



Report from the follow on meeting on young people, sexual violence, ethics and participation

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Cumberland Lodge, The Great Park, Windsor

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The meeting

This meeting was organised with funding from the Council of Europe and brought together academics from the Universities of Bedfordshire, Queen's, Sussex and the New Bulgarian University, along with practitioners working directly with young people affected by sexual violence, and representatives from International NGO's including Plan International, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes. Together 23 participants attended the meeting bringing with them experiences of working with young people across the UK, Europe and further afield.

Objectives

The objectives of the day were to:

- Explore the key themes emerging during the conference on '*young people affected by sexual violence as change-makers in prevention efforts: what are the opportunities and what are the risks?*'
- Identify ideas, opportunities and priorities for future collaborative work
- Develop a short 'recommendations' document for those working with young people affected by sexual violence in a participatory way.

Discussions and activities during the day

Background

The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking (IC) at the University of Bedfordshire who were hosting the meeting introduced the work of the centre. As part of this introduction they provided an overview of three international projects that are currently underway which all have an emphasis on promoting safe and ethical practice with young people affected by sexual violence.

These projects include the '*Our Voices*' project, a Pan European project, supported by the Oak Foundation, which promotes the involvement of young people in efforts to prevent sexual violence. The '*life skills, leadership, limitless potential*' project, a new two year project funded by the European Commission which involves activities in the UK, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Romania (one aspect of this project involves building the capacity of support services to develop safe, ethical, participatory practice with young people affected by sexual violence). The final project outlined was the *RISE Learning Network*. This project, also funded by the Oak Foundation and led by Family For Every Child, promotes learning around the recovery and reintegration of adolescents affected by sexual exploitation internationally. The IC along with Retrak are partners in this three year, multi-region project.

Introductions and icebreaker

Following introductions from all participants, delegates were asked to discuss with their neighbour:

- One thing that stood out from yesterday (the conference on ‘*young people affected by sexual violence as change-makers in prevention efforts: what are the opportunities and what are the risks?*’) and,
- One question they still had about ethical engagement with young people affected by sexual violence.

What stood out for participants?

- The concept of increasing protection through participation
- The risks that can come from being too risk averse in this area of work
- The need to move towards a ‘risk **and** resilience approach’ and focus on strength-based practice
- The importance of participatory group work
- The need to think about participation through online spaces
- The importance of thinking about power and understanding and how young people can access power and influence
- How we use definitions and the boundaries and hierarchies that we can create by focusing on the more extreme forms of sexual violence (for example through focussing on child sexual exploitation but not on sexual harassment)
- The power and potential use of photography and visual methods in participatory work
- The potential role of adults who’ve previously used services in supporting and facilitating participatory activities
- The voices that were missing and not discussed at the conference including those of boys and young men and children with disabilities.

Unanswered questions that remain

- How do we translate what we do offline into work online?
- What are the legal principles and frameworks we should be aware of when facilitating this work?
- How do we as professionals and adults prepare ourselves before we speak to children and young people?
- How can we explore issues of ‘ethics’ with young people themselves?
- How can we include broader groups of children and young people who wouldn’t identify as victims of sexual violence in this work?
- What are some practical ideas on how we can promote rights with young people who are sent away into secure accommodation?
- How do we work together with the media and challenge current negative representations?
- How do we prepare adults and train decision-makers to hear children’s views and perspectives?

Emerging issues identified

Following these discussions the facilitation team from the IC shared the emerging issues that they identified from the conference and these were compared with the list developed by participants.

- Promoting rights-based approaches when working with young people affected by sexual violence (protection and participation)
- Managing risk and creating safe spaces
- Taking a strengths-based approach (the importance of resilience)
- Recognising the potential for stigma (and thinking creatively about how to manage this)
- Needing to address wider issues with young people around consent, gender, and the body earlier and before discussions take place on the issue of sexual violence
- Working with families and communities
- Including diverse voices (boys and young men and children with disabilities)
- Recognising the benefits (and risks) of group work.

Exploring how participants currently deal with some of the challenging issues and aspects of this work

Participants were divided into small groups and were asked to consider and discuss what as individuals they currently do when faced with ethical challenges and dilemmas. They were asked in their groups to focus on answering the following questions:

- Where do you go for advice and support?
- How do you make decisions based on this advice?
- What resources do you refer to/use?
- What strategies do you employ to tackle the issue?

Feedback from groups

Strategies applied

- Using distancing techniques and speaking in the third person
- Using creativity to explore issues through play, music, art etc. and recognising that young people don't always want to talk
- Asking advice from young people if faced with an ethical dilemma '*if you were in my position what would you do?*'
- Asking advice from those from traditional social work/ youth work practice who are not as concerned perhaps about the strict and sometimes problematic policies and procedures in place
- Working in interdisciplinary teams
- Working with young people to understand what success looks like for them
- Working with young people to create safe support networks.

Tools

- [Brook's sexual behaviours traffic light tool](#) which helps practitioners to decide what is an issue of confidentiality versus one that is a child protection concern and provides space and time for practitioners to think about and formulate a response
- [Lansdown and O'Kane's toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children's participation](#)
- Tools from various INGOs.

Other issues highlighted in this session

- The meaning of 'participation' and the importance of recognising that 'speaking out' for policy and research is different from participating in decision making about one's own care and recovery, which is again different from participating in the running or governance of a service
- The importance of having a confident, healthy and supported workforce who are able to facilitate and provide support to young people
- The existing campaigns that are being led by young people on university campuses to stop sex discrimination (e.g. Title IV in the USA)
- The importance of preparing adults such as policy-makers for meeting with and responding to young people and preparing young people for the different ways that adults may respond to them.

Developing a 'think list' for planning participatory work with young people affected by sexual violence

Participants were asked to split into three groups to work together to come up with a list of things to think about when engaging in participatory work with young people affected by sexual violence.

The groups were focussing on different aspects of participation including:

- Individual care, recovery and group work
- Campaigning and policy influencing
- Media and representation.

They were asked to come up with a list of questions or topics that practitioners should consider and explore such as:

- *Have you contacted XXX?*
- *Have you thought about XXX?*
- *Have you considered XXX?*
- *Have you spoken to XXX?*

Feedback from groups

Working with young people individually and in a group

- Why are you involving young people?
- What other prior experience may they have had?
- What is their opinion on why they have been referred?
- What do you know about their peer network, school, social life etc.?
- Who do they feel safe with in a group?
- What intervention might be helpful?
- What's the legal situation of their case, if it is going to court, how might the work be seen as interfering with evidence?
- Who else has a stake in the group for example do donors want a particular 'product' from the group?
- Do young people know who has a stake in them attending the sessions?
- Are young people aware of the limits of confidentiality?
- What other support are they accessing?
- How confident is the workforce in running the group?
- Are you brave enough to scrap the idea or split the group up if it's not working?
- Do you have enough time to be successful?
- How will young people decide the rules of the group?
- How will young people take ownership of the group?
- Have you considered the timing of the group, will you provide food and ensure young people's basic needs are met?
- What barriers might be stopping young people from joining the group – e.g. caring for siblings or children?
- Have you considered the age group or developmental age of those who will attend the group?
- Will the group be same sex gender or mixed?
- What messages about the group will be shared afterwards?
- What if the young people don't want to develop a 'product'?
- Will there be online communication, have you considered how communication will be facilitated?

Involving young people in campaigning and policy influencing

- What are others doing on this area?
- Who is the audience for the campaign?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What policies are already in place and how are they being implemented?
- What is the timeframe e.g. is there a key event coming up or a date when this work needs to be completed by?

- Will this involve online campaigning?
- How will you deal with the expectations of the young people due to the time that real change can take?
- How will you feedback to the young people?
- What if the young people do not want to speak at an event, how will it be managed if at the last minute they pull out?
- What follow up will take place with the young people?

Involving young people in work with the media

- How will you ensure an on-going process of consent?
- Do you have clear aims of what you are trying to do?
- Have you mapped all the media channels?
- How will you develop something that you think they will want?
- How will you train young people on media literacy?
- How will you support them to think critically about the media?
- How will you go about allocating clear roles and responsibility to the different young people involved?
- How will you handle raised expectations e.g. what if an interview is cancelled or what if the press don't use your story?
- How will you make the media work for you?
- How will you develop partnerships with the media so you can identify the most appropriate company to work with?
- Who will facilitate the messages and spaces developed by young people?
- What skills will be built for young people and how will they be linked to employment opportunities?
- What or who will support the process?
- How will you gather evidence about the process?
- How will you plan in advance and disseminate?

Exploring the interests and needs of participants

In the final session participants were asked to think individually about what their own interests and needs were going forward. They were asked to think about what they felt would be helpful in terms of promoting safe and ethical participatory engagement with young people affected by sexual violence.

Participants were asked to write each of their ideas on a separate piece of A4 paper. Once participants had had a chance to do this individual thinking, participants went outside and laid the sheets on the grass. With the group gathered together, individuals were asked to explain and reflect on their ideas and statements.



Individual ideas on developing this work

Connecting, sharing and accessing professional peer support

- Connect with other groups from different countries
- How can we share tools, learning and practice e.g. a community of practice?
- A safe space for professionals to talk to peers about ethical dilemmas
- Set up a shared space where we can post and upload, research, tools and access information
- Establish a LinkedIn group
- Interested in methods for managing risk - need to find out different methods, good practices etc.
- Peer evaluation.

Yearly meeting/ conference

- Academics and practitioners and young people - joint discussion one year after
- A second meeting next year - take forward the learning
- Annual meeting.

Creating joint tools/ resources

- Create a database of good practice
- Develop joint, practical tools e.g. engaging children ethically, managing risk, what you need to start a youth group (human resources etc.) where can you learn more?

Connecting young people

- Establish connections between youth groups working on sexual violence to build solidarity, share learning and to act together

- Connect youth groups working on sexual violence to youth networks, media agencies and ‘online trenders’ who are not necessarily working on sexual violence to raise awareness of the issue.

Generating funding and testing and collaborating on projects

- Test and pilot
- Come up with project ideas, results for collaboration
- Explore how knowledge and experience from the UK can be transferred to south east Europe through webinars, training, exchange and research
- Pilot some programmes jointly in some countries and share evidence of ‘what works’
- To be very honest, for work we need funding
- To look at how we can support young people’s participation using new technologies at a greater scale? Crowdsourcing for example.

Other areas

- Creative and therapeutic ways to engage young people that don’t focus on negatives – sessions on poetry, drawing art, film etc.
- Have a shared message on CSE to advocate and collaborate when trying to influence policy
- Story telling training
- Connect this meeting’s participants to the new European project (mentioned by the IC).

Next steps

Through discussing these areas together a ‘list’ of achievable short term and long term actions were later developed which included:

Short term (does not require additional funding/ capacity)

Action	Who/ How	By when
Set up a shared space to start sharing practical tools on ethical engagement (Childhub, Dgroups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to discuss with JA and IP about setting up shared online space/ group 	30/10/15
Write up the recommendations for the ‘think list’ that was started during the meeting and finalise, design and disseminate as a poster for practitioners working with young people affected by sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC and CW to finalise first draft of list for review 	30/10/15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to amend and work with design team to design and print poster 	9/11/15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to disseminate through Our Voices Network and other avenues 	30/11/15
Develop a template for sharing learning on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to work with CW 	13/11/15

'what works' and 'what doesn't work'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and develop template to be shared • Share template with group for comments 	30/11/15
Develop a series of webinars based on the needs and preferences of the wider group that focus on participatory practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to share details of existing 'Our Voices' webinar series and ask for group members to offer to co-host, present and suggest ideas for webinar themes etc. 	30/11/15
Set up a system so that peers can review/evaluate others' project proposals that include working with young people affected by sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once online group is established develop concept note of peer reviewing service and ask for feedback, thoughts before agreeing on next steps 	29/01/16
Developing shared messages and definitions so that we're using the same language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once online group is established initiate online discussion on what the shared messages and languages should include 	29/01/16
Share learning that will come out of the European Commission project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to build this into dissemination plan 	Ongoing

Longer term (requires capacity and funding)

Action	Who/ How	By when
Organise another conference next autumn to explore thinking and progress and discuss solutions and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to finalise report from the conference 	30/11/15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to develop concept note in partnership with others for two day conference to be held in 2016 	15/01/16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group brainstorm funding ideas and sources 	30/01/16
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to approach funders with proposal 	12/02/16
Pilot projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once online group is established initiate online discussion on what the shared messages and language 	Mid 2016

	should include	
Link in learning with Sofia strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC to contact PD about opportunities to feed into the adoption of the new Council of Europe's Strategy on the Rights of the Child • CC to maintain contact with PD to explore opportunities once date and venue is set for the Sofia meeting in 2016 	<p>10/10/15</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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