled', 'being tricked', 'pressured into doing something' and 'taken advantage of' all went some way to describe and define CSE. It is these elements that need to be given emphasis in any explanation of or attempt to define CSE.

We also discussed whether or not the word 'sexual' could or should be removed from CSE, to encompass a broader and more inclusive form of exploitation. One participant, referring to the way that young people are exploited for drugs, theft and other offences, summed up that:

> *"there are much easier ways to make money than just having sex"* (participant 4)

Another participant thought it would help practitioners to have a wider understanding of the way children and young people are exploited in order to support them, and disrupt perpetrators. Many participants reflected that boys and young men are often used in this way, sometimes by the same people who sexually exploit girls and young women. One participant said:

> *"I don't think people who work with children and young people understand that there's more than the sexual stuff involved…there's other stuff."* (participant 3)

They continued to state that bringing these multiple forms of exploitation together in a definition and protocol which reflected this would protect young people and prosecute perpetrators because it would:

> *"break it all down for them and help them [practitioners]"* (participant 3)

Increased understanding of the connection between multiple issues would facilitate a targeted but rounded response to young people at risk who may be currently going unnoticed.

4.14   In terms of potential changes needed or problems with definitions of CSE, participants discussed how those available to them are too long, or overly wordy, and too complex. There is a need to 'spell it out', and the idea of a simple child and/or lay person friendly jargon free version was raised, as well as the idea of avoiding a definition and drawing out the issues behind CSE that make it distinct as a form of child abuse.

> *"Is there scope for (pause) you talked about there being a young person's version, but is there scope for it not needing a [separate] young person's version? It needs to be one [version] doesn't it? Not sort of a specialist little expert professionals view, we don't want that" (Focus group 19)*

> *"Participant 1: I think the problem is sometimes when you give a precise definition you're looking to pigeon hole something aren't you?*
> *Participant 2: Young people don't understand those words anyway, that's immediately where we fall down as professionals." (Focus group 10)*

> *"I think we are almost trying to come up with a definition we sort of get a bit bogged down in terminology, trying to define what at the end of the day is a method of committing child abuse. So I don't even, I've always thought this, I don't even know how helpful the term CSE is at all, you know it's something we've invented as almost a catchall for a whole host of different forms of child abuse and I think we might just be better calling it child abuse because that's what it is and recognising that that's committed in lots of ways and you know including by manipulation and grooming." (Focus group 15)*

Identification and assessment

4.15   This part of the report considers the data in terms of how effective and 'fit for purpose' the professionals from the range of agencies participating consider the guidance and associated protocol to be in terms of identifying and referring children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

4.16   There is confusion about the purpose and/or function of the risk assessment tool, and the difference in views has implications for how professionals approach scoring and subsequent actions. This confusion was also something that some participants reported. For some, the tool is viewed as a scoping or justification tool

and is the means for drawing together concerns about a child or young person, which, when brought together, indicate risk of being sexually exploited (or not). This view is in line with the intended purpose of the SERAF tool. For these participants it is not being used as it should by professionals who misunderstand it as providing a definitive assessment of CSE.

4.17   Conversely, some participants displayed this misunderstanding of the intended purpose of the tool, framing it as an assessment tool. For these participants it was seen as problematic in terms of the difficulties with evidencing risk and providing robust and accurate scoring for children and young people for whom there are concerns, and for these concerns to be acted upon. It is this understanding that appears to be primarily behind the calls for the tool to be 'validated' – as this might make the scores more trustworthy and accurate and therefore easier for professionals to work with to steer resources and manage the risk to sexual exploitation.

4.18   Regardless of the underpinning view of the function of the tool held by participants, there was a consistent and strong view that too much emphasis is being given to the CSE risk score, and the risks for a child or young person are not being assessed in conjunction with professional judgement. Many participants commented that the scores "have become everything" and yet have "become meaningless". Examples were given where, because the reliance on establishing whether there is a concern related to CSE is given over to the score, strategy meetings were not being called where the concerns of the professional referring the child or young person could not add these up to a score which would instigate a strategy discussion; meaning that, potentially, children and young people who are at moderate or significant risk are being missed:

> *"I think one of the strengths, from in my last job, you know as a youth worker, certainly if you're a non-statutory organisation, filling this in gives you the opportunity to have your voice heard a little bit and to involve you in a process that sometimes you wouldn't be. And even in my current role you know we've had a young person that myself and my police colleague have raised and you know we have raised it through the police and Children's Services channels with a [strategy] discussion but the view then was no no there's not enough concern so we completed a SERAF, just about scraped it over 16 and we*

*have to have a meeting and once that meeting takes place and there are 12
people in the room, very quickly the score went up to 25." (Focus group 19)*

4.19   Another reported problem with the emphasis on scoring was the unmanageable
       volume of children and young people scoring significant risk, meaning the protocol
       isn't always being followed for calling a strategy meeting for children or young
       people scoring at moderate risk. Some participants suggested that this practice
       context has contributed to occasions when sexual exploitation was known to be
       occurring but the young person did not have a risk assessment score above mild
       risk so there were difficulties with calling together a strategy meeting.

4.20   The emphasis on scores was understood to work against instilling and applying
       professional judgement about assessing risks and vulnerabilities. Participants
       relayed concerns there was no room for discretion or space to justify decision-
       making. The assessment process was thought to have become a "tick box
       approach", with professionals not following the assessment process due to the
       high numbers of significant risk cases, rendering it redundant or unworkable,
       leading to interpretation and non-process driven practice and reporting. Some
       participants said professionals receiving referrals need more narrative from
       referrers in order to help them make decisions about a child or young person
       outside of the risks and vulnerabilities ticked, and that training on the assessment
       would be helpful to emphasise this aspect of the tool.

4.21   This relates to a point raised by participants about who completes the form and the
       different contexts across sectors, which can limit (and also provide opportunities
       for) what information can be gathered about a child or young person. It was
       pointed out that health and education services are most likely to come into contact
       with children and young people either in a day-to-day context or for reasons that
       might raise specific concerns, but professionals working in these contexts are
       unlikely to have access to, or the opportunity to, gather information that would
       raise the risk score to one that would instigate action from children's services.

       *"The second thing from a health perspective is when you look at a number of
       those points in there, certainly from contraception and sexual health, we are
       completely confidential so often the young person comes either on their own
       or with other youngsters, so not with parents, so we have no background
       relating to that so we only know those questions that we may be able to ask*

with them. So it's great I think for the social care setting where you'll have information from lots of agencies, but for us, one of the reasons we struggled with it was that you know you had these points that you would never have the answer to… …and the problem was, was that it was still too lengthy for people working in health where you've got generally a ten minute appointment, if that." (Joint interview – healthcare professionals)

4.22 The information provided to us from colleagues working in health indicates that there has been substantial soon to be peer-reviewed work in Wales on developing a two-tiered 'CSE health assessment tool' which is suitable for completion by healthcare professionals (see Cook, 2016). The tool was developed to support those working in a sexual health context, but there are plans to introduce this into A&E departments and an aim to introduce it into GP clinics. The tool is specifically designed to support health practitioners in a time limited and health specific context to complete an assessment for referral. This tool has been developed since the introduction of the CSE protocol and SERAF assessment in Wales.

4.23 Participants also spoke of concerns that the assessment tool is being viewed as something to be completed by 'CSE experts' rather than by the individuals who are concerned about a child or young person. The history of the tool means that there can be a reluctance or lack of confidence about the assessment, meaning that professionals across a multi-agency context do not complete it and so concerns are not passed on and this limits the possibility for bringing concerns together.

"People were like all a bit ooh, ooh only Barnardo's people can, you have to be green to do the SERAF." (Focus group 5)

"I think the SERAF from a health perspective confuses people, because it seems to be quite a special tool with training [needed], and so in our Health Board, some people were using it, but you seem to need to ring Barnardo's to fill it out so it's, it is confusing." (Joint interview – healthcare professionals)

4.24 In addition to concerns about scoring, there were problems with the risks and vulnerabilities on the tool. Some of the risks and vulnerabilities were described as needing to be updated and/or needing to reflect current knowledge on CSE, for example: the risks around use of mobile phone and the internet were seen as now inadequate to encapsulate a whole range of concerns relating to CSE occurring

through or involving online activity. Similarly, some participants considered that knowledge around hostels and vulnerable housing needed to be included and emphasised; that factors such as 'going missing' do not incorporate new knowledge and are too vague or broad; that a stronger link needed to be made to trafficking; that the assessment doesn't lend itself to identifying peer exploitation as the emphasis on problematic relationships is with an older boyfriend; that risks and vulnerabilities are gendered, and don't lend themselves to identifying boys and young men very well.

4.25   Similarly, the need to update the tool to reflect recent understanding about CSE was reflected in the data from the young people:

Risks and vulnerabilities – young people's perspectives

Most of the young people taking part in the review were in agreement that 'concerning use of the internet' should be placed as the 'top risk'. Further discussions about concerning use of the internet raised the question about whether or not it was a symptom of CSE, rather than a risk or causal factor:

> *Participant 8: Concerning use of the internet, again, I would say that's a symptom rather than…*
>
> *Researcher: Rather than something that leads a young person into it?*

It was recognised that if a parent, carer or practitioner had concerns about a child or young person's use of the internet, it could indicate that a young person is already involved in CSE and making arrangements to facilitate it; rather than being at risk of involvement in it.

One further important point about online behaviour is that for most young people currently, the internet is mainly accessed via mobile phone. One participant explained that if a young person had a secret, or hidden, mobile phone that they kept away from parents, carers and practitioners, it could be used to access the internet rather than for calls and messages:

> *"If…their main phone hasn't got internet and the second one has then that's when it could become a risk of sexual exploitation." (Participant 3)*

This means that the current categories of 'concerning use of internet' and 'concerning use of mobile phone' are not easily distinguishable. It should be recognised that it may be very challenging for practitioners to gather evidence about internet use, as it may be happening on a mobile phone that is unknown to

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parents, carers and practitioners.

Overall, it is important to be aware that online and offline worlds are not obviously separate for young people. Being online is simply another space in which to exist, or another way to communicate. As technology, and the way we use it has moved on, the concept of being groomed in 'chat rooms' was not a concept that the young people related to. In terms of identification, the SERAF itself currently casts mobile phone use and internet use separately, when the realities for young people are that the internet is used predominantly via a mobile phone. Furthermore, instant messaging utilises the internet (as it is free, compared with, for example, text messaging) and much of this occurs on a mobile phone. This means the distinction between phones and the internet is not as clear as it once was and it may be difficult for practitioners to evidence this. Finally, online communications with perpetrators and other victims of CSE could represent both a risk of a young person becoming involved in CSE or that it is already taking place.

4.26   Participants across sectors raised the issue of too much weight being given to historical or more 'static' factors which will or may never change in any assessment (for example, 'family history of domestic abuse', 'breakdown of family relationships', or any of the previous experiences of neglect or abuse). This means that some children and young people may not reduce their risk below the higher thresholds. This relates also to a point raised about the absence of strength or protective factors in the assessment, which would provide a counter-balance to the more static factors in terms of assessment of concerns and in charting progress for a young person.

> *"you can have a score and not necessarily need to remain open and have that ongoing intervention… because, for a start, there are some risks that would drop off necessarily, so kind of some of the historic risk factors, but also yes some of the resilience factors [need to be amended/added]. And you know, if you've been working with a young person for a year and put in place some of those [considerations] and you know that young person is able to demonstrate that they have an understanding of [risks] and whatever, and there are some, some protective factors in terms of appropriate adults and that kind of stuff. It is very difficult to get those off the SERAF, so to reduce that score significantly enough to say ok they're no longer at risk but actually as a professional group you might be able to say yes you know we've put in place all of this, we feel*

confident that there is enough monitoring of you know, they might be open for another reason or with another team or whatever, that actually there is no need to continue to have [CSE] strategy meetings." (Focus group 10)

4.27   The point about the absence of any strengths/resilience/protective factors was also raised in relation to how the tool informs work with children and young people[26]. One participant raised the point that it creates a negative picture for young people and fails to acknowledge and recognise positive aspects of their behaviour and contexts. A similar point was raised by one focus group who talked about young people 'trading risk scores' with those having the highest risk score gaining credibility amongst their peers. Practitioners working with young people wanted to have a more positive basis for their work with young people.

4.28   We consulted with participants about introducing a 'key characteristics' or 'key groups' section to the guidance and the protocol, as a way of drawing out children and young people who may be most at risk of CSE. This was not met with any approval, with participants concluding that any child or young person could be at risk, and to try to highlight groups of most concern would end up producing too long a list for it to be meaningful. We also consulted with the young people participating in the review and, in contrast, whilst they were in agreement that anyone could be sexually exploited, they did state that certain groups may be more vulnerable to CSE:

Vulnerable groups: young people's perspectives

Race and ethnicity was discussed by the group, both in terms of victims and perpetrators of CSE. Most of the group agreed that nobody was immune from CSE, regardless of ethnic background, and that perpetrators were most likely to be white men. However, one participant identified coming from a BME background as a vulnerability because some men see non-white women as needing to be controlled, as easily controllable or as "exotic creatures to be kept in a cage" (participant 5). This participant felt strongly that it was not enough to say that everyone had the same vulnerability to CSE, and that BME women and girls were more likely to be victims of gendered violence and that this should be reflected in a definition or the guidance.

Sexuality was briefly discussed, and there was some disagreement about whether

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[26] As considered in chapter 3, the original SERAF tool featured these factors, however these were lost in the final version of the SERAF that was launched as the All Wales tool.

being gay (for boys and young men) would make a difference to being involved in CSE. Some argued that sexuality would not play a part in CSE, and that straight boys and young men could still be sexually exploited by male perpetrators. Others felt that if a boy or young man identified as gay that this would be an additional vulnerability, as some perpetrators would target and exploit nascent expressions of sexuality.

We also discussed whether and how being care-experienced was a defining factor in CSE. The group felt that it could be a vulnerability but that looked after children and young people would be reported on quicker, and protected earlier. However, the idea of being looked after and 'looked at' too much could have the opposite effect in relation to reporting. Many agreed that being under too much surveillance, particularly in residential care would stop young people reporting because workers do not listen, jump to conclusions, "turn what you've said into something it isn't" (participant 1) and "put words in your mouth" (participant 2). One participant, reflecting on the character in the vignette who lived with foster carers, said "he sounds like he just wants to be left alone" (participant 3) but reasoned that this was not an option for children in care. This idea of not being heard could be a push factor into an inappropriate relationship, or lead to CSE.

Responding to CSE – prevention, intervention, disruption and prosecution

4.29   This final section addresses key findings from the data in respect of discussion from participants relating to issues around prevention, intervention, and disruption and prosecution. The findings are cross-cutting, and relate to each area of work so have been organised by theme in order to draw out the detail in each.

New knowledge and practice

4.30   It was evident from across the data that there have been developments in practice in terms of responding to CSE, across all sectors, since the guidance and protocol were introduced in 2009. There is evidence of pockets of excellent multi-agency working and social care learning and practice taking place in Wales, as well as evidence of practice being developed from knowledge exchange activities with professionals in England. Some examples shared with us included the Gwent multi-agency 'Missing Team', drawing on learning in disruption techniques from London Metropolitan Police, and learning in terms of work to support children and young people developed by teams in Rotherham. In response to and in order to

support these developments, local practices and protocols have emerged in some Local Authorities across Wales to support what is in the CSE guidance and protocol and to provide local detail:

> *"It's more of a [local] practice guidance that fits alongside [the All Wales guidance] so it's not replacing it in any way and it kind of directly quotes some parts of the you know it references it, but it's more helping frontline practitioners and managers to understand what that means in practice for them. So it's just a little bit more practical and it has links to kind of what services we have in (place) specifically and kind of key contacts and that kind of thing yeah so it's not, it's not replacing at all it's just kind of guiding yeah."* (Interview: CSE lead coordinator)

> *"I can't speak highly enough of our PPU. So they, what I love is that I don't need to ask them to go and do any disruptive work, they're already out doing it. You know they call it intelligence led interviews, they've got all kinds of stuff, they're brilliant. So I think we need to capture that and get it in the guidance because I know that not all forces and not all PPUs within the forces are the same."* (Focus group 14)

4.31   Conversely, there is evidence that in some Local Authorities the protocol is not being followed, resulting in a service and response for children and families that could not be considered best practice. Participants relayed frustrations and concerns that strategy meetings were not taking place in some Local Authorities when they should, and that not all children at significant risk were receiving support.

4.32   Related to both points above, there were concerns raised about the lack of consistency for children and young people across Wales. For example, concerns were raised about the difference in interventions or support packages and safety plans being afforded children and young people, and about the recent influx of support workers or services designed to respond to CSE in Local Authorities but which were not being coordinated well, meaning there was a risk of duplication of services for young people. There are also areas in which the protocol has been adapted so that for some Local Authorities all children and young people at significant risk are placed on the child protection register, whereas this is not the case for other Local Authorities.

"I think what's come out today is the importance of consistency across Wales and obviously across the region, clarity for everyone, regardless of which agency you come from, and a real strong multiagency approach in that guidance" (Focus group 4)

4.33 Whilst participants relayed that they did not want to lose good practice where it would not be appropriate or feasible for rolling out across Wales, there was strong consensus for the importance of re-establishing the process in the protocol and for good learning to be embedded within any amendments to the guidance and protocol in order to ensure consistent practice across Wales.

Case example:

While the SERAF is used across Wales as an assessment tool and the All Wales Protocol set out basic procedures for CSE responses, there is variance in guidance from region to region. Two localised examples are provided below:

Cardiff and Vale

Cardiff Council's response strategy focusses on escalation to MASM in cases in which a child or young person is assessed as at moderate or significant risk based on their SERAF score. For those assessed at moderate risk, escalation to MASM is left to practitioner discretion, though the Cardiff CSE team will advise on such cases.   Additionally, the Cardiff and Vale RSCB have developed a critical enquiry framework which is aimed at providing a more structured way of evaluating CSE or at-risk cases. This framework provides further detail about vulnerabilities and risks and taking a holistic view of factors in a child or young person's life, providing a comprehensive overview of prevention and intervention strategies (see Cardiff and Vale RSCB, 2016; City of Cardiff Council, 2016).

Newport

Newport City Council has specific guidance for establishing safety plans and disruption strategies for exploited children and young people (2016). This provides a framework for response in a variety of cases, mindful of the context of the child or young person's individual experiences. Newport also have general CSE guidance which draws from the Signs of Safety model, a safeguarding approach developed by an Australian social care consultancy, and which has been evaluated in England by the NSPCC (Bunn, 2013).

4.34   Following on from the previous point, the data indicates a need to update the guidance and protocol in order to reflect and connect with changes in wider social care policy and practice, to ensure systems work and complement each other. Participants made reference to recent changes to the Sexual Offences Act (2003), the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, and the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014. The potential changes to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures following the current review were also raised as needing attention. An example of the issues raised is given below:

> *"So what we do now with the Wellbeing Act, we make an adult protection referral and we have put that into our flow chart… I think if the guidance could say anything on that, I think that [would be helpful]." (Focus group, 12)*

4.35   In addition, it was felt the guidance should make reference to overlapping child protection issues such as sexually harmful behaviour, teenage partner violence, domestic abuse, and drug exploitation; especially in terms of prevention and the connection between these issues and vulnerability.

4.36   Relatedly, an issue raised in some of the focus groups and interviews was the interconnectedness of preventing CSE and other wider government initiatives, plans, and practices – such as concerns around care and the care system and the (lack of) opportunities for children to engage positively with professionals, alongside the need for Welsh Government to ensure children and young people have access to appropriate support via youth services and mentors. Whilst mention of these can be given in the CSE guidance, and whilst these are clearly concerns for the Welsh Government to consider, these belong to the wider context of CSE and the focus should be made, and can be perhaps made better and more specifically, within the relevant guidance and legislation.

Roles and responsibilities

4.37   The importance of multi-agency and multi-sector working was a significant cross-cutting theme arising from the data, relating to almost every point made in terms of responding to CSE. All participants stressed the importance of CSE being, as one participant put it: "everybody's business". This point relates specifically to section

three of the guidance, where it considers roles and responsibilities, but it was mainly emphasised by participants in terms of prevention and the wider context of CSE, and the need for a consistent approach by sector across Wales. Whilst it was acknowledged that this information is in the guidance, it was felt that it should be emphasised:

> *"It is included in the existing guidance but I think it needs to be a lot stronger around the role that education provides and it needs to target much younger children in terms of what constitutes healthy relationships so on and so forth. It tends to be, there is a tendency to talk about the teenage group or you know 11, 12 year olds. The reality for us is our children in primary school who have mobile phones are accessing hard core pornography, are being approached by other people. It has to start at a much earlier age so it isn't just about assisting teaching staff in identifying those children who may be at risk or who have been exploited, I think their role in prevention is critical in terms of education." (Focus group 13)*

4.38   As the extract above indicates, a related issue raised was the key role that education has to play with regards to prevention. Almost all focus groups talked about the important role that primary and secondary schools play in terms of educating children and young people about healthy relationships, issues over consent, safe touch, and in providing safe spaces to raise potential safeguarding issues. This appears to be happening in some schools – we heard examples of school plays and discussion spaces addressing these issues being provided for pupils – but this is not consistent across Wales. The need to strengthen the role of schools and teachers was discussed, as well as the need to add something in the guidance that would improve communication between social services and schools in terms of assessment, responses and updating on progress of a young person's case.

4.39   In addition, participants gave examples of the important role that education and youth services can play in terms of both wider prevention initiatives, but also through direct involvement in support work when intervening in CSE. Again, it was considered that this should be emphasised in the guidance, particularly in relation to seeking opportunities to maximise chances to develop the 'key' relationship with a wider range of non-statutory professionals:

"So realistically, it's not even that expensive to put on you know opportunities for young people to take part in activities that they enjoy because I think the problem we've had for a long time is that people want to see clearly defined outcomes, what is this young person getting out of something that we have paid for? And in some cases there isn't. You don't have a clearly defined outcome for building resilience, for building self-esteem, what you have is young people making better choices and that's the only way you can measure it… And when, you know when I worked in a youth centre there were probably 20 odd vulnerable young people in that area who came for that reason. And sometimes they'd make friends and sometimes they don't, but actually there is somewhere safe with people who care about them who will introduce them to different sorts of activities that slowly and surely help build their strengths, they are not just being measured by how they do in school." (Focus group 19)

4.40   A similar point was raised in terms of the need to update information on the role of police and of health. For example, in the guidance the role of the police is positioned as being about prosecution, but prevention and working to respond to vulnerabilities is now as much a part of the police agenda as it is for other agencies. In addition, as considered in the section on assessment, the information about the role of health should be updated to reflect the contribution these practitioners can make in strategy meetings and outreach work, particularly in a sexual health context where practitioners are directly supporting or are party to knowledge about a young person that other professionals may not have access to. Consideration should be given to the work that has been done on the health SERAF, and how that work will fit within any new protocol or guidance (due to the recent development of this work it is not in the current guidance).

4.41   In a number of focus groups, the need to move away from the idea that responding to CSE belongs to specialist workers was raised, with the feeling being that it is something that all professionals need to be aware of. A point was also raised that the role of Barnardo's needs to be separated from the guidance and the protocol. There was a feeling amongst a few participants that this ownership of the SERAF isn't clear and because Barnardo's developed the SERAF a clear separation should be made between the tools and guidance and Barnardo's role. Specific reference to Barnardo's is currently given in the guidance, and this should be removed. Also related to this point was the view that CSE should be added to all

safeguarding training taking place in Wales, as well as there being a need to provide guidance on discharging the corporate safeguarding functions of Local Authorities.

Intervening and working to achieve positive change

4.42   Another theme in the data was the need for the guidance to say something about how to respond to young people for whom there are identified concerns relating to CSE. Participants raised frustrations that too much focus has been on assessment and not enough information is given about how best to respond or intervene. Alongside this, however, was the lack of information about what interventions might 'work'. Some participants noted there was information about working approaches, and spoke of their experiences of positive outcomes being linked to positive relationships between young people and workers. Others spoke of the potential to use the vulnerabilities and risks on young people's assessment forms to inform their safety plans.

4.43   Some frontline practitioners raised the importance of the need to consider both therapeutic input and trauma-informed approaches, and that focussing on working with young people to educate them on positive relationships, whilst important, wasn't enough on its own. It was suggested that direction about this needs to be present in the guidance[27]. Introducing harm reduction approaches to work with older young people was also raised as an appropriate response, alongside concerns about the need to formally introduce this approach for young people aged 17, before they move into the transition to adult services, as indicated in the following extract from a focus group discussion:

> Participant 1: *One was around transition from youth to adult, I think we're far better recognising children now but we're not particularly great at then managing that transition to an adult where the support disappears.*
> Participant 2: *That's a good point yes.*
> Participant 1: *I learnt the hard way, I have served abduction notices on children, or boyfriends of children up until they're 18 and they get to the other side of 18 and then you can't do it anymore and you've got no way of*

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[27] This links to the aims of the 'Gwella' project, funded by the Welsh Government through the Sustaining Social Services Grant. Pilots of the evidenced-based Gwella approach are beginning at the time of writing, with the evaluation due for publication in spring 2019.

managing them, and perhaps the way we reflected on that practice was actually you need to learn to tolerate risk a little bit more as they're getting older, and, I don't know, accept relationships that perhaps you wouldn't have accepted [when they were] younger as long as you can risk assess that properly." (Focus group 15)

Multi-agency strategy meetings

4.44 There are multi-agency strategy meetings of a similar purpose but with varied names (MACE, MASM, MACSE or CSE steering group meetings) occurring across Wales. In some parts of Wales these are now well-established (in Gwent and Cardiff, for example) whereas in others they have only recently been introduced (in Powys for example), although all areas do seem to be operating groups of a similar strategic level.

> "*our regional safeguarding board took responsibility for that, they put a CSE working group in place and we've now got those MACE running in each local authority area, chaired by Children's Services, attended to with the same people as what you've got and looking at those crosscutting issues around repeat offenders, locations, victims, things of that nature so but that's only recently, towards beginning of this year really that that has been embedded in terms of that more strategic sort of oversight from a safeguarding board sort of MACE meeting. But it does help. (Focus group 15)*

4.45 These meetings exist to discuss more strategic aspects of prevention and intervention, and are different to CSE strategy meetings for individual children and young people. The consistent response from participants about these meetings was that they are a positive development, particularly so for the police who operate across Local Authorities. However, their relatively recent introduction means that they are not all operating to the same terms of reference. The status of lines of accountability for these meetings is also not established – some groups are chaired by the police whereas others are chaired by social services and this may have implications for devolved or non-devolved accountability or on which sector perspective should 'lead'. This was not raised by participants with any concern, although the inconsistency was noted and guidance on whether this matters or not would be welcomed.

Governance, accountability and transparency

4.46   The need for the guidance to include information on mechanisms for accountability and for ensuring the protocol is being followed across Wales was raised, alongside discussion about the need for transparency and to provide a mechanism for sharing best practice across Wales:

> Participant 1: *There is nothing in that protocol that talks about [national] strategic meetings around CSE, is it? It just talks around the strategy meeting.*
> Participant 2: *You need a tiered approach don't you? You've got the operational stuff and I think we just need that tiered approach up to safeguarding boards and national groups.*
> Participant 3: *And I guess that's the other thing, so the safeguarding boards are meant to have CSE plans aren't they within them? I don't know the quality of those plans, how they're checked, how we look for good practice between them, and I don't think the national children's safeguarding board has that as a piece of work to do either. So I think there is a risk of sort of saying we've got something but I don't know the quality of it or how it links to that so that's probably another piece of work to develop as well in truth." (Focus group 16)*

4.47   Some participants raised the Children's Commissioner's Roundtable on CSE as a good model, but raised concerns that there is no certainty that this could continue, as this is an extraordinary grouping in that there isn't an equivalent grouping for other issues affecting children and young people (so concerns were around why and what is the impetus for CSE to be singled out in such a way, and where is the grounds for this singling out to continue). The rapid progress in practice developments and the introduction of local processes, as well as concerns raised about the increasing lack of consistency for work around CSE, were also raised in connection to this point about the need for gathering and sharing good practice (as well as who decides what is 'good practice').

Managing out of county/country placements

4.48   Whilst it is only one aspect of responding to CSE, the management and securing the safety of children and young people placed 'out of county' – within and outside of Wales, as well as from England into Wales – featured as a significant theme. Concerns about this were raised in every focus group, across almost all sectors.

Participants raised concerns about who takes responsibility for supporting a child or young person being placed:

"we have terrible trouble when our children are placed out of county where things happen. So it's not my responsibility to convene a multiagency strategy meeting where the child is placed out of county, it's the other authority and we have helluva job even in Wales when we're all working to the same you know" (Focus group 11)

4.49   Safeguarding concerns were also raised about the lack of information sharing within the process. The police reported concerns about instances in which they are not made aware when a child or young person moved for concerns over CSE is placed within their force area, leaving them unable to be proactive about managing and responding to the potential risk surrounding the young person (and other young people in the locality). Difficulties described by practitioners included problems managing risks where referrals did not contain information about concerns related to sexual exploitation, or where young people were placed together and presented a risk to each other but the information was not provided to the receiving local authority/placement.

4.50   Similarly, concerns were raised in relation to the benefit of placing children and young people out of county, with participants referring to increased risks of young people going missing and running away, an increased sense of isolation for the child or young person, and the difficulties maintaining consistency with contact and with workers from their home authority due to the distance and time restraints for workers. Some participants questioned whether this was the right approach for children and young people at risk of CSE, and that decisions to place young people is being driven by (lack of) resource rather than safeguarding concerns.

4.51   Where out of county/country placements are deemed necessary there were examples given evidencing good practice in terms of how to manage these:

"This is something the local authority can do, when we do have to place a child out of the local authority and we've got concerns around CSE, I will make contact with that residential provision and I will say I would like you to talk me through your response to CSE concerns, what do you do when they go missing?" (Interview: Lead manager for CSE prevention)

4.52   A number of the focus groups and interviewees suggested that when out of county placements occur within Wales, a good management procedure should be a requirement for all residential units (including the private sector) and the placing authorities, and this management should be a measurement for CSSIW.

Children and families' involvement

4.53   A particular theme discussed by participants was the involvement of children, young people and their families within the assessment process and in strategy meetings, although no consensus emerged. Those who raised this as something that should be introduced referred to the need to involve children and young people in decision-making about their care, noting how responding to CSE should reflect the strengths-based approach encouraged by the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 and the children's rights agenda, as well as family work as something central to social work practice. Others referred to how young people's lack of involvement in decision making is noted as a risk factor in the literature, and can be linked to their vulnerability to CSE and should form a vital part of responses. These are also strong themes from the literature (see sections 3.50-3.56).

4.54   However, not all participants were positive about involving young people in the process, citing concerns about information sharing and confidentiality, being uncertain about the benefits for young people, concerns over the handling of their involvement and it potentially adding to vulnerabilities, and concerns over whether it would result in positive outcomes for children and young people. An example of this is given in the following extract from a focus group:

> Participant 1: *you'd be dragging them [young people] to a strategy meeting and telling them why they're here. I am aware that when I mention it either they're going to clam up and tell you nothing or they're going to tell the person [exploiting them], so it's very difficult, really difficult, and my police colleagues would say straight away you see, they'd say don't tell them because we're worried about him or worried about her. So it's a really difficult.*
> Participant 2: *Yeah but then some young people they think it's about me, I want to go, I want to know what's going on, I want to know what people are saying about me. Of course, but it's also about having that conversation with the young person and saying you know well we are going to be meeting,*

because they will know that there is a meeting, and you know we will have a chat and just explain.

Participant 3: *It's kind of pulling a few things together, and one of the things that we try and do as a school is within our restorative approaches framework and you know a few years ago it was the great hope of [location] that everybody would do it. And I think that that kind of model where everybody has their voice heard is quite a good thing. But I have also sat through too many quite uncomfortable meetings that have achieved nothing because professionals have to be a bit more guarded about what you say, because parents are there or the young person is there, and the young person then is hearing these things about [themselves], you know it's not an ideal situation"* (Focus group 18)

4.55   Feedback from young people taking part in the review encapsulates both views held by the professional participants:

Consulting with and involving young people – young people's perspectives

Young people in our focus group raised concerns about not reporting behaviour or incidents because of not trusting workers or the police, or not having good relationships with them. They also discussed having bad experiences of reporting something and being shut out of the actions taken by professionals in response to the disclosure. While this was not specific to CSE the message about non-reporting is relevant. One participant described how the only reason he knew about a meeting taking place about him was because someone called to ask for his social worker's phone number. This incident lead to him not trusting any of his workers and not believing them when they reassured him that what he said would be confidential:

> Participant 1 *"you know what to do next time don't you? Tell them F all!"*

> Participant 2 *"Yeah well I stopped telling them everything!"*

> Participant 1 *"you learn that from a young age"*

> Participant 3 *"Yeah you learn from your mistakes"*

The 'mistake' that the participant above is referring to here is in relation to experiences of care. It is not their behaviour or the incident that is a mistake; the mistake was having told a social worker about concerns or worries. This is an important point when thinking about how to respond to children and young people

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involved in CSE. The young people told us that in order to stop under or non-reporting, building a relationship with a worker, being able to rely on that worker and involving young people in actions and responses that are about them are key.

In our focus groups we explored multi-agency strategy meetings and whether it would be appropriate for young people to be present or involved with them. There was general agreement in the group that anything related to evidence, police intelligence or information about another child or young person should be kept away from the child or young person about whom the meeting was being held. They were very firm that the confidentiality of another young person should be respected, having felt that their own confidentiality had been breached many times, in many ways. Two young people felt that they would not want to be at the meeting at all, as the things being discussed would be too personal and uncomfortable. However, many of our participants felt it was wholly appropriate for them to attend part of the meeting where the plan of support and protection for the young person was going to be discussed and decided:

> *"It drives me absolutely crazy that these meetings that happen about a certain a young person and they are not there to get their opinions heard. So they are talked about, they don't talk to them" (participant 6)*

On the question of not understanding what was being said at the meeting, it was felt that an advocate or support worker could go to explain things, or go in the place of a young person:

> *"There's no point saying a young person doesn't understand…you find a way to communicate" (participant 6)*

The group decided that from the age of around 14 or 15 years old the option of being involved in a multi-agency strategy meeting should be provided. As one participant summed up: *"it's your business, it's all about you" (participant 3)* and this should be respected, especially if young people are going to engage in CSE support services or interventions.

Turning policy and guidance into practice

4.56   We asked participants at the end of each focus group or interview what they thought a good (or not so good) outcome from the review would be. Overwhelmingly the responses related to the desire to see changes in practice in order to inform better responses to, and outcomes for, children and young people in Wales. There was a strong message that any amendments, additions or

alterations to the CSE guidance, embedded definition and protocol needed to translate across into practice – a message displayed here:

"I don't think there is any risk of any of the documents not being refreshed and things like that but it's the activity that takes place outside to make it real, that's the bit that's the challenge and you know needs working on." (Group interview – Safeguarding)

4.57   Participants spoke of the opportunity for renewed awareness and familiarity with the guidance, and relayed ideas about the ways in which the documents could be more interactive and accessible:

"A video would be good, like an E video training or so that you could log in and you know someone could present that and this is how you do it, and it's just a guide from this number." (Focus group 6)

4.58   A few participants referred to the guidance document recently produced in England and how it had useful references to good practice and provided helpful information, suggesting that this model be adopted for the guidance in Wales. A key message was that participants wanted to ensure that efforts were made to raise awareness of the guidance for professionals across all sectors, and to ensure that responding to CSE is seen as the responsibility of all people working with or for children and young people in Wales.

5. Conclusions

5.1 This section of the report summarises key findings from the primary research and review of literature, before providing some broader conclusions.

Knowledge and awareness of the guidance

5.2 A basic awareness, knowledge and understanding of the CSE guidance and protocol was expressed by all participants across the different professional groups. However, participants also raised concerns about the lack of awareness or familiarity with the CSE guidance amongst many of their colleagues.

Definition

5.3 The current definition used in the Wales CSE guidance and protocol is not being used consistently across sectors and across Wales. The findings suggest that the guidance is no longer fit for purpose in terms of defining CSE, and there is still a need to provide clarity and understanding. However, there is no consensus whether what is currently in place should be revised or replaced. Whilst participants referred to the changed version in England, there was no clear steer from the data about adopting this – the analysis indicates that it has not provided any further clarity on CSE, and participants expressed dissatisfaction with it. The calls for adopting this are mainly driven by the desire for clarity and consistency, and to try to reduce the number of different definitions in use.

5.4 There is a lack of certainty about CSE evidenced in the data, and the analysis suggests that practitioners are still uncertain about what constitutes CSE and what 'makes' something CSE or not (as opposed to CSA). A consistent point raised is that boys are very likely to be missed in assessments of CSE, and this is linked to a misunderstanding of what CSE is and how it occurs. There is strong evidence from the literature to support this finding. In addition, concerns about other non-sexual forms of exploitation but which occur to similarly vulnerable young people were raised. Boys are likely to be exploited as drug carriers, and this may or may not incorporate some form of sexual exploitation, and young people can be exploited as 'facilitators' for sexual exploitation (having been sexually exploited themselves). These young people are not easily recognised through the current definition and associated protocols.

5.5 As considered in chapter 3, the literature suggests that this problem of confusion and lack of clarity about CSE is not confined to Wales. CSE has been a matter of multi-agency concern as a safeguarding issue for long enough to suggest the problem is not explained by a lack of awareness of CSE. Definitions by themselves do not resolve issues of understanding but they should at least inform basic understanding and provide clarity. The particular history of CSE and its overlap with other forms of abuse suggests that a worded 'definition' of CSE may not be the most appropriate or effective way of addressing this. Indeed, CSE is a form of child sexual abuse – of which there is a definition readily available. Instead, outlining the specific particularities of CSE as a form of abuse may be the most appropriate way to provide clarity about what CSE is. It is worth drawing attention to the literature on these particularities here:

- CSE is now well established as a form of sexual abuse, occurring to children and young people up to the age of 18 (or 21 in the case of Looked After Children) – there is no specific adult equivalent within social care or related welfare policies. It involves an exchange of sex or sexual activity (including online activity) for something (which can include the withdrawal of something).

- In acknowledging that CSE involves exchange, the use of this concept for understanding CSE is often directed towards whether something has been received by the child or young person who has been exploited (and on what that thing is). This can be a source of confusion for professionals when the 'thing' young people receive is something that cannot be easily identified, doesn't exist as something material, or is the withdrawal of something (such as the withdrawal of threats to abuse others). Whilst applying the concept in this way can be helpful for identifying cases of CSE and the needs of the young person being abused, it provides a more helpful picture in terms of response. The importance of recognising the exchange element of CSE is to acknowledge the agency of the child or young person so abused and the abuses of power against them, which mean that the young person may feel or declare that they (to some extent) engage(d) in the abuse willingly. It is for these reasons that the exchange occurring within sexual exploitation is what makes it particular as a form of sexual abuse. This aspect of CSE also presents particular

challenges for those responding to CSE, and forms part of the need for a specific response outside of existing measures to respond to CSA. In line with the literatures on 'conditions of consent' and constrained choices, CSE can occur through some form of grooming process, but, crucially, not always.

5.6 Definitions provide boundaries to help establish who is and who isn't included in a problem, whilst also helping to establish practice responses. The need for distinguishing CSE from other forms of CSA is primarily because of the need to direct appropriate responses. Rather than reproducing the same problems that come with trying to create a comprehensive definition that is also manageable and easy to understand, highlighting these key characteristics of CSE would draw attention to and make explicit the nature of the problem and the challenges of responding to children at risk of and abused through CSE. This would inform our understandings of the issue and how to respond, as well as informing disruption techniques.

5.7 In addition, the findings reported here support the literature that there are some people who are likely to be 'missed' by professionals seeking to help them – such as boys, who are less likely to present as victims to professionals who come into contact with them. The data suggest that boys may also be more likely to be abused through drug exploitation[28], which may or may not involve sexual exploitation. Similarly problematic for professionals are those children and young people who may be exploited to act as 'facilitators' of exploitation but who may or may not be exploited for sex themselves. Whilst the sexual abuse may be absent, the abusive exchange that occurs through sexual exploitation is present in both these forms of abuse. They also present very similar challenges for practitioners in terms of intervention and disruption. This review presents an opportunity for Welsh Government to consider reviewing and amending the sexual exploitation guidance to an 'exploitation' guidance that incorporates a response to all three forms of abuse (sexual, drug and 'facilitator' exploitation), which are themselves interconnected. This could facilitate and lead the way for responding to children and young people at risk of, and experiencing, these abuses.

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[28] Whilst the 'County Lines' work has drawn attention to the abuses involved in drug exploitation, this is still an issue of criminalisation for young people yet the abuses involved and the routes into involvement mirror much of what we know about CSE, as well as the particular challenges for disclosure and for responding to young people.

Assessment and identification of CSE

5.8   The findings suggest that the guidance, protocol and embedded SERAF assessment process is no longer fit for purpose in terms of identifying and referring children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, and in terms of accessing support and interventions for young people in a multi-agency context.

5.9   There is confusion about the purpose of the assessment. It is perceived as either a screening tool or an assessment tool, which has implications for how professionals approach the scoring and their subsequent actions. Findings indicate that too much emphasis is being given to SERAF scores, and the risk scores are not being assessed in conjunction with professional judgement – which has implications for professionals' perceptions of and responses to children and young people's risk when they are not looking holistically at the concerns for the young person. This can also mean that support and resource allocation can be difficult to prioritise when all assessments result in a score of significant risk.

5.10   Some professionals are viewing the SERAF tool as something to be completed by 'CSE experts' rather than by the individuals who are concerned about a child or young person. There is a reluctance or lack of confidence, meaning that professionals across a multi-agency context do not complete 'the assessment' and so concerns are not passed on and this limits the possibility for bringing concerns together.

5.11   There are problems with the risks and vulnerabilities on the tool. They are either 'outdated', or do not reflect current knowledge (in terms of score rating). There is also too much weighting given to historical or more static factors, meaning that some children and young people will never reduce their risk below the moderate and sometimes significant threshold. The assessment does not include any strengths or protective factors, which is problematic in terms of the ethos of work with children and young people, but it also does not lend itself to a more holistic assessment of risk.

5.12   The All Wales approach as it stands does not suit all sectors. There has been substantial and soon to be peer-reviewed work undertaken in Wales to develop a two-tiered 'CSE health assessment tool' which is suitable for completion by healthcare professionals. However, the analysis indicates that merging this into an All Wales 'all sectors' tool would not create something suitable for other agencies. The All Wales protocol should embed the Health SERAF into the protocol through

making clear reference to this assessment tool and how it will work alongside the amended SERAF tool.

Responding to CSE[29]

5.13   The findings suggest the guidance is no longer fully effective in terms of preventing and intervening early in child sexual exploitation; protecting children and young people who are at risk of abuse or are abused through sexual exploitation and disrupting and prosecuting those who perpetrate this form of abuse.

5.14   Since the introduction of the guidance in 2011, there has been a substantial increase in knowledge around CSE, alongside developments in prevention and intervention work with children and young people. In some part of Wales this learning has informed the development of local protocols to accommodate the changes in local practices. This has benefitted certain sectors and geographical areas, and this needs to be replicated across Wales through direction from the guidance.

5.15   In addition, the landscape in terms of the health and social care, and policing legislative and practice contexts has changed, and there have been initiatives developed across all sectors that should be drawn upon in order to enhance and inform more effective practice in all areas of responding to CSE.

5.16   Prevention in particular needs to have greater visibility in the guidance to reflect the wider context of preventive activity and the role education and youth services can play. This does not necessarily have to sit within the protocol, but an emphasis on the role that all sectors have in terms of prevention needs to be made more prominent within the guidance.

5.17   Responding to CSE is the responsibility of all sectors and all professionals working in a multi-agency context with children. This needs to be emphasised within the guidance, and the role of professionals working within each sector needs to be re-emphasised and updated.

5.18   More guidance is needed on how to respond to children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and on how to intervene. The guidance needs to take into account the learning outlined in this review, as well as learning from CSE practice across Wales (and from elsewhere) in order to provide the tools and knowledge to

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[29] The material presented here relates specifically to the conclusions from the research findings. The nature of the research questions means that the conclusions from the findings lend themselves quite specifically to the recommendations.

enable professionals to produce good and effective safety plans with young people.

5.19   One area that needs to be clarified is the issue of online and offline CSE. Online CSE (CSE which occurs wholly through online platforms) is a distinct area of CSE, and this needs to be made explicit within the guidance. Much of the concern about online CSE amongst participants appears to be different to this and relates to the use of social media amongst young people. The distinction between 'online' and 'offline' worlds is one that children and young people rarely make – reflecting the transformation of UK society in terms of its incorporation of social media through almost all forms of social life. It should be made explicit in the guidance that this merging of online and offline worlds is reflected in cases of CSE: rarely is there CSE that occurs without some online communication involved. Rather than focussing on online CSE (when it is not intended to mean online CSE as described above) and heightening this misconception of dual forms of CSE, understanding how young people engage with social media (and other forms of internet based communication) in general would be more helpful for practitioners. This would in turn inform understanding and awareness of how this usage can cross over into cases of CSE. CSE guidance may not be the most appropriate place for a full consideration of these issues though should provide information where pertinent.

5.20   There is a need to ensure accountability and transparency (with sharing of best practice as a central focus) for ensuring the protocol is being followed, as well as providing a means of monitoring trends, reporting on progress, and sharing learning and good practice, with timeframes for accountability. The Children's Commissioner's roundtable provides an opportunity for this, although currently it is not linked into existing structures.

5.21   The MACE meetings (or their equivalent in variant name) are a recent introduction to CSE practice and are in the process of being established across Wales and appear to be working very well at a strategic level for prevention, intervention and disruption. Because of their recent introduction they are not mentioned within the guidance. Where these are still being established, the sharing of terms of reference and examples of good practice would benefit these groups in order to ensure consistency and good learning.

5.22   Out of county placements is one particular and specific aspect of responding to CSE, but featured as a particular and urgent concern among participants across all

agencies. A protocol for managing this is needed, as well as some structure for reporting and accountability. In addition, in accordance with the literature, the guidance should give consideration to how these should be managed as 'last resort' responses for young people at risk of CSE. This would also require consideration from the relevant sectors on how else such placements would be managed where no available accommodation is available in the locale of the placing authority.

5.23   A particular theme for responding to CSE is the need to involve children and young people in decision making about their care. This is a strong theme from the literature, and is also one arising from the data. Non-involvement can reinforce vulnerabilities and risks for children and young people whilst involvement and consultation is seen as a vital part of good responses. The guidance should reflect the strengths based approach encouraged by the coproduction and children's rights agenda. Parents are also core within this, and family work is already central to child protection practice. Whilst this will need to be managed carefully, particularly in the context of strategy meetings, as it does with all child and family involvement, the guidance should provide information on how to manage this involvement through all aspects of the process and draw attention to principles of good practice.

Final conclusions

5.24   The overarching conclusion from this review is that the sexual exploitation guidance, embedded definition and SERAF protocol are no longer fit for purpose. There is clear evidence indicating that the guidance and protocol should be updated to encompass new learning, reflect recent wider policy changes and to learn from developments in practice across Wales. A related conclusion is the importance of these documents for informing frontline and strategic practice and the need to keep a consistent All Wales approach. The analysis from the data, in combination with the literature review, suggests this is a key strength in terms of responding to CSE.

5.25   There is a strong desire to build on the excellent practice that exists in Wales, and for that to be embedded within guidance that becomes a 'live' document – one that is accessible to frontline and strategic professionals working across all agencies, informing good and consistent practice across the country in order to work towards better safeguarding and better outcomes for children and young people in Wales.

6.   Recommendations

6.1   This final section of the report draws on the key findings and conclusions from all the elements of the review and offers the following recommendations for the Welsh Government's consideration. Beginning with the overarching recommendation, these are organised under the following headings: definition; identification and assessment; responding to CSE; strategic considerations; involving children, young people and their families; producing and launching the new guidance and protocol.

6.2   We note here that all recommendations need to work with other related guidance and strategies in existence. The wider context of CSE means that the protocol and guidance cannot exhaust all that can be done in terms of prevention work and the broader responses to CSE. Education, health, social services and policing are all sectors engaged in broader activities that will inform this work. An issue raised in some of the focus groups and interviews was the interconnectedness of preventing CSE and other wider government initiatives, plans, and practices such as: concerns around care and the care system; the (lack of) opportunities for children to positively engage with professionals; funding for youth service provision; and investment in education, alongside the need for Welsh Government to ensure children and young people have access to appropriate support via youth services and mentors. While these are important areas in need of consideration and investment from Welsh Government and should be included in CSE guidance, the focus of these belongs outside of CSE and within relevant guidance and legislation.

Overarching recommendation

1. The Wales guidance, embedded definition, and SERAF protocol should be updated to reflect knowledge that has emerged since they were produced, along with developments in practice and multi-agency working. This should also contribute to the spread of good practice across Wales.

Definition

2. We recommend removing a worded definition of CSE, and replacing this with a bullet-point approach outlining the agreed factors that make CSE particular as a form of abuse (see Annex D as an example).

3. Online CSE (CSE which occurs wholly through online platforms) is a distinct area of CSE, and this needs to be made explicit within the guidance. Relatedly, informing an understanding of how young people engage with social media (and other forms of internet based communication) and how this forms part of CSE would be helpful for practitioners.

4. Any refreshed definition should be accompanied with a sub-section in the guidance outlining the common misconceptions of sexual exploitation and a section on conditions of consent that should make reference to issues of power, consent, children's agency and grooming.

5. Welsh Government should consider reviewing and amending the guidance to incorporate a response to sexual exploitation, drugs exploitation and 'facilitator' abuse, which are themselves interconnected abuses, presenting similar challenges in terms of responding to children and young people and for disruption and prosecution. This would provide a means of responding to children and young people at risk of and experiencing these abuses where formal provision or guidance is lacking. Welsh Government should also consider reframing the guidance to address these three interconnected forms of abuse, focussing on the issue of the problematic exchange that takes place within such abuses[30] .

Identification and assessment

6. Any launch of new guidance and protocols should stress the 'screening' nature of CSE assessments, emphasising the important role professional judgement plays alongside any score in assessing risk and identifying concerns.

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[30]   While arising from the data and from the literature around CSE, we acknowledge this recommendation may not receive universal support. This recommendation was not received with support from the professionals' stakeholder workshop, held as part of the review. Those participants who suggested this or talked about this possibility in the review did so strongly. We received very strong support for this from the stakeholder workshop held with young adults.

7. The SERAF tool should be amended and reworked into a two-layered approach to assessment: a short 'screening' tool, with an emphasis on professional judgement alongside identified key risk factors, to be completed by any practitioner or professional in contact with a child or young person with concerns. This would be followed by a fuller CSE screening assessment to be completed by a social services practitioner. The assessment process should draw on relevant research (see for example section 3.38) and be subjected to further evaluation.

8. Creating an All Wales 'all sectors' tool may not be suitable for health professionals, and the Health SERAF has been developed to ensure that the opportunity to capture concerns arising through their work are maximised. The All Wales protocol should embed the existing Health SERAF into the protocol through making clear reference to this assessment tool and how it will work alongside the amended SERAF tool.

9. The CSE specific response within the protocol should focus on moderate risk and significant risk cases. There needs to be a response to low risk and concerns, but this should be embedded in, and addressed through, existing broader processes within the social services and education sectors.

10. Any new assessment tool should include strengths and/or protective factors. As considered in chapter 3, the original SERAF tool featured these factors. Learning will have moved on, but access to a copy of these early versions of the SERAF by the original authors Clutton and Coles should be sought by those reworking the CSE guidance.

Responding to CSE

11. Revised guidance should emphasise that responding to CSE is the responsibility of all sectors and all professionals working in a multi-agency context with children, accommodating new practice contexts and approaches.

12. The role of prevention needs to be more prominent in revised guidance, including the wider context of prevention work and the role that education and youth services can play in this regard – in particular that of facilitating positive relationships with adult professionals and providing opportunities for discussion around relationships, power and consent.

13. More information is needed on how to respond to children and young people at risk to CSE and on how to intervene. The guidance needs to take into account the learning outlined within the research literature and the practice learning on CSE being implemented in Wales and elsewhere in order to provide the tools and knowledge to enable professionals to produce good and effective safety plans. Examples of good practice and case studies should be provided to help guide professionals.

14. The guidance and protocol should be updated to reflect new learning from initiatives to enhance and inform more effective practice in all areas of responding to CSE including disruption and prosecution, taking account of local processes and services across all agencies. The guidance and protocol should require agreed local level protocols/plans, such as disruption plans, which will complement the national guidance and protocol but incorporate local practice.

15. The guidance should be updated to reflect the legislative and practice changes in health and social care and policing. (Annex E provides an example of an updated flowchart of the process involved when there are concerns about CSE).

Strategic considerations

16. MACE meetings, or their equivalent, should be rolled out across Wales. As part of the development of a revised protocol, terms of reference should be produced to promote consistency and best practice. The terms of reference should include who should chair and vice-chair these meetings, a role currently performed by representatives from the police or children's social care.

17. Revised guidance should include the role of corporate safeguarding in terms of prevention and policing, such as work with taxi drivers, procurement of services and the night time economy.

18. Highlighting accountability and transparency (with a focus on sharing best practice) is required to help ensure the protocol is followed and for promoting shared practice across Wales. We recommend a structure that has a National CSE group, which is led by Welsh Government and has ministerial responsibility attached to it. This would provide a means of monitoring trends,

reporting on progress, and sharing learning and good practice, with timeframes for accountability. See Annex F as an example structure for managing CSE in Wales. Such a national group could replace the current Children's Commissioner's roundtable (or evolve from this group).

19. Consideration should be given to the management and associated reporting requirements for out of county placements, and information on this should be added to revised guidance. Where these occur within Wales, good management of this should be a requirement for all residential units (including the private sector) and the placing authorities. Welsh Government should consider how this process can be replicated to ensure those young people being placed outside of Wales and coming in from England can be managed in the same way. Consideration should be given to the potential role for CSSIW in collecting management data on this.

20. CSE should be incorporated into safeguarding training across Wales. Current CSE training should be amended to incorporate the learning provided within any revisions to the guidance and protocol.

Involving children, young people and families

21. Revised guidance should consider the involvement of children, young people and their families in terms of responding to CSE in individual cases – the message should be clear that they should be involved wherever possible and examples of good practice should be provided.

22. Revised guidance should state that one worker be assigned to stay with the young person throughout the care planning process and to work with them in a co-productive way. This person will take the lead on what information is safe to share with a young person (and their family where appropriate).

23. Where appropriate, children, young people and their families should be invited to be part of their CSE strategy meeting(s). This may not be appropriate where there are safeguarding concerns arising from the sharing of information or where it runs counter to frank discussion about risks and safety plans. However, consideration should be given to their attendance at part of the meeting, and/or for them to have a nominated person (as set out above) to attend on their behalf. The requirement to provide young people with information about each meeting, the opportunity to feed into and attend these

(where appropriate), as well as updates and the opportunity for discussion about agreed actions should be written in to revised guidance as best practice in the care planning process. This information should also be provided to families where appropriate.

Producing and launching the new guidance and protocol

24. It is recommended that any reworking of the guidance and protocol should be informed by an advisory group including key representatives from all sectors across Wales with the knowledge and experience of best practice in the field.

25. Consideration should be given to how revised guidance and the associated protocol are produced, to make them interactive and easily accessible to all practitioners.

26. Any relaunch should include awareness raising activities among practitioners and professionals in order to promote the revised protocol and to continue to address inconsistent or misinformed practice.

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Annex A – List of organisations involved and focus groups held

(This list includes groups specially convened for the purposes of this review)

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board

All Wales Safeguarding in Education Group (SEG)

All Wales Safeguarding Managers Group

Aneurin Bevan UHB

The Assistant Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)

The Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW)

Barnardo's Cymru: Better Futures Project

Barnardo's Cymru: Policy and Research

Betsi Cadwallader University Health Board

Cardiff Children's Services

Cardiff and the Vale RSCB

Cardiff and the Vale Health

Cardiff and the Vale UHB

Carmarthenshire County Council Children's Services

Ceredigion County Council

Ceredigion Youth Justice and Prevention

The Children's Commissioner for Wales (also in their role as chair of the All Wales Roundtable on CSE)

Conwy Children's Services

Conwy Multi-Agency Focus Group

Conwy Social Services

Cwm Taf RSCB

Cwm Taf UHB

Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service

Denbighshire Children's Services

Dyfed Powys Police

Educational Social Work Service, Conwy

Ethnic Youth Support Team

Fitzalan School

Flintshire Children's Services

Gwent Missing Children Hub

Gwent Police

Gwynedd Children's Service

Hywell Dda UHB

Llamau

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Children's Services

Mid and West Wales RSCB

Monmouthshire County Borough Council

Monmouthshire Multi-agency practitioner group

The National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISW)

National Probation Service

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty against Children (NSPCC)

NCC Gwent missing children team

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Social Services

Newport Children's Services

NHS Public Health

North Wales Police

North Wales Police Protection of Vulnerable People Unit

North Wales RSCB

Pembrokeshire County Council Children's Services

PING Group, Cardiff

Policing CSE Threat Group

Powys County Council

Powys Teaching Health Board

Public Health Wales

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Safeguarding in Education Group

Safer Wales

South East Wales RSCB

South Wales Police

St Giles Trust

Swansea C&C Social Services

University of South Wales

Vale of Glamorgan Directorate of Learning and Skills

Voices for Care Cymru

Western Bay Safeguarding Board, C&C of Swansea

Western Bay Youth Offending Team

Welsh Local Government Association

Welsh Government

Western Bay RSCB

Wrexham County Borough Council

YMCA

Ynys Mon Education Department

Youth Offending Service

Annex B - Interview schedule for focus groups and interviews

Demographic information

Agency and position:

Length of experience in terms of working within CSE:

Can you tell us a little bit about your role (or the role of the board/organisation) in terms of working in the area of child sexual exploitation?

The Guidance (General)

These are some quick structured questions looking for a yes/no or brief response as the detail will be covered later in the focus group/interview.

- Are you familiar with the Statutory Guidance on Safeguarding C& YP from Sexual Exploitation?
- Can you tell us how you make use of the Guidance in your work?
- Is there good awareness of the guidance (in your opinion) in your agency? In agencies with which you work? E.g. the police, social services, education, third sector.
- Have you been involved in calling for a review of the Statutory Guidance in recent months/ years? If yes, please explain reasons why you think the Guidance needs to be reviewed.

Defining CSE

We will get to issues around identifying CSE in a bit, but firstly we wanted to focus specifically on the definition of CSE within the guidance. (*Show them the card with the definition*):

- Were you all aware of the definition, would you say you have knowledge of it?

- Are there any problems with the definition?
    Prompts: Does the definition match up to your knowledge and experience of working within CSE?
    Prompts: Are there any problems you come across in terms of understanding CSE? (Either your own or colleagues you come across.)
    Prompts: Does it reflect and encompass the sorts of cases you and colleagues might see?
    Prompts: Does it work for example, if there is no obvious groomer or in online cases?

- Is the definition fit for purpose?

    Prompts: Can you explain why or why not?

    Prompts: What changes should be made to it, if any? Are there any other definitions you prefer, why?

- What do you think distinguishes CSE from other forms of sexual abuse? Do you feel confident making the distinction?

- Is there anything else you might want to flag to us in terms of the definition?

Identification and referral

- How well does the guidance (and the SERAF) work in terms of identifying and helping you/your agency (and other relevant agencies) work with CSE, particularly around the risks and vulnerabilities that feature in the assessment?

    Prompts: Is there anything missing or that's difficult to capture in the current SERAF, that you think would be useful to have included?

    Prompts: Are the risk categories about right or helpful for gauging the right level of concern?

    Prompts: Are the associated scores useful for determining the level of risk for children and young people?

- Would you say the SERAF (guidance and definition) is effective and 'fit for purpose' in terms of <u>identifying</u> young people at risk of CSE? Why?

    - And would you say it is effective and 'fit for purpose' in terms of <u>referring</u> children and young people? Why?

    - Do you have any good or not so good examples to draw on that would help demonstrate these points?

- What changes should be made to the SERAF or the Guidance in terms of <u>identification</u> and <u>referral,</u> if any?

Preventing/intervening/prosecuting (sometimes referred to as the 3 P's - Preventing, Protecting and Prosecuting)

- How well does the guidance (SERAF and definition) work in terms of supporting multi-agency work in this area?

    - Are there any key strengths and/or barriers in this regard?

- How well does the SERAF and the guidance work in terms of <u>preventing</u> and <u>intervening early</u> in cases of CSE?

    - Do you have any examples of problematic or good practice you could share?

- How well does the Guidance and the SERAF work in terms of <u>supporting and working with</u> children and young people at risk of, or involved in, CSE (particularly for providing longer term support)? i.e. beyond an assessment of risk does the guidance facilitate working with the child or young person towards positive change.

    <u>Prompts</u>: awareness of need for additional support for those with heightened vulnerabilities such as:
    - those that go missing, are NEETs, LAC, disabled children and young people
    - BME (e.g. less likely to come forward – because of honour/shame)
    <u>Prompts</u>: about the situation for boys and young men (as well for girls/young women)

    - What would success look like in this regard?

    - Do you have any good or not so good examples to draw on that would help demonstrate this?

- How well does the guidance enable or facilitate work practitioners and professionals to work to <u>disrupt and prosecute</u> those who perpetrate CSE?
    - Are there any examples that you could draw on to help demonstrate this?

- What do you think needs to change to improve multi-agency (and single service) responses to CSE in your area?
    - Are there any particular barriers that need to be addressed?
    - Do you have any examples of good practice or successes?

- Would you say the Guidance and the SERAF is 'fit for purpose' in terms of responding to CSE?

- Is there anything that could be included in the guidance or the SERAF that would help you as an agency or practitioner/professional to: prevent, intervene or protect children and young people against CSE?

- Is the Guidance used at a strategic level, e.g. to monitor cases of CSE, to inform the development of the CSE Action Plan. Please describe how.
    - Do you think the Guidance is 'fit for purpose' in this respect?
    - What are the difficulties of implementing the Guidance at a strategic level? What would facilitate this?
    <u>Prompt</u>: Requirements on regional safeguarding boards to produce action plans

Concluding questions:

- Have we covered everything – is there anything that you want to bring to our attention (in terms of this review) that we haven't given you the opportunity to share?

- In particular are there any changes required to the guidance that haven't already been raised and discussed that you want to share?

- Finally, what do you think would be a good outcome of this Review?

Annex C – UK definitions of CSE

Wales:

Child sexual exploitation is the coercion or manipulation of children and young people into taking part in sexual activities. It is a form of sexual abuse involving an exchange of some form of payment which can include money, mobile phones and other items, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, 'protection' or affection. The vulnerability of the young person and grooming process employed by perpetrators renders them powerless to recognise the exploitative nature of relationships and unable to give informed consent (WAG 2009:3).

England:

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 (HM Government 2017a:5).

Scotland:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse in which a person(s), of any age, takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something received by the child and/or those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the presence of perceived consent does not undermine the abuse (Scottish Government 2016:1).

Northern Ireland:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland 2014:1).
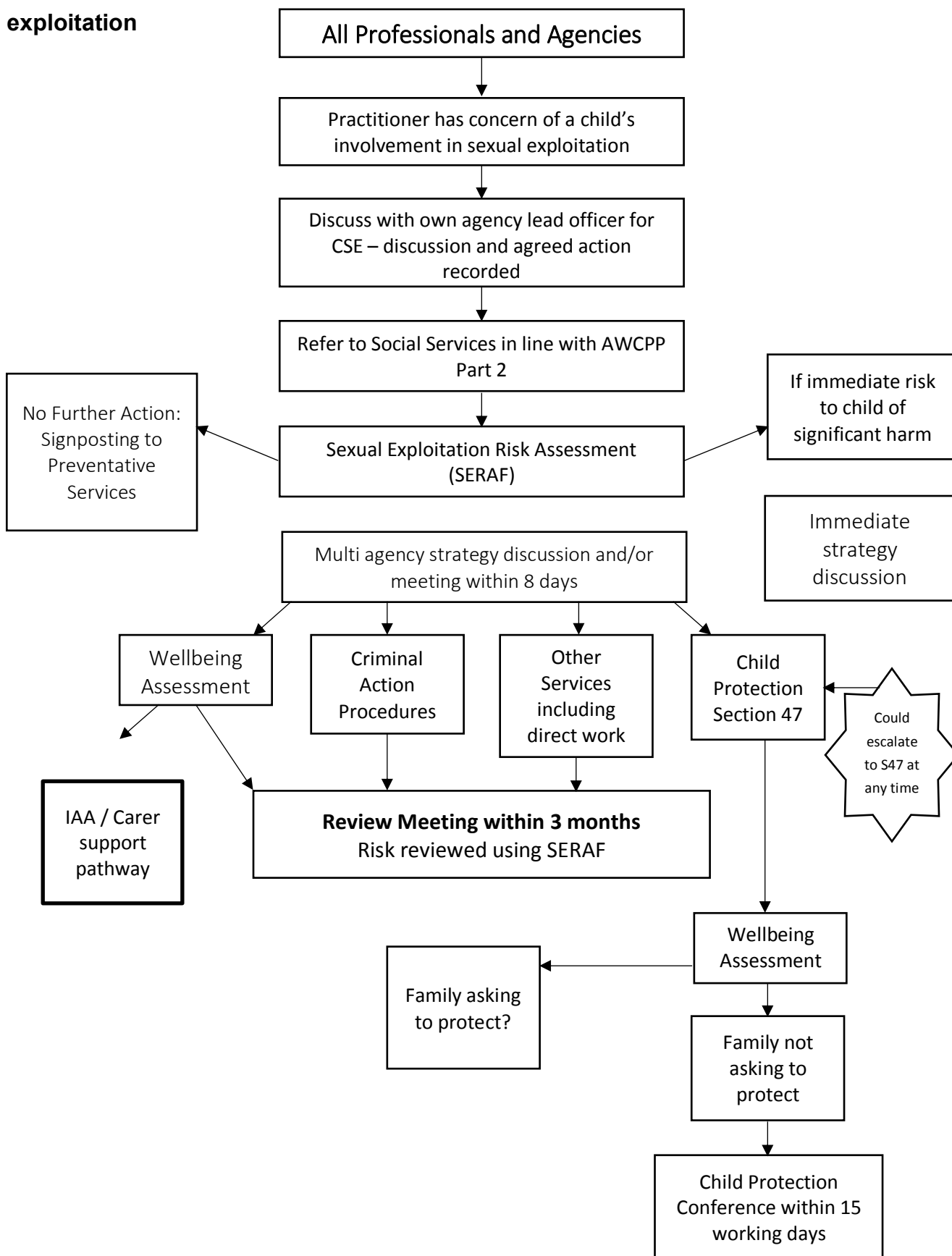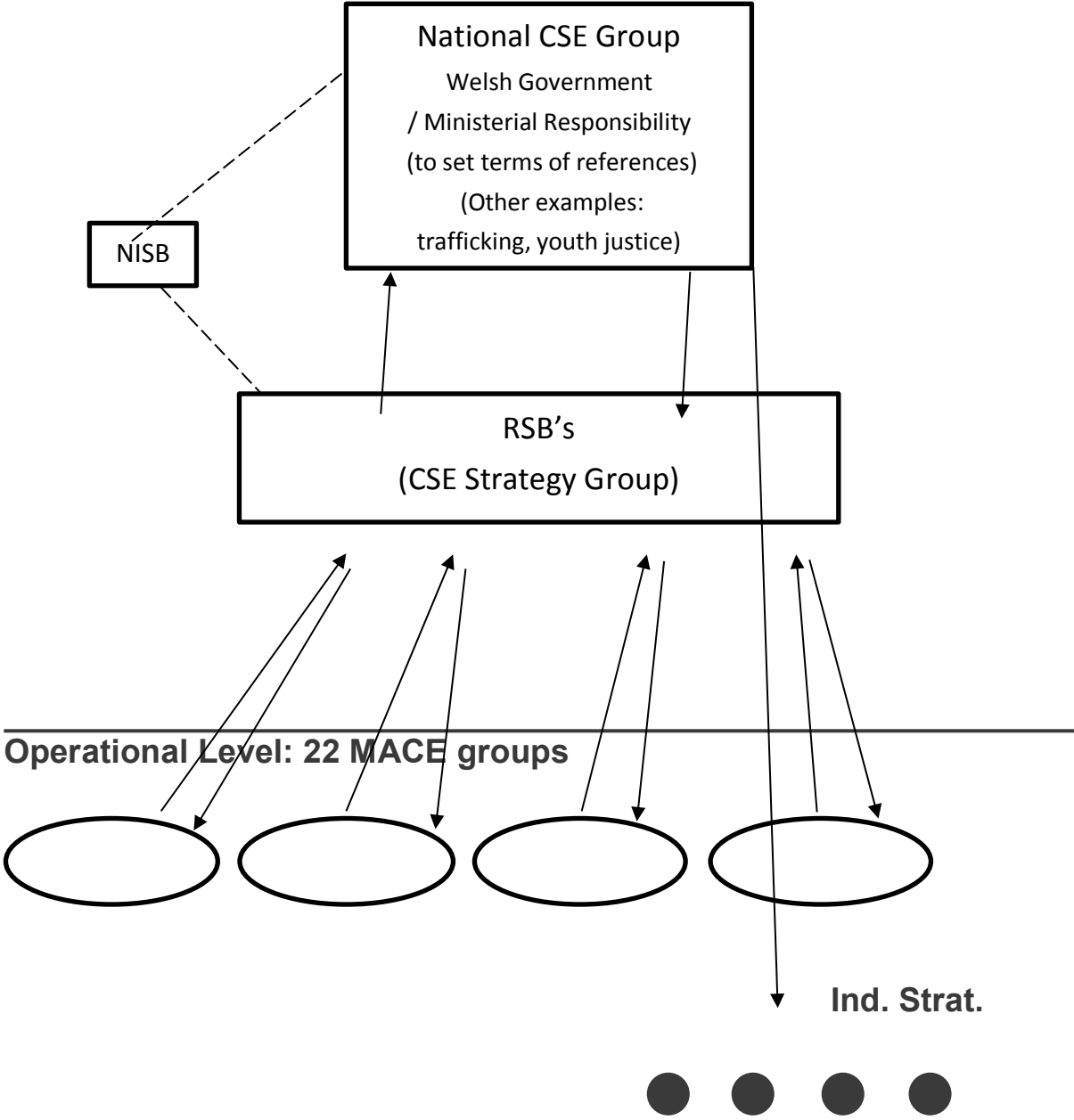
Annex D – Example of new definition

At its simplest, child sexual exploitation can be described as the sexual abuse of children and young people through the exchange of sex or sexual activity for something. There is no single agreed definition of CSE in the UK, or globally. There are however three 'components' essential in all definitions:

1. It is a form of sexual abuse which can include:
    a. sex or any form of sexual activity with a child; the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children, whether photographs, films or other technologies.

2. It occurs to those up to the age of 18 (or 21 in the case of those entitled to aftercare services);

3. It involves some form of exchange:
    a. The exchange can include the withdrawal of something (rather than the giving of something); such as the withdrawal of violence or threats to abuse another person.
    b. Persons may have third party involvement in the sexual abuse; they may, for example, receive goods or money on behalf of the child or young person.
    c. **The focus should not be on what is received but on the agency of the child or young person so abused and the abuses of power against them, which means that they may feel or declare that they (to some extent) engage(d) in the abuse willingly.**

Annex E – Flow chart: Action where there are concerns about child sexual exploitation

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  All Professionals and Agencies  │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │ Practitioner has concern of a    │
                    │ child's involvement in sexual    │
                    │ exploitation                     │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │ Discuss with own agency lead     │
                    │ officer for CSE – discussion     │
                    │ and agreed action recorded       │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │ Refer to Social Services in line │
                    │ with AWCPP Part 2                │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
```

No Further Action: Signposting to Preventative Services

Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment (SERAF)

If immediate risk to child of significant harm

Immediate strategy discussion

Multi agency strategy discussion and/or meeting within 8 days

Wellbeing Assessment

Criminal Action Procedures

Other Services including direct work

Child Protection Section 47

Could escalate to S47 at any time

IAA / Carer support pathway

Review Meeting within 3 months
Risk reviewed using SERAF

Wellbeing Assessment

Family asking to protect?

Family not asking to protect

Child Protection Conference within 15 working days

Annex F – Suggested national structure for responding to child sexual exploitation

National CSE Group

Welsh Government
/ Ministerial Responsibility
(to set terms of references)
(Other examples:
trafficking, youth justice)

NISB

RSB's
(CSE Strategy Group)

Operational Level: 22 MACE groups

Ind. Strat.

Annex G – Acknowledgements