BEING HEARD:
PROMOTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S INVOLVEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Findings from an international scoping review

Silvie Bovarnick with Delphine Peace, Camille Warrington and Jenny Pearce

August 2018
GLOSSARY

Violence against children
“All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” (Pinheiro, 2006; UNCRC, 1989).

Sexual violence
“Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.” (Jewkes, Sen & García-Moreno, 2002).

Children and young people (C&YP)
‘Child’ means any person up to the age of 18 (UNCRC, 1989) whereas the terms ‘young person’ and ‘young people’ refer to the age range between 10 and 24 years (Hegel, Shah and Coleman, 2017). The report primarily, though not invariably, focuses on young people between the ages of 16 and 24, reflecting the available data.

C&YP’s participation
Forms of social engagement relating to C&YP’s right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives: C&YP “taking part in and influencing processes, decisions, and activities that affect them, in order to achieve greater respect for their rights” (Lansdown, 2003, p. 273).

Participatory research
Any research that entails a degree of collaboration between those undertaking the research and those who are typically ‘the researched’ (Pain, 2004). In the context of child/youth participatory research, the term refers to opportunities for C&YP to inform the research design and process beyond solely providing information. Degrees of collaboration (and therefore “participatory practice”) will vary along a spectrum from opportunities to consult on some of the issues to research which is fully instigated and led by participant-researchers (Lansdown and O’Kane, 2015).

Consultation
Research initiatives that elicit C&YP’s perspectives and offer them opportunities for influence (Ibid.).

Collaborative research
Research projects in which adults work in varying degrees of partnership with C&YP, creating opportunities for them to actively influence the design and processes of projects and to share decision-making. Research generally remains adult-initiated although its inception and development may be informed by C&YP (Ibid.).

Child/youth-led research
Research projects that are initiated and led by C&YP. Entails providing opportunities and (resources) to enable C&YP to initiate and run their own activities. Processes are owned and led by C&YP, but adults may facilitate, provide resources, funding or guidance and support on aspects of their work (Ibid.).

(Adult) professional researcher(s)/facilitator(s)
Trained adult professionals who work in a capacity related to research and/or participation in academia, the private, governmental and/or non-governmental sector or related fields. Their role varies according to the levels of C&YP’s participation (see above) and power-sharing arrangements between the adult and C&YP involved in a given research project.

Participant-researcher
Individuals (not necessarily C&YP) who are typically ‘subjects’ of research but who take on the role of a ‘researcher’ in a participatory study. Unlike professional researchers/facilitators, participant-researchers are usually not formally trained and do not work in a professional research capacity.

Young researcher(s)
Participant-researchers (see above) up to the age of 24.

Research subject(s)/respondent(s)
Those who are the ‘researched’ or ‘subjects’ of the research study, e.g. individuals who fill out questionnaires, respond to surveys, are observed as part of ethnographic studies, or participate in interviews, focus groups or other research activities.

Participant(s)
Those who are invited to ‘participate’ in a project or research study (participatory or non-participatory). The term can refer to participant-researchers and/or respondents but usually does not include ‘professional’ researchers.

ABBREVIATIONS

C&YP Children and young people
CRC (United Nations) Convention on the Rights of the Child
HIC High-income countries
LMIC Low- and middle-income countries
NGO Non-governmental organisation
PAG Project advisory group
SVAC Sexual violence against children
SVRI Sexual Violence Research Initiative

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team is grateful for the commissioning of this scoping review as part of the ‘Being Heard’ project and for the support of Oak Foundation. We appreciated the encouragement and input from our colleagues at the Sexual Violence Research Initiative and the valuable advice from members of the ‘Being Heard’ Project Advisory Group. In particular, we would like to thank Elizabeth Dartnall for her ongoing commitment and support.

Special thanks go to those who agreed to be interviewed as part of the scoping review for giving us a deeper insight into their work. We would also particularly like to recognise the invaluable contributions of Kirsche Walker, CJ Hamilton, Helen Veitch, Dr Helen Beckett, Tricia Young and the international delegates at the SVRI Forum 2017. They shared their knowledge and expertise during a pre-conference workshop, which allowed us to identify key themes for this scoping review and gave us a unique opportunity to consult on emerging findings.

Any errors in the report are the responsibility of the authors.
THE SCOPING REVIEW

This report presents findings from an international scoping review about the involvement of children and young people (C&YP) in participatory research on sexual violence. The scoping review was commissioned as part of the ‘Being Heard’ project, a collaboration between the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) and the University of Bedfordshire’s International Centre. Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking (IC). It was commissioned to inform work on promoting ethical and meaningful child/youth participatory research on sexual violence. The project ran from January to December 2017 and was funded by Oak Foundation.

In the context of this scoping review, ‘participatory research’ is defined as any research that entails a degree of collaboration between those undertaking the research and those who are typically ‘the researched’ (Pain, 2004). The conceptual framework used here draws from Lansdown and O’Kane’s (2019) ‘participation continuum’, whereby participatory involvement of C&YP ranges from ‘consultation’ at one end, to ‘child/youth-led’ research initiatives at the other, with different levels of ‘collaboration’ in between these two ends of the spectrum (see Figure 1, p. 28).

The scoping review is a multi-method study; in addition to identifying relevant academic publications (n=76) and grey literature (n=42), data was elicited through a call for evidence (n=58), a small number (n=10) of key informant interviews and a consultation with international delegates (n=37) as part of a pre-conference workshop that was held at the SVRI Forum in September 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. 112 of these resources were cited in the final review and form the evidence base for this report. The report also draws on additional background literature, identified through hand-searches, to substantiate and contextualise key themes that emerged as scoping progressed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE FINDINGS

1 Participatory research practice in this field is still emerging

Overall, the scoping review found very little practice that involved C&YP in participatory research on sexual violence or related topics. Of relevant examples identified, the majority were consultative (n=53) and collaborative (n=46), with very few examples (n=40) of child/youth-led research (see Table 2, p. 30). Due to the lack of evidence specifically on participatory research in this area, the scoping review also draws from learning about children’s and youth participatory initiatives more broadly. This attempts to give us a better understanding of the barriers and challenges associated with C&YP’s engagement in participatory practice on sensitive topics.

Most of the data underpinning this scoping review originates in Europe, North America and, to a lesser extent, Australia, reflecting an existing evidence base that is skewed towards high-income countries (HIC). Although efforts have been made to locate relevant resources from a range of geographical areas around the world, including from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), the findings presented here must be seen in the context of what has been published rather than as a genuine reflection of all participatory research activities that exist globally.

2 There is evidence of benefits to multiple stakeholders of involving C&YP in participatory research addressing sexual violence against children

C&YP’s vulnerabilities must be central in thinking about whether and how an individual can be engaged in participatory research safely. For many individuals, involvement in particular research projects may be neither desired nor ethically appropriate.

Participatory approaches can enhance the evidence base on sexual violence against C&YP by incorporating the insights of those affected, directly or otherwise. Such approaches can add relevance and credibility to research findings and help to inform thinking on the prevention of, and responses to, sexual violence against children (SVAC). C&YP’s participatory involvement can potentially add value to all stages of the research process, including the research design, ethics, governance, participant recruitment and engagement, data collection and analysis, and dissemination (see Table 3, p. 34). Participatory approaches are conducive to redressing power differentials in research, including between those present in data collection processes. For example, involving young researchers has been shown, in some instances, to promote engagement between researchers and respondents, facilitating the gathering of sensitive information that might otherwise be difficult to access.

Participatory research can also offer a range of benefits to C&YP affected by SVAC, both at individual and collective levels. Involvement in participatory research addressing sexual violence can present opportunities for C&YP to develop confidence, acquire new skills and strengthen resilience. It can give those involved in such initiatives a chance to represent their views to wider stakeholders. The act of ‘self-representation’ may offer some therapeutic benefits to those directly involved in such initiatives. It can also benefit wider communities of C&YP by establishing them as political agents for social change, and by raising awareness of SVAC and its consequences.

3 Barriers to initiation of child/youth participatory research on sexual violence

Despite evidence of benefits, there are significant barriers to C&YP’s involvement in participatory research addressing sexual violence. These include:

- (i) reluctance to engage with vulnerability, including concerns over managing risk and pre-empting re-traumatisation and secondary/vicarious trauma;
- (ii) lack of confidence and knowhow amongst the wider research community of age-appropriate, participatory and creative methods, and more broadly, of truly meaningfully involving C&YP in sexual violence research;
- (iii) (perceived) lack of C&YP’s competencies in relation to their ability to undertake research and handle sensitive topics.

(ii) reluctance to engage with vulnerability, including concerns over managing risk and pre-empting re-traumatisation and secondary/vicarious trauma;

(iii) lack of confidence and knowhow amongst the wider research community of age-appropriate, participatory and creative methods, and more broadly, of truly meaningfully involving C&YP in sexual violence research;

(iii) (perceived) lack of C&YP’s competencies in relation to their ability to undertake research and handle sensitive topics.

4 Complexities of participatory research on sexual violence against children: challenges and strategies

Learning from participatory research and wider participatory practice involving vulnerable groups on sensitive issues highlight the complexities of such processes. This report discusses several specific challenges that can arise during such processes and strategies to address them. Research processes and C&YP’s involvement in them can vary, and the reports attempts to discuss identified challenges and strategies corresponding to different stages of the research process (outlined in Table 3, p. 34):

(i) Research oversight and governance: C&YP’s involvement in research oversight and governance usually comes through their role in advisory or steering groups. While these can be organised in different ways, and provide important opportunities for influence, there may also be significant limitations on C&YP’s ability to exert control through these mechanisms.

(ii) Ethical approval: Ethics committees fulfil the crucial role of ensuring that potential harm to research participants/respondents and researchers is minimised. Committee members may not always have the relevant expertise, however, to scrutinise and provide guidance on developing ethical participatory research in this area.

(iii) Recruitment and engagement: Sexual violence is highly stigmatised; consequently, C&YP may feel reluctant to be associated with this topic or may face opposition from their family, friends or community in relation to participating in sexual violence research.

The transient and complex lives of some marginalised C&YP can also create logistical barriers to their involvement and mean that some groups are rarely engaged in participatory research. Specialist services can sometimes facilitate and support the involvement of marginalised C&YP. These services, however, may themselves struggle to prioritise involvement in facilitated by trained staff with specialist (participatory, youth) expertise.
research due to lack of time and resources and a focus on crisis prevention.

The common practice of accessing participant-researchers and respondents through specialist service providers also raises questions in relation to access and diversity. It can compromise the representational quality of the group involved in participatory research.

(iv) Consent: How to negotiate C&YP’s informed and engaged consent to participate in research on sexual violence in an ethical and meaningful manner is a critical question. It can be particularly challenging with younger children, those with low literacy and/or learning difficulties. Age-appropriate, trauma-informed, arts-based, creative, audio, visual and interactive methods can help to ensure that consent is informed and meaningful.

(v) Data collection and analysis: Involving vulnerable C&YP in data collection and analysis in the context of sexual violence research can raise serious concerns if those involved are not sufficiently prepared and supported, and if research activities are not facilitated properly. Several specific issues were noted:

• Participatory approaches, including those involving peer researchers in data collection activities, can facilitate the sharing of potentially sensitive data that would be otherwise difficult to access. The potentially close proximity between participant-researchers and respondents, however, raises ethical concerns in relation to informed consent and how such data is handled and anonymised. There may also be instances where participant-researchers may struggle to distance themselves and critically reflect on the evidence gathered.

• Sexualised forms of violence are often normalised, including by those who experience, witness and/or perpetrate them. The normalisation of sexual violence can undermine ethical and effective research practice, for example, by compromising (adult and child/youth) researchers’ sensitive interviewing skills, empathy, and ability to recognise and identify experiences as abuse. Poor understanding of sexual violence can also inform research findings and potentially produce (and disseminate) unhelpful messages about SVAC.

(vi) Confidentiality and dealing with disclosures: Ensuring confidentiality during data collection, analysis and dissemination is a key challenge in sexual violence research. If data protection is breached, this can have serious and far-reaching consequences, not only for those involved and implicated by potential disclosures but also for organisations facilitating the research. Researchers involved in sexual violence research must be prepared for the potential for participants to make disclosures of experiences of abuse during their work. This requires knowledge, skills and support. In contexts without effective referral pathways in place, both professionals and young researchers may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of handling disclosures. Setting up proper referral pathways can be difficult, particularly in international research projects where child protection standards vary across different countries and support and service provision for victims may be limited or not available in some contexts.

(vii) Group dynamics: Due to power differentials within and between groups of participant-researchers and/or participant-researchers and respondents, group dynamics may be complex and need to be carefully managed. Re-defining and adjusting to new power-sharing arrangements between professional and young researchers may require a high degree of flexibility and personal engagement.

(viii) Dissemination: Presenting evidence on sexual violence can pose ethical and legal dilemmas, all of which must be taken into consideration when presenting such data. Researchers and key stakeholders need to work in partnership, build trust, and have open discussions on what can and should be shared within the contexts in which the research is being undertaken. Such discussions need to begin before the research starts and be ongoing throughout the research process.

(ix) Impact: Having open and transparent conversations with all stakeholders about limitations and potential outcomes, and clarifying the level of support that a research project can offer to C&YP at the individual and collective levels (for instance improving access to services), are crucial to manage expectations and promote transparency.

Thinking of ways to promote sustainability and to ensure that participatory initiatives continue to benefit those involved in the research beyond the duration of the project are not always part of the research planning. Such considerations are important, however. They can involve (among other things) recognising and documenting C&YP’s contributions in ways that are useful for their continued training, education or future employment, and should be appropriate for the context of their lives.

1.1 The ‘Being Heard’ project

The ‘Being Heard’ project is a collaboration between the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) and the International Centre, University of Bedfordshire. Funded by Oak Foundation, the project’s goal is to promote the meaningful and ethical involvement of C&YP in participatory research in the field of sexual violence (for more information see the project website: www.svri.org/what-we-do/capacity-development/projects/being-heard). The evidence gathered as part of the ‘Being Heard’ project (see 1.1 below).

The report has three sections:

(i) Section one outlines the rationale, focus, methods used, key concepts and theoretical framework of the scoping review.

(ii) Section two presents the findings from the scoping review. It provides a brief overview of the evidence gathered and explores some of the key rationales for involving C&YP in participatory research on sexual violence. It then explores barriers to undertaking participatory research with C&YP affected by sexual violence. It also presents some examples of strategies identified as useful in addressing some of the challenges discussed.

(iii) Section three draws out key reflections for research in this field.

1.1.1 The Sexual Violence Research Initiative

The SVRI is a global research initiative that promotes and supports good quality research in the area of sexual violence in LMIC. It seeks to build an evidenced and committed network of researchers, policy makers, activists and donors to ensure that the many aspects of sexual violence are addressed from the perspective of different disciplines and cultures. The SVRI believes that prevention efforts and service provision must be informed by sound research and evidence (for more information, see www.svri.org).

1.1.2 The International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking

The IC is a research centre based at the University of Bedfordshire in the UK. It is committed to increasing understanding of, and improving responses to, child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking, in local, national and international contexts, achieved through:

• academic rigour and research excellence;

• collaborative and partnership-based approaches to applied social research;

• meaningful and ethical engagement of C&YP;

• active dissemination and evidence-based engagement in theory, policy and practice. The International Centre has a focus on C&YP’s participation and aims to promote such approaches wherever possible (for more information see www.beds.ac.uk/intcent).

1.1.3 The project advisory group

The ‘Being Heard’ project was supported by a project advisory group (PAG), consisting of ten international experts in one or several of the following fields: C&YP’s participation; children’s rights; sexual violence research and/or programming (for more information, see www.svri.org/what-we-do/capacity-development/projects/being-heard/advisory-group). The role of the PAG was to provide strategic guidance on ethical, safe and meaningful participation of C&YP in research events and activities related to the ‘Being Heard’ project and to advise on the design and implementation of different aspects and stages of the scoping review. Four PAG meetings were held virtually over the duration of the project to discuss progress of project activities.

1.1.4 Project activities and outputs

The ‘Being Heard’ project had two main components:

(i) The first project activity, led by the SVRI, consisted of developing a toolkit on ethical and meaningful engagement of C&YP at SVRI Forums. This involved bringing a group of young researchers to the SVRI Forum 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, through a system of bursaries. The young researchers were young people who had been engaged in participatory research in their communities. The purpose of their involvement was to share their experience of participatory research with Forum delegates, participate in the Forum, and work with the SVRI to develop a toolkit to guide the meaningful and ethical engagement of young people at SVRI Forums.

(ii) The second project activity, led by the IC, was to undertake an international scoping review on the engagement of C&YP in participatory research on sexual violence. The evidence gathered as part of the scoping review informs this report.

1.1.5 The rationale for the project

Every two years the SVRI hosts one of the world’s largest conferences on sexual and intimate partner violence research – the SVRI Forum (for more information, see: www.svri.org/svri-forum).
1.1.6 Rationales for focusing on C&YP affected by sexual violence

The scoping review focuses primarily on C&YP with experience of sexual violence whilst also considering the broader category of C&YP affected by sexual violence. The first category includes children who are victims and/or perpetrators of sexual violence. The second category includes C&YP who may have been indirectly affected by sexual violence, for instance, through witnessing sexual violence or living in environments with high incidents of sexual violence, such as gang-affected neighbourhoods (see Beckett et al., 2013). These C&YP may know or have supported someone close to them with direct experience of sexual violence and may themselves be at elevated risk of experiencing this form of abuse.

The rationale for including the second category stems from a recognition of the ‘ripple effects’ of sexual violence (Morrison, Quadra and Boyd, 2007; Warrington et al., 2017) and acknowledges the secondary traumatisation that can result from having a family member, friend, and/or partner who has experienced sexual violence.

The two categories can be problematic, not least because they exclude those individuals who have undisclosed experiences of sexual violence and those who do not self-identify as victims of sexual violence because of shame, self-blame, stigma, mental health problems, or due to sexual violence being normalised (Morrison, Bruce and Wilson, 2018). Research on children’s disclosures of sexual abuse shows that disclosures can take a ‘very long time’ and, sometimes, sexual abuse will never be disclosed at all (Allnock and Miller, 2013; Stoltenborgh et al., 2011; Ullman, 2003).

SVAC is known to be a serious and widespread problem across the globe (UNICEF, 2017; Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Evidence from the pan-European STIR (Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships) study highlights that prevalence of interpersonal violence and abuse among young people is pervasive, with between a half and two-thirds of young women and between a third and two-thirds of young men aged 14 to 17 years old from five European countries (England, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Italy and Norway) reporting such forms of violence and abuse (Baer et al., 2018). Data from national surveys conducted between 2007 and 2013 in Cambodia, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Swaziland and Tanzania indicate that the lifetime prevalence of experiencing any form of sexual violence in adulthood in most of the seven countries studied was greater than 25% (Surner et al., 2015).1

The aim of this scoping review is to explore ways to harness the expertise and specialist knowledge of those C&YP affected by sexual violence, either directly or otherwise. It is hoped that the report provides a starting point for a deeper conversation about what it means to ethically and meaningfully engage C&YP in sexual violence research and why it is important to do so.

1.1.7 Key research questions:

The scoping review explored the following key questions:

1. How is participatory research on sexual violence with C&YP conceptualised in the literature and practice?
2. What are the benefits of C&YP’s participation in research on sexual violence?
3. What are the barriers that hinder participatory involvement of C&YP in research on sexual violence?
4. What are the key challenges emerging from children and youth participation involvement in research on sensitive topics?
5. What strategies or approaches have been used to support C&YP’s involvement in participatory research in this field?
6. What are the training and support needs of researchers and C&YP to enable meaningful and ethical participation?
7. What resources would be useful to build capacity, knowledge and skills to facilitate more child/youth participatory research in this field?

1.2. Methods

1.2.1 The rationale for choosing a scoping review

This study is not a systematic literature review, but a multi-method scoping exercise. The importance and role of systematic literature reviews in contributing to a rigorous evidence base is recognised in social research, but this approach can be limiting in exploring new areas of research where the evidence base is still emerging.

According to Putter et al. (2010), a scoping review seeks to clarify the nature of research questions, to identify the range of relevant resources and to make a broad assessment of the coherence and quality of knowledge. Given that the scoping review focuses on an area where academic literature is relatively scarce and predominantly originates in HIC (Elslie et al., 2014; Know Violence against Children, 2017); and much relevant knowledge resides in practice and may not be documented in a format that meets the criteria for systematic review, adopting a scoping review was an appropriate choice.

The decision to adopt a broader search strategy (explained below) to capture the evidence published in peer-reviewed journals reflects a growing interest in types of knowledge and a recognition of different approaches applied to the generation of knowledge through literature reviews (Jackson and O’Malley, 2005; Boaz, Ashby and Young, 2002; Brodie et al., 2016).

3 A more comprehensive catalogue of the research questions can be found in the research protocol (Appendix A).

4 A number of different sectors, including (higher) education, government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are active in engaging C&YP in participatory research on a range of social issues, at local, national and international levels. Sometimes, projects are undertaken in collaboration and more recently initiated by international agencies, international NGOs, or organisations based in HIC and co-developed and delivered in countries with high levels of child abuse, including through the process of SVR. In such instances, the boundary between participatory and non-participatory research often overlaps, and the line between the two can be difficult to define. Participatory research offers important learning, such initiatives, particularly if supported by the appropriate and robustly rigorously evaluated or documented-in-publications, peer-reviewed or otherwise.

5 The pilot consisted of conducting between three and 25 trial runs on Discover (see footnote 6). In addition, databases (Social Care Online, ASSIA, Social Index, Sage Premier, Google Scholar, British Library EHOCS, Cochrane Library: Campbell Collection; PayXML, PsycINFO, PubMed) were searched individually. The searches were conducted using different search terms and/or search combinations, modifying and refining these to achieve relevant results. Each trial was accompanied by a thorough hand-search of the first 300 articles.

6 Discover is a ‘single search’ tool that allows users to conduct searches of most of the University’s catalogue and electronic resources simultaneously.
Is the article about participatory involvement of service users from vulnerable groups in research?

Does the article discuss relevant ethical or methodological issues that can offer learning that is applicable to the sexual violence context?

Are there relevant lessons from this article that can be transferred to the context of involving C&YP in sexual violence research?

Articles were then included or excluded based on a review of abstracts or tables of content (in the case of longer reports or books). Results that met some but not all of the above-mentioned criteria were retained to be considered in the second selection process. Sporadic quality checks were conducted by two peer researchers to determine whether criteria were applied with consistency. This first stage included 304 sources.

The second selection process consisted of reviewing the articles selected during the first stage and coding them according to the categories listed below. Reasons for including or excluding each source and the category codings were then discussed and reviewed. In the event of diverging opinions, reviewers discussed these differences to reach a mutual decision. After the second stage, 76 sources remained (see Appendix C).

The scoping review, coding and selection process were undertaken by two independent reviewers to ensure consistency and reduce bias. A coding system, consisting of five categories, was established to ensure systematic weighting of the evidence. Articles were rated according to key themes and relevance, in order of priority:

**Category 1**: Literature on participatory research methods, C&YP and sexual violence (or other relevant marginalised groups/issues, e.g. participatory research with adults on sexual violence OR participatory research with marginalised C&YP, such as street-connected youth);

**Category 2**: Literature on participatory research methods and C&YP;

**Category 3**: Literature on (non-participatory) research methods with C&YP on sexual violence and broader abuse issues;

**Category 4**: Background reading relevant to broader concepts, focusing on participation and definitions of participation or participatory research; and

**Category 5**: Literature with transferable conceptual or ethical issues from different contexts (for example, health research involving children or vulnerable groups).

Grey literature review
A grey literature search was conducted alongside the academic literature review to identify learning from participatory research projects and to capture examples from practice. This consisted of hand-searching organisational websites and databases of relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs); international NGOs; UN agencies; research/academic institutions; national, regional and international practice, policy and research networks, including Childhub, Participatory Methods, Save the Children, the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC), the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), and the UK’s National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children’s (NSPCC) ‘Inform’ library. The search identified 42 relevant resources that were included in the review (see Appendix D); of these, two were sourced through Childhub and 39 were found on the Participatory Methods website (www.participatorymethods.org).

**Call for evidence**
A call for evidence was launched to complement the academic and grey literature searches (see Appendix E). This was distributed widely through associated national, regional and international networks, including SVRI, the RISE Network, Childhub and the ‘Our Voices’ Research and Practice network, requesting relevant materials to be submitted and for the call for evidence to be re-posted to achieve wider circulation. The call generated 86 submissions, 20 of these were included in the review.

**Key informant interviews**
Ten key informants were interviewed on specific participatory research initiatives on sexual violence and related areas. In semi-structured interviews, they were asked to elaborate in depth on the benefits and challenges they encountered, and to identify strategies they had employed to address these (see interview topic guide in Appendix G). If not stated explicitly as a source, data emerging from these interviews are referenced in the scoping review as ‘(Int.)’. All data were anonymised to ensure confidentiality and minimise the likelihood of being able to attribute contributions to individual informants.

Key informants were selected based on being associated with a particularly relevant project identified as part of the scoping exercise. They were selected in consultation with the PAG, with specific consideration of closing evidence gaps, for instance relating to geographic representation, emerging from the academic literature review.

**Young key informants**:
Three of the key informants were young women between the ages of 20 and 24, representing Western Europe, Latin America and Africa. In addition to studying at university, these key informants had been involved in a range of participatory research initiatives facilitated either by NGOs or academic institutions.

**Adult key informants**:
Seven of the key informants were adult professionals, three males and four females. They had been identified as experts in C&YP’s participation with experience of facilitating participatory research with marginalised or vulnerable C&YP representing a range of professional sectors, five informants were based at NGOs, one was based at a research institute and one was a university-based academic researcher. In terms of geographic representation, three of the seven were based in the UK but had substantial experience of facilitating participatory research with C&YP in LMIC (mostly Africa and Asia); the remaining four were based in Africa (two in Uganda, one in Tanzania and one in Nigeria).

**Workshop consultation**
A pre-conference workshop was run with 37 international delegates at the SVRI Forum 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The aim of the workshop was to gather data on the training needs of researchers who are interested in, or already using, participatory approaches to researching child sexual violence. In addition to testing emerging findings from the scoping review and identifying gaps in current knowledge, workshop activities explored the values and challenges of barriers to involving C&YP in research in this field.

The workshop also elicited feedback on what types of information and range and format of resources might be useful to facilitate more participatory research on sexual violence. The data emerging from the workshop were anonymised so they cannot be attributed to individual delegates and to ensure data protection. The information elicited through the workshop informs the scoping review and is integrated into the findings section of this report. If not stated explicitly as a source, data emerging from the workshop consultation are referenced in the scoping review as ‘(WS)’.

**1.2.3 Limitations**
Several limitations arise from the chosen methods. As noted above, the scoping review was not a systematic literature review and therefore does not claim to be exhaustive. Furthermore, there are some limitations in relation to the geographic reach and regional representation arising from the chosen remit and methods. The time and resources allocated to this project allowed a review of materials that were accessible in English. This resulted in gaps in the data generated in relation to specific regions, most notably Eastern Europe, parts of Asia (particularly North and South East Asia) and Latin America and the Caribbean. Efforts were made to address these gaps by targeting individuals and networks in under-represented regions and re-circulating the call for evidence with an invitation to submit non-English resources. A small literature search was undertaken in French, Spanish and Portuguese; however, none of the materials generated by searches focusing on non-English materials met the inclusion criteria. Consequently, the geographic and linguistic focus of the scoping remains Anglo-centric. Due to these limitations, the scoping review is more accurately described as ‘international’, rather than ‘global’.

---

**TABLE 1: Key informants (anonymised)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Key informants</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Region(s) of professional activity</th>
<th>Referenced as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Int. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Int. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Int. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Young person</td>
<td>NGO &amp; university</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Int. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Int. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>UK &amp; Africa</td>
<td>Int. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Int. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Young person</td>
<td>Young researcher and student at university</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Int. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Associated with university</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Int. 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNICEF explains SVAC by noting that it:

“...can take the form of sexual abuse, harassment, rape or sexual exploitation in prostitution or pornography. It can happen in homes, institutions, schools, workplaces, in travel and tourism facilities, within communities – both in development and emergency contexts...as well as in non-emergency contexts in developed countries. Increasingly, the internet and mobile phones also put children at risk of sexual violence as some adults look to the internet to pursue sexual relationships with children.” (UNICEF, 2015, p.1)

In recent years, ‘peer on peer’ violence, including sexualised forms of abuse and bullying perpetrated against C&YP by their peers, has gained increasing recognition (Barter and Berridge, 2011; Finkelhor and Jenkins Tucker, 2015; Firmin, 2015). An in-depth exploration of ‘peer on peer’ abuse is outside the remit of this scoping review; however, it is important to note that the types and forms of SVAC discussed above include those perpetrated by adults as well as by other children.

There is a growing evidence base focusing on virtual forms of abuse, including sexual abuse (UNICEF 2017). It is also recognised that forms of SVAC, whether perpetrated by peers or adults, extend beyond the physical world into virtual realms and that online and offline abuse can be interlinked (Burton et al., 2016; Davidson et al., 2012; Harrm et al., 2015; Smeaton, 2013).

SVAC is pervasive and underreported

SVAC is a global reality across all countries and social groups (UNICEF, 2017; Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Reliable data on SVAC, as on violence against children more broadly, are difficult to obtain, partly because such violence frequently takes place within interpersonal relationships and is hidden by cultures of silence (Know Violence in Childhood, 2019). Sexual violence is reasonably believed to be underreported with the reported scale of the problem likely only to portray the ‘tip of the iceberg’. Global evidence reveals that the self-reported prevalence of child sexual abuse victimisation is more than 30 times higher than official reports (Stoltenborg et al., 2011).

1.3.2 C&YP’s involvement in participatory research

It is important to provide a clear definition of what is understood as ‘participatory research’, and C&YP’s involvement in it, given the broad range of activities that are described as ‘participation’. To this end, a concept note has been developed, outlining the focus and parameters of this study (see Appendix B). The report limits itself to briefly discussing the key principles and models in relation to C&YP’s involvement in participatory research that are used throughout this scoping review.

‘Participatory research’ can be broadly defined as:

“A range of methodological approaches and techniques, all with the objective of handing power from the researcher to research participants... Participatory research involves inquiry, but also action.” (Participate, n.d.)

As the quote above highlights, alongside the concern with power, much, though not all, participatory research has a focus on (social) action and retains a strong commitment to influencing or delivering tangible benefits and changes for those involved – either as individuals or communities. In pursuing these aims, collaboration and dialogue between stakeholders, such as between researchers, service users, communities, policy makers and/or practitioners, tend to underpin participatory research processes.

As with action research, the distinction between research and social change can be blurred as the process of developing new knowledge becomes integrated with responses to the issues under exploration (Banks, Harrington and Carter, 2017). Social action may include the capacity building inherent in these processes, campaigning work and/or influencing and changing practice. As Williams and Brydon-Miller note (2004), participatory action research:

“...combines aspects of popular education, community-based research, and action for social change. Emphasizing collaboration within marginalized or oppressed communities, participatory action research works to address the underlying causes of inequality while at the same time focusing on finding solutions to specific community concerns.” (p. 245)

An associated benefit inherent in participatory research practice relates to the creation of opportunities for those who are typically the ‘subjects’ of research to ‘self-represent’ themselves, their communities and their experiences directly, rather than relying on representation by others. This marks a critical shift in traditional research relationships and specifically addresses concerns about power relations associated with the means of representation (Castells, 2000; [1996]; Foucault, 1980). It also aligns with traditions in feminist and narrative research which value multiple subjectivities as opposed to searching for objective ‘truths’ in research (Plummer, 1999). Alongside other (mainly qualitative) approaches to research, participatory research challenges positivist conceptualisations of ‘knowledge’, raising epistemological and methodological questions in relation to what constitutes ‘evidence’ and who is involved in producing it (Bowman with D’Arcy, 2018).

To summarise, though used variably in different contexts, ‘participatory practice’ can be understood to incorporate some shared principles and assumptions. For the purposes of this scoping review, four key characteristics have been identified:

- a commitment to redressing existing power imbalances in research;
- a concern with social action (e.g. improved services or responses);
- a focus on collaboration among stakeholders – and particularly those usually marginalised from such processes;
- a subsequent increase in opportunities for research respondents to self-represent.

1.3.3 Models of participation

C&YP’s involvement within participatory research processes can occur in different aspects of the research project and afford C&YP different degrees of influence. One useful model to characterise this variation is the three-tier typology of consultative, collaborative and participatory practice developed by Lansdown and presented in Lansdown and O’Kane’s children’s participation evaluation toolkit.

FIGURE 1: Models of Participation

*Lansdown and O’Kane, (2016)*

*Consultative* refers to initiatives that elicit C&YP’s perspectives and offer them opportunities for influence, e.g. by informing services or decisions affecting them. *Collaborative* is defined as adults working in varying degrees of partnership with C&YP. Collaborative initiatives create opportunities for C&YP to actively influence the design and processes of projects and to share decision-making. Projects generally remain adult-initiated, although their inception and development may be informed by C&YP.

*See more detailed information about prevalence, see the ‘Ending Violence in Childhood Global Report 2017’ (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017).*

9 A comprehensive meta-analysis by Stoltenborg et al. (2011) combining prevalence figures from CSA estimated that global sexual abuse was 127/1000 in self-report studies and 4/1000 in informant studies, with self-reported and non-reported prevalence ranging from 1/1000 to 90/1000 and from 1/1000 to 127/1000, respectively. In Asia, sexual abuse was recorded at 136/1000 while in Africa it was 93/1000. In Latin America, the prevalence rate was recorded at 24/1000. The meta-analysis also found that the prevalence of child sexual abuse was 15/1000 in of boys in Africa (193/1000). The results of this meta-analysis confirm that CSA is a global problem of considerable extent, but also show that methodological issues drastically influence the self-reported prevalence of CSA.

7 The CRC does not define ‘sexual violence’, though it includes (child) ‘sexual abuse’ (CSA) in its definition of ‘violence’ in Article 19 and specifically addresses protection from (child) ‘sexual exploitation’ as a form of CSA in Article 34.

8 For more detailed information about prevalence, see the ‘Ending Violence in Childhood Global Report 2017’ (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017).
Children as research subjects
Children consulted on aspects of research process
Children collaborate and work in partnership with researchers
Children supported to lead and have ownership of research activity

Leading theorists on children’s participation (Hart 2008; Lansdown, 2011) note that when using such models (in research or practice) the different levels of participation should be viewed as a continuum, rather than a hierarchy, and that the nature of children’s influence in participatory activities can frequently fluctuate, overlap or encompass different levels simultaneously, even within a single research project. Similarly, different levels of participation are possible or appropriate at different times, depending on the capacity, interests, and circumstances of individuals; funders’ requirements; and resources available.

1.4 Theoretical framework

1.4.1 Tensions between children’s participation and protection: vulnerability and resilience

Historically, children’s rights narratives have placed paramount emphasis on children’s needs for protection from violence and abuse. This is partly due to children’s specific and additional vulnerabilities in relation to violence and abuse that arise out of conditions of their dependency. It also partly responds to evidence that shows the potentially long-term and wide-ranging detrimental impact of experiencing different forms of maltreatment, including sexual violence, during the sensitive and formative years of childhood (Felitti et al., 1998; Flett and Ands, 2009; Finkelhor, 2007; Finkelhor and Jenkins Tucker, 2015; Fisher et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2016).

Recognising children’s specific vulnerabilities has been significant in helping to afford them a special status of protection. At the same time, it has arguably diverted attention away from children’s agency, i.e. their ability to make choices and decisions, to influence events, and to have an impact on their world (ACECQA, n.d.; Jago et al., 2011). As a result, children who are considered ‘vulnerable’ are typically side-lined from participatory initiatives and decision making about their own needs and futures or discussions about how to help others (Iddy, 2017; Warrington, 2016; Warrington et al., 2017).

While the CRC endorses ‘the indivisibility of rights’ and highlights their interdependency, a pragmatic approach which prioritises children’s protection rights above those of participation is often adopted in practice (Feinstein and O’Kane, 2008). This ‘hierarchy of rights’ is particularly pronounced in the area of sexual violence, where notions of ‘victimhood’ and ‘vulnerability’ have often been linked conceptually.

1.4.2 Maximising benefits alongside minimising harm

C&YP affected by sexual violence may not see themselves or be perceived by others as ‘vulnerable’ (Brown, 2006), but it is important to recognise that they may present with high levels of complex needs. This has implications for participatory research and means that C&YP may, at some point, require advocacy and support within and potentially beyond the remit of a participatory (research) project. Professional researchers and other adults must take extremely seriously the vulnerabilities of C&YP who have suffered significant trauma. These must be central in thinking about whether and how an individual can be engaged in participatory research safely. This may mean that for some individuals, involvement in particular research projects is neither desired nor ethically appropriate. Any risks of re-traumatisation must be taken extremely seriously, and the impact of sexualised trauma and its consequences considered carefully by informed professionals.

This may explain why engaging vulnerable groups in participatory research on highly sensitive and stigmatised social issues appears to be rare. The dearth of academic literature suggests that there is a tendency among academic researchers to shy away from the associated risks. Given that risks cannot be eliminated, Warrington (2016) argues that we should consider...

“...working with and managing risk as opposed to adopting more risk averse approaches” (p.3).

An experience of sexual violence should not automatically preclude a child or young person’s involvement in participatory research opportunities. It undermines their chance to inform the developments. It undermines their chance to inform the developments. It undermines their chance to inform the developments. It undermines their chance to inform the developments. Similarly, when weighing up the risks of children’s participation in research, consideration should also be given to the potential benefits of their involvement and the risks of non-involvement.

Side-lining C&YP who have been affected by sexual violence from research minimises their influence in practice and policy developments. It undermines their chance to inform the developments. It undermines their chance to inform the developments. It undermines their chance to inform the developments. Similarly, when weighing up the risks of children’s participation in research, consideration should also be given to the potential benefits of their involvement and the risks of non-involvement.

“...maximise benefit for individuals and society as well as minimise risk and harm” (ESRC, 2017; Graham et al., 2013).

Evidence from research shows, however, that both vulnerability and resilience are multifaceted; not static but fluid; existing along a continuum; and interrelated (Allaga et al., 2016; Anthony and Cohler, 1987). It could be argued that considering adverse childhood experiences exclusively in the context of ‘vulnerability’ diverts attention away from C&YP’s inherent capabilities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). It overshadows measures that can boost these, and the crucial role they play in building resilience to cope with adversity (Bagattini and Gutwald, 2016; Coleman and Hagell, 2007; Logan-Greene et al., 2014; Soleimampour, Geierstanger and Bhinds, 2017).
The second part of the report presents the findings that have emerged from the scoping review.

It has four sections. The first section provides an overview of the evidence reviewed. The second section presents the rationale for involving C&YP in participatory research on sexual violence and elaborates on some of the documented benefits of participatory approaches. The third section focuses on barriers to initiating participatory research with C&YP affected by sexual violence. And the final section highlights some of the complexities of participatory research processes engaging vulnerable groups, exploring ethical and practical challenges that can be encountered in practice.

Where possible, it includes potential strategies which have been identified as useful in addressing some of the challenges and includes signposts to relevant resources. Some of these are illustrated through examples.

## 2.1. Overview of resources reviewed

The scoping review identified a range of ways in which C&YP are involved in participatory research on sensitive topics. In keeping with the continuum of children’s participation (Figures 1 & 2), research activities reviewed ranged from consultative to collaborative to child/youth-led research activities. The distinctions between these three categories are largely conceptual as projects often used different types of participatory practice at different stages of the research. Despite this, it is worth noting that the scoping review identified far fewer research activities that could be categorised as collaborative and youth-led than consultative (see table below).

### TABLE 2: Breakdown of participatory research initiatives identified in the scoping review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SOURCES REVIEWED IN FINAL SELECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-led</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory monitoring and evaluation of youth services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory action research projects with young people</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.1.1 Opportunities and benefits of involving C&YP in participatory research

The identified participatory research initiatives are broadly categorised here according to the contributions that C&YP have made to different aspects of them. The table below shows opportunities for involvement and the perceived value of C&YP’s contributions. It is divided according to different stages in the participatory research process, for the purposes of clarity. It acknowledges that these processes may vary and that there is often significant overlap between the different stages.

### TABLE 3: Documented opportunities and benefits associated with C&YP’s involvement in participatory research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS</th>
<th>NO. OF IDENTIFIED STUDIES INVOLVING C&amp;YP</th>
<th>IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR C&amp;YP’S INVOLVEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH</th>
<th>PERCEIVED BENEFITS/IDENTIFIED VALUE OF ENGAGING C&amp;YP IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>- Defining research focus/ agenda.</td>
<td>- Identifying/prioritising the most pertinent issues affecting C&amp;YP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Adapting research questions or formulating new ones.</td>
<td>- Formulating research questions in age/context-appropriate language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Piloting research design.</td>
<td>- Ensuring methods are youth-friendly, engaging, and age-appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Contributing to funding bids.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>- Co-developing risk and needs assessments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Contributing to risk management; e.g. by developing group working agreements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ensuring that materials (e.g. consent forms, project information leaflets) are accessible to child/youth respondents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research governance/management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>- Serving as a member of Project Advisory Boards, advising on research process and content, including ethical, methodological and logistical issues and dissemination.</td>
<td>- Ensuring that research projects incorporate a child’s/youth person’s perspective throughout the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Providing guidance on research management, including monitoring and evaluation.</td>
<td>- Supporting accountability to key stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Enhancing research governance and ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Strengthening project monitoring and evaluations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and engagement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>- Assisting in identifying marginalised communities/individuals.</td>
<td>- Facilitating recruitment of participants/respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Identifying ‘spaces and places’ of target population.</td>
<td>- Helping gain access to locations where target groups gather (may be particularly relevant for ethnographic research).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Facilitating reach and rapport; young researchers may be perceived to be on a more equal footing and more approachable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Example sources:
- Addy, 2015; Åkerström and Brunnberg, 2013; Braye and McDonnell, 2013; Challenges Heights, 2013; Dentith, Measor and O’Malley, 2009; Flicker, 2008; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Holland et al., 2010; Houghton, 2015; Kirby, 2004; Lushey and Munro, 2015; McLean and Modi, 2016; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010; Save the Children, 2003; Smith, Monaghan and Broad, 2002; West, 1999; YPF Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010
- Aparajeyo-Bangladesh, 2010; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Flicker, 2008; Houghton, 2015; Girl Effect 2017a; Lushey and Munro, 2015; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010; Warrington et al., 2017; YPF Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010
- Braye and McDonnell 2013; Beckett et al., 2013; Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Brown, 2006; Busza 2004; Cossar et al., 2013; Houghton, 2015; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Warrington et al., 2017
- Addy, 2015; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Dentith, Measor and O’Malley, 2009; Flicker, 2008; Girl Effect, 2017a; Kaima-Atterhög and Ahlberg, 2008; McClearney-Sills et al., 2011; McLean and Modi, 2016; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010; van Blerk, Sand and Shanahan, 2017

---

10 This table combines data from child-led and collaborative research projects involving young researchers in all or various stages of the research process, as well as some consultative research projects in which young people were involved in dissemination and/or developing recommendations for policy and practice.
Data collection

- Conducting interviews, surveys, undertaking ethnographic research or using a range of other (e.g. creative or visual) methods.
- Reducing power imbalances between researchers and researched.
- Building rapport by having the same frame of reference as respondents.
- Increasing respondents’ sense of safety and comfort.

Example sources:
- Addy, 2016; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Braye and McDonnell, 2013; Challenging Heights, 2013; Chappell et al., 2014; Cossar et al., 2013; Coser et al., 2014; Caudill and Temple, 2001; Eckstein and Pinto, 2013; Fleming, 2011; Flicker, 2008; Girl Effect, 2017a; Hagell, 2013; Holland et al., 2010; Houghton, 2015; Kirby, 2004; Lushey and Munro, 2015; McLean and Modi, 2016; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010; Save the Children, 2004; Smith, Monaghan and Broad, 2002; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017; West, 1999; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010

Analysis

- Interpreting data.
- Sense-checking/making: i.e. deriving meaning from information collected and/or critically reviewing the research findings through a young person’s lens. This can include verifying terms and expressions commonly used by C&YP and making sure meanings are conveyed correctly in accordance with the specific contexts in which information was relayed.
- Prioritising research findings.

Example sources:
- Addy, 2015; Becket et al., 2013; Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Braye and McDonnell, 2013; Challenging Heights, 2013; Chappell et al., 2014; Coser et al., 2014; Fleming, 2011; Flicker, 2008; Girl Effect, 2017a; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Holland et al., 2010; Houghton, 2015; Kirby, 2004; Lushey and Munro, 2015; McLean and Modi, 2016; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010; Smith et al., 2002; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017; Warrington et al., 2017; West, 1999; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010

Dissemination

- Facilitating workshops.
- Creating accessible research outputs to share messages to younger/lay audiences (e.g. reports, films; leaflets; briefings).
- Engaging in dissemination events (e.g. public/community meetings; conferences, policy forums at regional, national or international levels).
- Developing messages for action.
- Supporting youth campaigns and participatory advocacy.

Example sources:
- Addy, 2015; Armsden and Van Wynsberghe, 2005; Apaaroje-Bangladesh, 2010; Blanchet-Cohen, 2014; Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Brown, 2006; Challenging Heights, 2013; Chappell et al., 2014; Caudill and Temple, 2001; Eckstein and Pinto, 2013; Fleming, 2011; Flicker, 2008; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Girl Effect, 2017a; Hagell, 2013; Holland et al., 2010; Houghton, 2015; Kirby, 2004; Lushey and Hulst, 2013; Lushey and Munro, 2015; MacDonald et al., 2011; McLean and Modi, 2016; McCleary-Sills et al., 2011; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Plan, 2009; Potter, 2016; Ruiz-Casares et al., 2013; SANLAAP, 2010; Smith, Monaghan and Broad, 2002; Stuart, Maynard and Rouncefield, 2015; Totty, 2014; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017; West, 1999; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010

2.2. Rationales for C&YP’s involvement in sexual violence research

The benefits outlined in Table 3 present a rationale for considering and supporting participatory research processes in the field of sexual violence. It responds to a challenge identified during the pre-conference workshop at the SVRI Forum 2017 to better understand and demonstrate the values of participatory approaches. Delegates emphasised that, without this, it may be difficult for C&YP to ‘sell’ participatory approaches to funders (iii, iv).

Responding to this need, the following section elaborates on the documented benefits of involving C&YP in sexual violence research, to the research community and to the individuals involved and their communities. For the purposes of clarity, benefits of participatory research have been categorised as follows:

(i) Enhancing the evidence base: improving the quality of data and relevance of research messages;
(ii) Enhancing the evidence base: improving the quality of data and relevance of research messages;
(iii) Strengthening dissemination;
(iv) Enhancing outcomes for individuals and communities;
(v) Challenging sexual violence.

It is worth noting that the above categorisation is artificial as the benefits discussed here often overlap in practice. As such, they are rarely bound by distinct categories but rather are interlinked and mutually dependent: for example, an improved evidence base may lead to better policy and practice responses, which in turn may lead to better outcomes for C&YP affected by sexual violence.

2.2.1 Participatory research can enhance the evidence base

A recurring theme from the sources studied was that C&YP’s involvement in sexual violence research could strengthen and refine the evidence base. Central to this argument is a recognition of C&YP’s unique insights into their own and their peers’ circumstances and the need to access these perspectives directly. As one key informant stated:

"...we are getting information from the horse’s mouth" *(Int.1)*

Additionally, while C&YP’s contributions can enhance understanding of the topic, it is also a means of demonstrating their capacity to act as competent commentators on their lives. This can enrich the evidence base in various ways. Findings from UK-based research projects on CSE identified that C&YP’s participatory involvement has resulted in research evidence that both supports the existing evidence base, and adds nuance, additional detail or re prioritises key messages (Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Beckett et al., 2013; Caudill and Temple, 2001). For example, a participatory research project exploring C&YP’s experiences of criminal justice responses supported existing evidence about the lack of sensitivity by professionals, but also identified new findings about C&YP’s experiences of investigations and court processes (Beckett and Warrington, 2015).

11 English colloquialism for getting information from a direct or first-hand source.

Access to respondents

A growing body of academic and grey literature supports the view that participatory approaches can be helpful in identifying or accessing groups that researchers have typically struggled to engage with (see Table 3 for a full list of references). Power imbalances between researchers and research subjects can create barriers to engaging marginalised groups in research. According to Graça, Gonçalves and Martins (2017), such barriers can arise from a researcher’s affiliation with a university or other aspects of the researcher’s biography that identify them as privileged or more powerful in relation to those with whom the researcher seeks to engage. The literature discusses a range of related challenges in accessing populations who are highly stigmatised and who can understandably be suspicious of academic researchers who express an interest in them, including resulting from previous negative experience with research (Ibid.; Houghton, 2015).

There is some evidence to suggest that participatory approaches can help to address these barriers by helping to redress power differentials in traditional research relationships (Martin, 2013; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Flicker, 2008). In a collaborative participatory study examining the vulnerabilities of C&YP living in so-called ‘red light districts’ (where sex is for sale) in Kolkata, India, the participatory research design harnesses the expertise, proximity and access to peer groups of young researchers (SANLAAP, 2010). Most of the young researchers involved lived in the red light areas themselves and were trained as peer researchers, surveyors and primary data collectors. They identified other C&YP living in vulnerable situations for recruitment as respondents. Similarly, a youth-led research project investigating urban crime and youth employment in slum areas in Kampala, Uganda, documented by Addy (2015), highlights that young researchers added unique value by means of their in-depth understanding of the complexity of their local communities. They were able to recruit respondents: acted as translators; identified high-risk and unsafe areas; and even negotiated access to slum areas with local gatekeepers, allowing research activities to proceed (Ibid.).

The familiarity of participant-researchers with research contexts and respondents, however, can also be ‘used’ by stakeholders. If the ethos of power sharing and the principles of participation (as outlined in Part 1) are not well understood, the specific dynamics of participatory research can easily turn exploitative, rather than being an ‘empowering’ experience for young people.

Access to data

Participatory methods can potentially establish more equal ground between those undertaking the research and those being researched. For instance, engaging peer researchers can change the nature and dynamic of interaction and facilitate trust (Chappell et al., 2004). Peer research (iii) typically involves members of the research target group assuming the role of active researchers who undertake data collection activities (O’Keefe, 2006).
Collaborative research with young peer researchers in Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa suggests that their position as friends, relations or neighbours was conducive in establishing trust and dialogue between peer researchers and community responders, facilitating the gathering of higher quality information. This contrasts to international evidence from both academic and grey literature which indicates that young researchers may enhance data collection by establishing rapport more easily with their peers than adults (Bovnick and Scott, 2016; Hellek et al., 2015). It also links to bodies of literature which suggest that some C&YP may feel more comfortable discussing sensitive issues with peers than adults (Bovnick and Scott, 2016; Hellek et al., 2015). Furthermore, it resonates with an evidence base, mostly originating in Europe and North America, that highlights the importance of peers in providing support to C&YP affected by sexual violence (Allnock and Miller, 2013; Barron, 2015). Participatory action research undertaken by Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; van den Bergh and Felner, 2016). This is important given the well-established significance of trust and rapport in eliciting sensitive and reliable data (Braye and McDonnell, 2013; Devries et al., 2015; Graça, Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010; Coser et al., 2014; Girl Effect, 2017a; SANLAAP, 2010; van den Bergh, 2015). As noted previously, power differentials can equally exist between peers (Beckett et al., 2013; Firmin, 2015; Schumann, Craig and Rosas, 2014). Despite the advantages described above, it is important not to assume that C&YP are always best placed to access sensitive information from their peers. Indeed, there may be important ethical reasons why the opposite may be true in certain contexts. For example, Barter et al. (2016) note that not all young people are comfortable sharing sensitive information with peers, and, on the topic, may feel more comfortable with adult researchers. Similarly, UK-based research into gang involvement and sexual violence found that young people avoided using peers as a source of information due to perceived risk, trust, and need for anonymity (Beckett et al., 2013). Reflecting on her experience of researching violence with a group of young people in a conflict-ridden borough in Medellin, Colombia, Blanchet-Cohen (2014) also acknowledges the significant risks associated with involving young people in research in high-conflict settings. As stated in Part 1, the principle of ‘maximising benefits and minimising harm’ provides helpful guidance for planning research projects.

**Producing relevant research messages**

As outlined in Part 1, participatory research seeks to enable those that are typically subjects of research to actively shape the design and process of knowledge creation on a topic affecting them. A range of strategies highlight the benefits of participatory approaches to qualitative data analysis in research addressing sexual violence and/or wider forms of abuse (Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Cosser et al., 2013; Holland et al., 2013; Warrington et al., 2017). These benefits include:

- **...make it easier for people to relate**

  (Beckett and Warrington, 2015, p. 130).

Creating opportunities for C&YP to speak with authority and authenticity on issues affecting them or their communities can be a powerful vehicle for promoting their perspectives in broader policy and practice forums.

It is important to recognise that not all participatory dissemination requires active involvement of C&YP. Other important aspects of participatory research, such as involving young people in public events or speaking. Given the needs of many C&YP to remain anonymity in relation to sexual violence research (or participatory), alternative approaches to dissemination of research messages and creating impact are critical. One key strength of involving C&YP in research dissemination is the opportunity to garner their support in ensuring outputs are accessible to a wide range of audiences, including C&YP themselves. A range of research projects on sexual violence both participatory and otherwise have involved C&YP in developing accessible outputs to ensure that research messages are reached by their peers and wider communities. 12 These may include short briefings, leaflets, films, animations and websites (Barter et al., 2013; Cosser et al., 2013; Hagell, 2015; Warrington et al., 2017).

**2.2.2 Participatory research can strengthen outcomes for individuals and communities**

C&YP’s participation in sexual violence research can inform considerations of ethical relations to the outcomes for individuals and communities. This relates specifically to the impact of direct involvement in research for individual C&YP and closely aligns with benefits attributed to involvement in participatory initiatives more generally. Some writers also highlight the relationship between participatory research and social change, noting the scope for challenging wider social norms that allow sexual violence to flourish and for redressing the traditional hierarchies of research and knowledge production (Brown, 2006; Cody, 2017). C&YP’s participation in research dissemination is the strength of involving C&YP in research for individuals and communities.

**Individual and collective benefits**

Although the scoping review found only anecdotal evidence10 of the impact of participatory research on those involved in it, the documented benefits associated with participatory practice more generally may offer some transferable insights.

Experiences of sexual violence are typically characterised by feelings of isolation and powerlessness (Finkelhor and Browne, 1985). C&YP affected by sexual violence are often ignored or disbelieved and their disclosures are frequently not acknowledged or understood. (Allnock and Miller, 2016). Promoting opportunities for these C&YP to exert choice, experience influence and control and have their voices heard is therefore particularly significant in this field and may help to counter some of the psychological effects of sexual violence (Beckett, Holmes and Walker, 2017; Bovnick with D’Aleyre, 2018; Hallett and Prout, 2003; Hickle, 2016; Warrington, 2016).

10 Research on gang-associated sexual violence in the UK (Beckett et al., 2013) identified funding for a parallel participatory film project that engaged C&YP from gang-affiliated communities in developing short films to encourage representation and voice among gang groups and communities in Bradford, Leeds, Vauxhall and The Grove. The films produced by the young people were shown at a local school event, which encouraged discussion about addressing the issues raised by the research, and even later included in national curriculum resources for use with older pupils.

13 For reasons described, not many participatory research projects have been reproducibly evaluated. More generally, there are methodological difficulties in measuring impact and determining whether or not individual initiatives have improved outcomes. However, in some cases it is possible to assess the impact of participatory research from participating projects by collecting data, mostly based on self-reporting by participants.

14 Evidence from public inquiries and court cases on young people’s experiences of child sexual exploitation in the UK suggests that child victims are often left feeling control is removed by professionals (Brooks et al., 2016; Warrington, 2013).

At times, the distinction between individual and collective benefits of sexual violence research can feel that they are making a positive difference by speaking out on behalf of themselves and others affected about the injustice they face (Bovnick with D’Aleyre, 2018; Cody, 2017; Hagell, 2015). In a similar vein, one workshop participant at the SVRI 2017 Forum who identified as a survivor of child sexual abuse described the act of ‘speaking out’ and ‘joining forces’ with other ‘survivors’ to challenge sexual violence as a ‘healing experience’.

Though bringing together vulnerable groups can entail a range of challenges, meeting others with similar experiences can foster peer support and a sense of solidarity (Matthew and Barron, 2015). Participatory action research undertaken by Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010; Coser et al., 2014) further argues that bringing together a collective of C&YP in a participatory activity can instil a sense of belonging and community among participants which can form a platform for collective political action. This in turn relates to a growing evidence base about trauma-informed responses to sexual violence, highlighting the importance of ‘connection with others’ and ‘peer support’ (see Hickle, 2016). This resonates with the literature indicating that C&YP’s involvement in campaigning and advocacy relating to sexual and reproductive health, self-confidence, self-worth and can foster a sense of connectedness (Batesler, 2011; Brown, 2006; Hagell, 2013; Houghton, 2015; Levy, 2012; Martin, 2013; Oliver et al., 2006).

Several authors also note that involvement in participatory activities can offer C&YP opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, and to develop a positive self-confidence and sense of purpose (Coser et al., 2014; Dentith, Measor and O’Malley, 2009; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017). Drawing on an example of a young woman’s experience of involvement in a participatory project investigating the issue of power in relation to adolescent sexuality and reproductive health in Ethiopia and Uganda, Ngutuku and Okwany (2017) noted that the young researchers reported a sense of pride in gaining respect and praise from peers, teachers, parents and the community, which boosted their self-confidence. Establishing a new strong-based or ‘professional’ identity as a researcher or advocate that is not primarily defined by deficit or victimhood can be valuable when young people are trying to move away from situations of violence and abuse and into continued education or formal employment (Brown, 2006; Houghton, 2015).

2.2.4 Participatory research can challenge sexual violence

Transformative action and a commitment to social justice are at the heart of participatory research, and as such, participatory research projects can be a vehicle for social change. Specifically, there is evidence that participatory research can play a part in challenging and redressing some forms of sexual violence to flourish. As mentioned in Part 1, sexual violence is ‘stigmatised’ and portrayed in cultures of silence (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Pearce (2018) argues that there is a relationship between society not openly discussing the issue and children feeling that they, in turn, cannot either (ibid., p. 24).
The ethical and legal considerations of involving children in research terms are more complex and sensitive. This is primarily because children are more vulnerable due to their age and development stage. This vulnerability is based on the fact that children are not yet fully capable of making decisions in line with their best interests. Therefore, involving children in research requires special considerations to ensure their safety and well-being.

Informed consent is a crucial aspect of research involving children. It is a process that ensures that children are well-informed about the research context, its potential benefits and risks, and the measures put in place to protect their safety and privacy. Informed consent involves children’s assent, which is their agreement or agreement to the research participation, and parental or legal guardian’s permission.

Secondary and vicarious trauma are additional factors that need to be considered when involving children in research. Secondary trauma can affect individuals who are indirectly exposed to traumatic events, such as professionals who work with trauma-affected individuals. Vicarious trauma occurs when individuals who are not directly involved in trauma experience emotional distress or symptoms of trauma-related disorders.

There is evidence of significant barriers which prevent the planning or initiation of participatory research on sexual violence with C&YP. These barriers include lack of expertise, lack of resources, and the need for capacity building. However, participatory research holds the key to addressing these challenges and empowering vulnerable populations.

Specific ethical considerations for research with children include:

- Children's competencies: Children have the right to participate in research, but their level of understanding and decision-making capacity should be considered.
- Consent: Informed consent should be obtained from children, parents, and legal guardians.
- Confidentiality: Researchers should ensure that the data collected is confidential and protected.
- Respect: Participants should be treated with respect and dignity.
- Safety: Researchers should ensure the safety of participants, especially in cases of trauma.

Despite these ethical considerations, there are challenges in implementing participatory research with children. These include difficulties in obtaining informed consent, potential re-traumatisation, and the need for adequate support and resources.

The importance of participatory research cannot be overstated. It is a tool for building capacity and empowering children and youth. It allows children to express their voices and experiences, and it provides a foundation for addressing their needs effectively.

In conclusion, participatory research is a powerful tool for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. However, it requires careful consideration of ethical issues and the implementation of strategies to ensure the safety and well-being of participants. It is essential to continue developing and refining ethical and participatory research approaches to make research more effective and impactful.
2.4 Learning from participatory research processes with C&YP to address sexual violence

This section presents key learning about undertaking participatory research with C&YP on sensitive issues and illustrates some of the complexities of such processes. Many of the issues discussed are interrelated and can affect more than one stage or aspect of the research process. For the purposes of clarity, the authors have attempted to discuss the findings in relation to eight distinct aspects of research project:

1. Research oversight and governance
2. Obtaining ethical approval
3. Recruitment and engagement
4. Gaining and maintaining consent
5. Confidentiality and disclosures
6. Group dynamics
7. Data collection and analysis
8. Dissemination and impact

2.4.1 Models of engaging C&YP in research oversight and governance

Evidence of C&YP’s involvement in research oversight and governance was primarily through their engagement as members of project advisory boards or steering groups. This can provide a route through which C&YP can offer guidance on various aspects of research design and development. There appear to be two main models through which this takes place: 1) the inclusion of individual C&YP on professional (adult) advisory groups (see Beddoe and Warring, 2015); 2) separate groups made up solely of C&YP which provide parallel advocacy support alongside professional groups (see Barter et al., 2015; Beckett et al., 2013; Cosar et al., 2013; Warrington et al., 2017).

These groups may be created for the purposes of research (Cosar et al., 2013) or be an existing group co-opted into the research process (see the ‘STIR’ study, http://stirit.up). Both models described above present challenges for promoting C&YP’s influence over the research design and process. In the former, C&YP’s perspectives may be side-lined or undermined by older, professional voices. Predominantly adult or professional advisory groups may feel inaccessible to many C&YP and/or adult members may themselves not be prepared or have the skills to act inclusively. Although the latter model may represent a more inclusive and traffic-free space for C&YP, the separation from professional perspectives may also result in side-lining their contribution, depending on the terms of reference and project management relationships.

2.4.2 Obtaining ethical approval

Ethics committees fulfil a vital role in promoting stringent ethical standards in research and seek to ensure that risk and harm to participants, researchers and wider communities involved in the research are minimised (Block et al., 2013; ESRC, 2017). Unsurprisingly, ethics applications tend to rise in complexity in accordance with the degree of sensitivity of the proposed research, the perceived risks emanating from the proposed methodologies, and the levels of vulnerability of those the research seeks to involve. It is therefore inevitable that concerns over ethics applications not holding up to the scrutiny of research ethics committees can act as a major deterrent to, using, or considering, child/youth participatory approaches in sexual violence research (WS).

The typical nature of many processes involved in participatory research with C&YP may mean research committees are ill-equipped to advise or assess such applications. In addition, relevant expertise and infrastructures, including processes for applying scrutiny and offering advice on the ethical implementation of research, may not be readily available in some ethical settings. Ethical standards and requirements for conducting research vary widely across the globe and some authors note the need to develop stronger awareness of the importance of considering ethical issues and in assuring proper research governance in LMICs (Regmi et al., 2016).

Research consortia can potentially strengthen ethical research

Recruiting children from resource-poor settings as research subjects for ‘foreign sponsored’ studies has come under scrutiny (Roth, 2003). Such research is riddled with ethical challenges and issues (Back Chua and Schaefer, n.d.). However, if managed correctly research consortia between LMICs and higher income countries (HIC) can trigger fears that the child might tell“...

2.4.3 Recruitment and engagement

The scoping review identified several key issues around the recruitment and engagement of participant-researchers in C&YP research which present potential challenges, including potential barriers related to stigma, logistics, and organisational barriers, and issues concerning representation and live investigations, each of which is addressed in turn below.

Challenges related to stigma

As mentioned in Part 1, sexual violence is commonly associated with high levels of stigma, albeit in different ways in different contexts (Know Violence in Childhood, 2007; Pain, 1991; Saevyc et al., 2008). In many societies, sexual violence is a taboo topic that is not openly talked about (Ankson Fonseca and Plummer, 2010; Avetisyan, 2018; Cody, 2017). This section presents key learning about undertaking participatory research with C&YP to address sexual violence.

Research consortia can potentially strengthen ethical research

Recruiting children from resource-poor settings as research subjects for ‘foreign sponsored’ studies has come under scrutiny (Roth, 2003). Such research is riddled with ethical challenges and issues (Back Chua and Schaefer, n.d.). However, if managed correctly research consortia between LMICs and higher income countries (HIC) can trigger fears that the child might tell“...

Logistical challenges

The highly transient lives of some marginalised groups, such as street-connected C&YP or those affected by street-based forms of CSE, and the specific vulnerabilities arising from these may constitute logistical barriers“...

Restrictions in C&YP’s availability due to commitments, such as work, school, or activities that prevent them from participating in research. This may mean that C&YP might not be fully involved in all stages of the research process, or that certain aspects will need to be adapted to enable C&YP’s involvement. Indeed, overly ambitious plans to involve C&YP in all aspects of a research process may result in lower levels of representation if the required commitment or responsibility feels too onerous to potential participants.

Organisational barriers and gatekeepers

Participant-researchers and respondents are often accessed through service providers or specialist NGOs that work with the target group, due to their expertise and already established relationships with vulnerable populations. These organisations provide a gatekeeping role and, as several authors note, the primary focus of many such service providers is on crisis intervention and keeping their clients safe (Busza et al., 2004; Graça, Gonzalves and Martins, 2017; Houghton, 2015). Though these specialist workers may have the necessary skills and expertise to undertake crisis work with beneficiaries, they may simply lack sufficient time and resources to enter collaborations with researchers to support participatory research initiatives.

Even where independent researchers or facilitators have responsibility for managing research projects, involving C&YP to participate in research is likely to have considerable resource implications for gatekeepers. For example, they may need to learn about and assess the appropriateness of the opportunity; support C&YP to make informed decisions about participating; support researchers to undertake individual risk assessments and plan how to support the research process; and be available for follow-up support if required. Two key informants noted that unless professional researchers acknowledge and can compensate for these resource implications, it may be unenforceable for service providers to support such initiatives (Ints. 6 & 8).

23 These key informants, two of them young people, concurred that adopting an approach to participant-researcher selection which participants can discuss researcher applications with their families could potentially access (Ints. 4 & 8).

24 For instance, potential barriers could emanate from domestic or intimate partner violence (abusive/partner researchers) or caregivers exerting pressure on the potential participant-researcher to avoid risk (in line with the need to provide sufficient time/funds to participant in research). Helplessness (participant not participating, primarily based on the research project), substance abuse or mental health issues.

Brown (2008) notes that common personal difficulties among vulnerable youth include stress, anxiety and feeling emotionally fatigued, which may be compounded by situational difficulties, such as travel restrictions, child care obligations or partners or other family members exerting control over them. Managing the logistical and practical challenges associated with these often-complex situations has significant time and resource implications for research staff and organisations. Restrictions in C&YP’s availability due to commitments, such as work or school, means that those planning or participating in research need to consider potential gaps in data collection because of engaging in research, and anticipate potential gaps in C&YP’s involvement.}
strengths of each potential young researcher and respondent to determine, on a case-by-case basis, the appropriateness and their involvement in a particular research project. Risk assessment processes for potential participants can also identify whether individuals are involved in live investigations, so such risks are known and properly managed.

Key informants also emphasised the importance of including C&YP in this process (Ibids.; one young key informant recommended talking openly with the individual child or young person concerned about the potential risks related to their participation and involving them in considering ways to address these issues). Reiterating the significance of considering the ethical implications of excluding individuals from participatory opportunities, one of the young key informants stressed the importance of constructively engaging with risk, rather than “...taking it as an excuse not to involve C&YP” (Ibid. 9).

Evidence from UK-based research suggests that an overly risk-averse stance can replicate power differentialsthat exist in services targeted at vulnerable C&YP (Warrington, 2016). The young key informant suggested that making unilateral, ‘professional’ decisions to exclude a vulnerable child or young person “...can undermine their agency and be, in itself, experienced by some C&YP as dempowering and re-traumatising” (Ibid. 9).

Accessing marginalised groups

The scoping review listed several strategies that have been successfully used in participatory research to access marginalised groups of C&YP:

- Snowballing: word of mouth;
- Respondent-driven sampling: C&YP recruiting their peers (see WHO and UNAIDS, 2013; ESRC, 2017);
- Facility-based outreach (e.g. visiting shelters or community centres);
- Outreach via local partners and/or service providers;
- Outreach via schools (local partners facilitating access); and
- Advertisement via parenting networks and public spaces (e.g. faith-based institutions, recreation or shopping centres).

4.4 Gaining and maintaining consent

Challenges relating to consent

As with all research involving C&YP, participatory research raises issues concerning informed consent. How to obtain informed consent, whether consent can be truly informed, and how to account for influences or constraints that compromise children’s ability to freely opt in or out of research, are pertinent questions researchers face.25 Literature on trauma-informed care suggests, however, that processes of obtaining consent from C&YP in the context of sexual violence research should also be trauma-informed. This entails building awareness of the impact of trauma, the importance of training researchers in trauma work, and of developing trauma-sensitive and trauma-informed working environments to safeguard the well-being of participants and researchers and to minimise the risk of secondary or vicarious trauma (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018; Latich, 2017; SAMHSA, 2017). Methods of gaining consent need to consider the child’s or young person’s individual ability to understand the purpose of the project and their role in it. Existing guidance emphasises the role of the child/young person’s ability to communicate, verbally or non-verbally. It requires researchers to think about how C&YP’s sensitivity and ability to read children’s non-verbal cues, including body language, are important in this context. Researchers should make it easy for C&YP to withdraw consent in ways which do not provoke guilt, embarrassment or anxiety. To facilitate this, research processes may need to be explained in a range of different ways to younger audiences, requiring more time and resources to be dedicated to this (see Warrington et al., 2017). Consent workshops should be designed to be engaging and fully informed about how the research is funded and managed, along with its intended use.

Consent workshops

Consent workshops can be a meaningful tool for negotiating informed consent. One key advantage of such workshops is that they provide a time-limited and generative amount of time allocated to ensuring that participants and/or respondents fully understand the implications of their involvement in the research (Ibid. 2004). In an action research project involving marginalised adult sex workers in Cambodia, consent workshops had participants/respondents review both the benefits and the risks of the project. Topics covered included an introduction to informed consent and how respondents could opt out of research and maintain informed consent (Cocks, 2006; Houghton, 2015; Jupp-Kina, 2015; Warrington et al., 2017).

Obtaining consent using a rights game

In a participatory research project exploring participatory pathways to inform a baseline study in São Paulo, Brazil, the lead researcher developed a ‘rights game’ to explain her research and its rights as participants/ respondents to the young people, and to stimulate discussion of the potential risks they might be exposed to and engaged and entertained through physical activity. Such processes support children to think critically, reflect with others and challenge adults. The use of physical activity also ensures an interactive and participatory decision-making from all. Such processes can help researchers feel confident that C&YP fully understand the processes they engage with and have considered their implications. See Jupp-Kina’s (2015) thesis available online for a full description of the rights game.

As noted, consent is an ongoing process and it is important to build in multiple opportunities and ways for C&YP to opt out at a participatory research project. Participants should be reminded of their right to withdraw consent at any stage of the research process and (if relevant) to have an option to have all, or part, of any personal data they have provided removed from transcripts and interview notes. Maintaining consent may entail checking in with young researchers and respondents at regular intervals in a friendly and supportive manner to make sure that they are still happy with their level of involvement and contribution to the research (Beckett et al., 2013). It can be conducted through face-to-face conversations, regular telephone calls, emails, WhatsApp or text messages or other forms of communication.

25 ‘Street connected youth’ refers to C&YP who permanently or temporarily live in street environments or informal settlements, and/or maintain livelihoods often through the informal economy. They may be involved in present or previous living and working conditions that require C&YP to develop complex responses to their social and economic marginalisation, working on the fringes of formal and informal urban economy (van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017).
Confidentiality in group settings

Challenges relating to confidentiality can arise from group-based processes, which often form a central part of participatory research. These need to be carefully planned and managed as confidentiality can never be guaranteed by professional researchers in these contexts (Warrington et al., 2017). For example, C&YP need support to make truly informed decisions about what they will share in the presence of others, especially if these are peers. Encouraging C&YP to share personal data may not always be appropriate in group-based settings and may increase individuals’ sense of vulnerability and stigma (Ibid.).

Confidentiality in data analysis

One key informant suggested that there are complexities arising from the practice of generating data in shared physical space (Ints. 10). In research where young researchers produce their own data and maintain their personal experience, it may be unethical to engage the same C&YP in the analysis of this data, as this practice may render data anonymisation ineffective (Ibid.). In addition, the key informant stated that in many practice-based participatory research projects, young researchers and respondents tend to know each other well as they are commonly drawn from the same peer group. This can make it very easy for young researchers to identify each other’s data, with the implication that anonymity may be compromised almost by default (Ibid.).

Managing child protection issues including disclosures

Child protection is not merely an ethical or moral issue but a legal responsibility. It is recognized that involving children in research (participatory or otherwise) is to ensure that child protection obligations, including those arising from potential disclosures, are met (Graham et al., 2013; ESCR, 2017; The Research Ethics Guidebook, n.d.). While many of the ethical considerations around working with children equally apply to vulnerable people over the age of 18, they are not formalised in the same way through legal requirements.

The responsibilities of meeting the ethical and legal obligations of child protection must lie with the professionals who are facilitating or supporting such initiatives, even if research initiatives are child/youth-led. The onus must not be, inadvertently or otherwise, on C&YP to handle potential child protection concerns resulting from potential disclosures, nor should they feel required to support others through, or to prevent experiences of, sexual violence (Hellevik et al., 2015). In practice, this means ensuring that local services can provide appropriate support for children who are challenging, to be shared with the young researcher, or to ensure that legal and ethical obligations can be met. In view of the challenges described, the merits of mandatory reporting of sexual abuse in research settings were discussed at the C&YP forum (Ints. 2, 3, & 10). The authors conclude that, in resource-poor settings, young researchers sometimes linked to individual experiences of oppression and their perceived entitlement to be part of a process. This can present additional challenges in managing potentially complex group dynamics and arrangements to be created and managed for different perspectives, needs and conflicts to emerge. None of the literature reviewed for this study considers this specifically in the context of involving vulnerable C&YP in participatory research. Therefore, four key informal researchers acknowledged this issue (Ints. 1, 2 & 3). It is also addressed in wider bodies of research concerning C&YP’s participatory practice (Landsdown and O’Kane, 2015; Warrington forthcoming).

Setting safe parameters for involvement

Involving C&YP in participatory ways in the development of group work arrangements and establishing the rules and parameters of their engagement can be a useful strategy to mitigate against some of the challenges associated with group work. Such approaches draw heavily on traditions in youth and community work and often involve the development of shared working agreements or contracts which all participants sign up to (professional and otherwise) (Factor, Chauhan and Pitts, 2001). Similarly undertaking risk assessment exercises collectively provides opportunities to draw on multiple perspectives and use group problem solving to develop risk management strategies (Warrington forthcoming).

2.4.7 Data collection and analysis

The scoping review identified several challenges in data collection and analysis that are linked to the specific complexities of involving vulnerable groups in participatory research processes. These were based on C&YP’s lack of research competencies and to shield behind a professional façade, leaving respondents too, should share their personal stories through photographs. This constituted a departure from one-directional inquiry that allow researchers to ask questions, to observe, and to shield behind a professional façade, leaving respondents comparatively exposed. The call for self-disclosure required the professional researchers to become an active part of the process, rather than merely facilitating the research (Ibid.). It marked a shift in power and re-determined who was in control of the research process.

Creating a safe space

Involving C&YP in participatory ways in the development of group work arrangements and establishing the rules and parameters of their engagement can be a useful strategy to mitigate against some of the challenges associated with group work. Such approaches draw heavily on traditions in youth and community work and often involve the development of shared working agreements or contracts which all participants sign up to (professional and otherwise) (Factor, Chauhan and Pitts, 2001). Similarly undertaking risk assessment exercises collectively provides opportunities to draw on multiple perspectives and use group problem solving to develop risk management strategies (Warrington forthcoming).

2.4.6 Group dynamics

Managing complex group dynamics within participatory research processes

Managing complex group dynamics in the context of project advisory boards as well as in group work involving vulnerable groups more generally can present a range of challenges. Although C&YP may be drawn from the same constituency (e.g. ‘beneficiaries’), they should not be presumed to necessarily construct their own data. C&YP’s biographies and personal characteristics may very significantly. Participant-researchers and respondents may, in fact, be drawn from groups that have little cohesion, and are perhaps even marked by division and conflict, requiring the associated risks to be managed carefully (Barlow and Hurlock, 2013; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017).

As noted previously, power imbalances can also exist within peer groups. There is potential within such constituencies for new power dynamics to develop, sometimes linked to individuals’ different experiences of oppression and their perceived entitlement to be part of a process. This can present additional challenges in managing potentially complex group dynamics and requires a safe space to be created and managed for different perspectives, needs and conflicts to emerge. None of the literature reviewed for this study considers this specifically in the context of involving vulnerable C&YP in participatory research. Therefore, four key informal researchers acknowledged this issue (Ints. 1, 2 & 3). It is also addressed in wider bodies of work addressing C&YP’s participatory practice (Landsdown and O’Kane, 2015; Warrington forthcoming).

Re-defining power dynamics between professional and participant-researchers

Participatory processes are dynamic and reflexive in nature and, by implication, often require a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. Block et al. (2013) note the need for ‘reflexive’ research practice to acknowledge potential disparities in power between professional researchers and participants as well as among young researchers and respondents. As power dynamics between professional researchers and participants need to be in place throughout the process shift, so do the roles and the parameters for interaction. This can be challenging and, at times, take professional researchers out of their comfort zones. During a community-based participatory research project with young researchers using the ‘Photovoice’ method to develop understanding of the psychosocial histories of people involved in the sex trade,
research project with young fathers, the close bonds between peer researchers and respondents, and the discomfort of on-going processes of criticism or sharing personal information from fellow fathers during debrief sessions (ibid). For some peer researchers, discussing data from these interviews felt like a breach of trust.

Gaining and maintaining informed consent and making transparent the limitations of confidentiality are especially important in the context of involving vulnerable groups in research on sensitive topics.

Challenges related to reflexivity

Concerns over C&YP’s ability to exercise ‘researcher neutrality’, perhaps in part due to the issue discussed above, emerged as a recurring theme in the evidence reviewed. Four key informants noted that some young researchers struggled to distance themselves from other participants’ and/others’ viewpoints, at times concurring with ‘false’ beliefs during interviews and reinforcing misconceptions about sexual and reproductive health issues (Ints 1, 3 & 6 & 8). Three key informants believed that the de-sensitisation was directly linked to C&YP’s own experiences of abuse (Ints 1, 2, 3 & 6). Reflecting on involving young people as researchers to explore wider protection issues in emergency settings, one key informant recounted:

“Our young researchers have been through tough experiences and are very direct – almost shouting at respondents, or asking very direct questions [about violence] in some forceful ways... The [adult] research team left it to eight months until the young researchers were ready to ask questions about gender-based violence in a sensitive way. It was an on-going process with feedback and supervision by research staff.”

Three key informants noted the need to ‘re-sensitise’ young researchers to the problem of sexual violence in efforts to foster sensitive interviewing and listening skills (Ints 1, 3 & 8). Without this, they felt the young researchers’ ability to ask sensitive questions, empathise with respondents, and make high-quality reports feel safe during interviews could be undermined.

As two key informants stressed, the importance of pre-empting the risks of causing upset to respondents (and other researchers) in the context of abuse-related research (Ints 2 & 3). In one example cited, young researchers received training focused on developing key competencies and personal qualities such as kindness, listening skills, patience, empathy and adopting a non-judgmental attitude.

It is critical to recognise that, in some circumstances, de-sensitisation may be part of a coping mechanism for some individuals affected by sexual violence, serving as a defence against extremely distressing, painful experiences (Schiraldi, 2000). The process of re-sensitisation may require therapeutic work, the involvement of specialist professionals such as trained therapists, clinicians or youth/school workers, and longer-term interventions. Research and service provision may be combined, particularly in resource-poor nations (Coles et al., 2014), but this should not be presumed to be the case everywhere. In many cases, high levels of therapeutic engagement may be outside the scope of a participatory research project, not least because many professional researchers will not have the relevant expertise, time or resources to undertake therapeutic work.

Challenges arising from misconceptions around sex

During a child-led study on reproductive health issues in Ghana, limited knowledge of the research topic (teenage pregnancy) at times made it difficult for some young researchers to distinguish between “opinions” and “facts” in respondents’ responses. Some of the data emerging from peer interviews were not critically re-evaluated but were “true” [e.g. “condoms are bad”]. The lack of critical engagement with the evidence produced research findings that were problematic. This had serious implications for dissemination. During a school event, the young researchers presented research messages to their classmates, which included several harmful beliefs about sex. The facilitators were then faced with the challenge of having to ensure that the presentation did not leave respondents feeling misinformed whilst, at the same time, being mindful not to undermine the legitimacy of the research findings that the children had produced. (Challenging Heights, 2013)

As the example illustrates, there can be tensions in participatory research between ensuring that messages from research are well-informed, whilst not undermining C&YP’s agency in the process.

Building professional capacity to use participatory and creative methods

The academic literature recognises that to mitigate the challenges described above, involving vulnerable groups in data collection and analysis in the context of sexual violence research needs to be facilitated by skilled and experienced professional researchers (Blanchet-Cohen, 2014; Graca, Gonzáles and Martins, 2017; Lushey and Murro, 2015). As noted previously with reference to adult professionals’ competencies (see 2.3.2), there is a need for capacity building across the research community in relation to using age-appropriate and participatory methods of collecting data on sexual violence.

Though not all are necessarily inherently participatory, there are a range of creative and interactive methods,30 arts-based tools such as Photovoice (see Ribeiro Piereira et al., 2017; or Selestine, 2017), theatre-based approaches (Carlert, 2017), audio/video-based tools (StoryCenter, n.d.) and visual and sensory techniques that lend themselves well to working with C&YP on sensitive social issues in the context of participatory research. Many of these have been used in diverse cultural contexts, including groups that have been affected by trauma. They offer researchers several benefits on grounds of their:

- accessibility to diverse groups of C&YP (particularly where they do not rely on literacy);
- ability to sustain the engagement of C&YP;
- ability to encourage critical reflection among participants and make data analysis processes more transparent and integrated throughout the research process;
- ability to ‘ground’ C&YP who may be experiencing symptoms of trauma (see Warrington et al., 2017).

There is a significant body of literature and guidance on how to use participatory and creative research methods with C&YP (Lansdown and O’Kane, 2015; Robinson and Gilles, 2012; Ford J and Blaustein M (2013). Broadly speaking this means:

- recognising the signs, symptoms, and impact of trauma in individuals; responding by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeking to actively resist re-traumatisation (SAMHSA, 2018).

Trauma-informed practice

Within social support services there is increasing recognition of the need for work with C&YP affected by sexual violence to adopt ‘trauma informed’ approaches (Sweeney et al, 2016; Ford J and Blaustein M (2013). Broadly speaking this means:

- understanding the signs, symptoms, and impact of trauma in individuals; responding by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeking to actively resist re-traumatisation (SAMHSA, 2018).

30. The Participate website provides a range of resources on participatory methods: http://participate.org.za/methods/

31. Grounding activities or exercises have been defined as techniques that help to keep individuals connected to the present moment by helping them to identify how their thoughts and feelings can be used for managing overwhelming memories, strong emotions or disorientation, and look for ways to regain their mental focus from an intense emotional state (SAMHSA, 2018).

28. It is recognised here that ‘survival sex’ is common throughout the world and has been widespread in the past, particularly in contexts of conflict and displacement, for example, in refugee camps, internally displaced persons camps (Liebling-Kalifani, et al., 2008) and, Human Rights Watch, 2008).

29. It is recognised here that ‘survival sex’ is common throughout the world and has been widespread in the past, particularly in contexts of conflict and displacement, for example, in refugee camps, internally displaced persons camps (Liebling-Kalifani, et al., 2008) and, Human Rights Watch, 2008).

30. The Participate website provides a range of resources on participatory methods: http://participate.org.za/methods/

31. Grounding activities or exercises have been defined as techniques that help to keep individuals connected to the present moment by helping them to identify how their thoughts and feelings can be used for managing overwhelming memories, strong emotions or disorientation, and look for ways to regain their mental focus from an intense emotional state (SAMHSA, 2018).
While little is written about integrating trauma-informed approaches into research, some evidence was identified of data collection activities that consider the impact of trauma and adapt approaches accordingly. In particular research methods which rely on practical or physical tasks, such as mapping, drawing or other creative research tools, were noted to reduce the emotional intensity of involvement in research (Warrington et al., 2017). Three key informants highlighted the benefits of using methods that enable C&YP to discuss and reflect on issues without direct reference to personal experience, such as using composite case studies. Images or vignettes are also commonly used in participatory research to give participants a chance to distance themselves from the data (Ints. 2, 3 & 7). ‘Distancing’ or ‘projective’ techniques that encourage C&YP to talk about a hypothetical person rather than themselves were highlighted as helpful in structuring research activities in a way that enables young researchers to maintain some emotional distance (Ibids.).

The academic and grey literature also note the importance of taking practical steps to guard the emotional well-being of researchers and participants during the research processes in efforts to avoid re-traumatisation and secondary/vicarious trauma. This can include providing a safe environment to which participants (young researchers and respondents) can retreat at any stage of the research process, by having a separate room allocated for this purpose, and giving them a choice not to participate in activities or to step out of the process at any stage (Busua, 2004; UNHCR, 2005; Plan, 2009; SANLAAP, 2010). It is also important to consider that C&YP’s choices in relation to giving or withholding consent may be constrained, particularly in resource-poor settings, and should be given to how to redress such dynamics (Graham, et al., 2013).

Mentoring, regular de-briefs and supervision can also help young researchers to offload and be a safe space for reflection. Wherever possible, professional counselling should be available.

Key principles of keeping children and young people engaged

- **Youth-led**
  - give young researchers the opportunity to give their input and voice their opinions before teaching them the research methods and technical skills.
  - High energy: keep the training fun and interactive. The idea is that young researchers will learn more if they are doing as much as possible rather than sitting and listening for long periods of time.
  - Interactive: encourage young researchers to learn by experiencing role-playing and exercise. The aim is for young researchers to learn by making mistakes and reflecting on this.
  - Confidence building: the training should give young researchers opportunities to grow in confidence and receive positive feedback.

Adapting the research design to suit the C&YP involved

Research design and processes may need to be adapted and tailored to reflect the availability of time and resources; furthermore, they should suit the requirements and interests of the C&YP involved. This may involve simplifying complex processes. In addition, there is value in focusing on areas in which C&YP’s views might add the most benefit to the research and to tailor the research design accordingly (SANLAAP, 2010).

Several papers focusing on child/youth participatory research discuss modifying research methods for data collection to accommodate low literacy levels (Adly, 2015; Block et al., 2019; McLean and Modi, 2016; van Blerk, Shank and Shananah, 2017). Example methods included using audio versions of interview guides, employing smartphones or tablets to record interviews, or undertaking activities verbally or using drawings (Ibids.). Learning from involving C&YP in qualitative data analysis processes shows that interesting qualitative data sets emerge from processes that may need to be adapted to include a range of creative and/or collaborative approaches (Adly, 2015; Beckert and Warrington, 2015; Cosser et al., 2013; Holland et al., 2010; McLean and Modi, 2016; van Blerk, Shank and Shananah, 2017) found that informal methods of involving C&YP in data analysis worked well. The methods employed in this study considered C&YP’s preferred modes of communication and, for instance, recognised that the C&YP involved were not interested in reading transcripts. Instead, adult researchers shared the content of such transcripts with C&YP through informal discussions. Grouping data thematically before sharing it with young researchers and facilitating data coding visually using flip charts can also help to make data analysis more accessible to C&YP (Lushey and Munro, 2015).

“...adults don’t lead but empower us” (young person cited in Houghton, 2015).

Similarly, all three young key informants in this study said they wanted professional researchers to provide them with ‘tools’ and advice, and as when required (Ints. 4, 5 & 9). Providing timely and tailored guidance can promote independence, foster competencies and instil confidence in C&YP to initiate and undertake their own research projects. In the words of one young key informant:

...help us learn how to do it by ourselves (Int. 9).

McLean and Modi (2016) suggest that mentoring can be a useful tool in this context. The young researchers involved in their study were mentored throughout the participatory research process, which also included elements of self-monitoring, where C&YP reflected on and assessed their own capacities, such as organisational, problem-solving, social and research skills, at regular intervals. Similarly, Addy (2015) employed peer-to-peer teaching sessions during which peers taught each other how to use some of the research tools, as part of a youth-led study investigating urban crime and youth employment in slum areas in Kampala, Uganda. These different mentoring strategies to promote young researchers’ self-efficacy.

Giving C&YP ample opportunities to rehearse research skills, for example by undertaking practice surveys and interviews, and providing ongoing support and constructive feedback, was also highlighted as crucial to the research. In addition to group training, Coser et al. (2014) suggest that facilitators may need to provide one-to-one learning support to some young researchers.

One recent initiative identified through the call for evidence used a training programme to engage C&YP researchers in studies on gender-based violence. The training followed this format:

**Ask:** the topic of the session is introduced to young researchers by asking them what they know and think about this topic.

**Explain:** simple language and visual examples are used to explain the topic.

**Activity:** this can take many forms from role-playing games to small tasks in pairs or groups. These activities keep young people engaged and provide opportunities to practice interview skills.

**Reflect:** the group comes together and reflects on key messages from the session. Participants can ask any questions or for clarifications. (Girl Effect, 2017b)

The training manual also outlines several key principles that can help to keep C&YP engaged as described below.

**32** There is evidence in academic and grey literature to support this. SANLAAP (2010) argue that C&YP are well placed to determine the appropriateness of research methods used, particularly when the topic of study directly resonates with their own experiences. McLean and Modi (2016) similarly report that participatory research can generate high validity data for example. Young researchers involved in their participatory study on the economic and social empowerment of adolescent girls and partners in Democratic Republic of Congo, achieved high levels of consistency across the interviews they conducted. Given that their research findings were successful, both the authors and how to develop robust coding systems for data analysis (Ints. 4 & 9).

**33** Two young key informants noted that they would like specific guidance on how to navigate gatekeepers, on writing successful ethical applications and on how to develop robust coding systems for data analysis (Ints. 4 & 9).

**2.4.8 Dissemination and impact**

Several key issues emerged from the reviewed evidence in relation to dissemination of research findings from participatory research. These included challenges related to communicating sensitive data on sexual violence and wider questions regarding the impact and legacy of C&YP’s involvement in participatory research.

**Challenges in communicating sensitive findings**

Disseminating outputs from participatory research initiatives can be a difficult balancing act, not least because the messages C&YP produce may challenge existing norms and power structures. Sharing sensitive findings back to communities and policymakers can evoke uncomfortable feelings and put C&YP involved in dissemination activities at risk. There may also be a disconnect between young researchers’ findings and adults’ perceptions of C&YP’s similar challenges. (Ibids.)

Taylor and Percy-Smith (2008) highlight the inherent paradox that can arise from childhood participatory practice, suggesting that even when encouraged to articulate their views, C&YP often experience a lack of validation and their influence is constrained by adult values and priorities.

Drawing on participatory research using Photovoice to explore problematic sexual issues in relation to work of services for young sex workers, SVAC, one adult key informant reported experiencing pressures to ‘sanitise’ the research messages:

“We had a dissemination event for a research project using Photovoice where children put up pictures. Some pictures were taken away because they were not [considered] appropriate for the facilities. [They were] about issues of rape by the police, domestic girl workers acting as sex objects. The pictures would show a home, or a public place in town that could be identified and [we] were told to put them [the pictures away].” (Int. 6).

Dissemination strategies for sharing highly sensitive and political research messages should consider issues of legality, ethics and confidentiality. For instance, findings from research into rape of sex workers by police in South Africa were communicated in ways that respected sex workers’ stories but left the door open to work with police on improving the situation (Sonke Gender Justice and SWEAT, 2017).

It is also vital to ensure that confidentiality is not breached, deliberately or accidentally, during dissemination events (Ints. 6 & 8). One key informant reported an incident during which a group of young researchers disclosed the identities of perpetrators and victims during a presentation that sought to...
It is important for those undertaking sexual violence research to acknowledge that communicating sensitive data can be challenging. Including vulnerable C&YP in such activities can present particular ethical issues. Young researchers should be supported in carefully thinking through the possible implications of sharing their own or others’ personal stories in group or public settings. At the same time, facilitators should also communicate the importance and commitment to listen to C&YP’s experiences and perspectives, and provide opportunities to do so, should they choose to share personal information.

### Challenges in achieving impact

Related to the previous challenge, the scoping review found that most of the research explored within this scoping review is undertaken in ‘invited spaces’ (Cornwall, 2004, p. 78) where C&YP’s activities take place in existing structures that are typically defined or designed for them. Recognising and acknowledging the limits this places on C&YP’s influence is of key importance to analysing their participatory nature and avoiding overlooked claims of empowering practice. This raises the overarching question of how to apply, in practice, an ethos of contributing to social justice, which is at the very core of participatory research. More specifically, it identifies a challenge arising from moral obligations towards those involved in participatory research and the wider constituency they represent. According to one key informant:

> “The role of the researcher is different from that of a clinician or counselor and potentially more traumatizing because of an inability to ‘help’ the victim. Researchers identify problems and needs, but may feel unable to provide any assistance that helps survivors cope with their experience of sexual violence” (p. 96).

### Dealing with emotions of helplessness whilst feeling the burden of moral obligation towards research participants can be a source of considerable emotional and psychological stress for researchers and render them prone to vicarious traumatisation. Devising a focused research uptake plan that includes an advocacy element aimed at promoting social change can help to transform researchers’ feelings of helplessness. It is useful to plan a key stakeholder analysis at an early stage and to devise strategies for political engagement in the context of the project and related areas. This includes the following:

- **Ethics and Safety Recommendations for Research on the Perpetration of Sexual Violence** (Levkoff, Darnall, and Sikwelya, 2012): “Growing up on the Streets Knowledge Exchange Training Pack” (Bennett et al., 2016); and ‘Y outh Sexual Violence’ (Jewkes, Dartnall, and Sikweyiya; 2012); ‘Growing up on the Streets Knowledge Exchange Training Pack’ (Bennett et al., 2016); and ‘Youth Sexual Violence’ (Jewkes, Dartnall, and Sikweyiya; 2012).

- **Guidance developed by Save the Children (2015) and Veitrich with Corazon Buala (2017) offer useful discussion of the minimum standards for children’s participation in consultations.**

- **Coser et al. (2014); Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017** offer useful discussion of the minimum standards for children’s participation in consultations. This raises the importance of considering any legal implications and how to maintain anonymity of respondents and data.

### Schools offering educational initiatives in the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children (ECPAT, 2015).

**Questions of legacy**

Questions of what happens to young researchers after a project ends and whether their involvement will have a legacy are important considerations not only at the end but also at the planning stages of participatory research. Follow-up with C&YP has been highlighted as a weak area in the broader field of participatory practice, including youth consultations (Veitrich with Corazon Buala, 2007, pp. 56-67). Although this forms part of the key practice standards in children’s participation (Save the Children, 2008, evidence in the scoping review suggests that the issue of ‘ageing out’ may sometimes be overlooked, misunderstood, or informed by unrealistic expectations in relation to the amount of funding, levels of resources or time allocation available to participatory research.

Two key informants highlighted that transitioning out of participatory initiatives can be a period of anxiety and uncertainty for some C&YP, especially in relation to the issue of ‘ageing out’ of youth participation (Ints. 9 & 10). This is a particularly pertinent issue for young people’s advisory boards, which may have individuals or groups of young people over longer periods of time.

### Preparing C&YP for public speaking on sexual violence

Evidence shows that if it is the intention of a project to involve C&YP in public dissemination, it is important that this is properly planned and supported, and that informed consent is sought at every stage of the process (Jewkes, Darnall, and Sikwelya, 2012). As noted earlier this includes supporting C&YP to carefully consider the impacts of sharing personal information in such settings and to plan events which protect participants from a need to do this. In addition it is important to ensure that C&YP are provided with support to learn about sexual violence more broadly and can practice speaking about it to feel comfortable communicating their lived experience within and outside the project.

Preparing young researchers for speaking engagements and dissemination events, through training on communication skills and public speaking, should include strategies for addressing different stakeholder groups. Risk assessing these processes is also crucial and can be undertaken in participatory ways, involving C&YP in anticipating challenges, both personal and those that come from external audiences. It is important that preparation and training recognise potential barriers: for example, young researchers may need support to address questions that their agency, competences or entitlement to speak to decision-makers or other relevant stakeholders; inappropriate questions may be asked; or assumptions made about the personal experiences of C&YP involved in participatory initiatives are made on any basis other than being legal implications and how to maintain anonymity of respondents and data.

### Closing participatory research projects responsibly

Considering what happens to young researchers after a research project ends necessitates thinking through how support can be phased out ethically and responsibly. It raises questions about the ongoing ethical obligations towards those who have contributed to the research project, particularly if they are vulnerable individuals. In this respect, three key informants highlighted that C&YP not only need support during their involvement, but that they would also like assistance to transition into further projects and employment in slum areas in Kampala, Uganda, young researchers were asked for their preferences regarding various forms of remuneration. In addition to receiving allowances, they can also receive English language tuition, a certificate of participation, a graduation party and an identification card. The latter was of significance to the young researchers as many of them did not possess any form of identification, which prevented them from undertaking various activities such as opening bank accounts or registering a mobile phone (Addy, 2015). Furthermore, the scoping review identified examples where young researchers were given employment, volunteering, or further training opportunities by project partners (Julie, 2015; Coser et al. 2014; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017).

**BEING HEARD: ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE AT SVRI FORUM TOOLKIT**
PART 3: REFLECTIONS FOR RESEARCH PRACTICE

3.1 Ensuring safe engagement of vulnerable C&YP in participatory research

The scoping review has illustrated the pivotal importance of ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of all parties involved in participatory (and non-participatory) sexual violence research. Considerations as to whether it is safe and appropriate to involve vulnerable C&YP in such research are particularly pertinent given the highly sensitive nature of the topic and the significant challenges associated with involving vulnerable groups. Such decisions should not be taken lightly and need to be preceded by comprehensive risk and capacity assessments for those who are to be involved as participant-researchers and respondents and those who plan to facilitate the research and support them.

3.2 Risk and needs assessments

Individualised risk and needs assessments should be carried out for children and young people who will potentially be involved in participatory research on sexual violence. Decisions as to whether their safe and positive involvement is possible should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and should engage the child/young person concerned. Where possible (and commensurate with age and capacity) C&YP should be involved in conversations about the risks associated with their engagement in the research and about whether these can be managed. These conversations should focus on what needs to be in place to enable their safe participation. The primary concern should always be that participatory research does not put the child/young person, or any of the adults involved, at risk of harm, while the potential benefits (and hence risks and negative implications of excluding individuals from such opportunities) should also be taken into consideration.

3.3 Capacity assessments

Conducting capacity assessments of those planning to facilitate participatory research with C&YP people can help to ensure that staff are well equipped to handle ethical concerns, including those related to child protection, and that initiatives are appropriately planned, designed and resourced. Considering who holds responsibility for supporting C&YP involved in research (both young researchers and respondents), and what resources staff and participants will require, both during and after their involvement, must be a central part of ethical project planning. As part of this, professional researchers may need to acknowledge their personal and professional limitations (for example, due to a lack of therapeutic experience and knowledge in relation to trauma-informed working practices, or if initiatives are not appropriately funded and resourced, this can render participation tockistic, or worse, put those involved at risk of harm.

It is important that participatory research is underpinned by specialist training, good leadership, management structures and an organisational commitment to this type of work. Building time for reflection, proper supervision and regular de-briefs can help to safeguard both adult professionals and participant-researchers against the harmful effects of secondary or vicarious trauma. Reflective practice and shared decision making can promote an environment in which professionals feel safe to raise concerns and to respond appropriately to emerging issues or risks.

A list of practice resources identified through the scoping review has been included in Appendix H.

3.4 Training and support needs of professional and participant researchers

The challenges discussed in this scoping review highlight the importance of providing adequate levels of support and training for both C&YP and adults involved in participatory research. If this is not undertaken, there is a risk of imposing responsibilities on C&YP for which they are insufficiently prepared or lack the necessary skills or confidence to undertake. Equally, if professionals are not adequately equipped themselves, for instance if they lack the relevant skills and knowledge in relation to trauma-informed working practices, or if initiatives are not appropriately funded and resourced, this can render participation toxicistic, or worse, put those involved at risk of harm. As noted previously, this work must be underpinned by specialised training, an understanding of trauma-informed work and a critical engagement with patriarchal social norms. This requires prioritising time and space in the process for dialogue, reflection and debate. It also prompts the complex question of how to address gendered social norms that normalise sexualised forms of violence in practice. Although there are some promising initiatives, such as the ‘GREAT’ project in northern Uganda,38 that use a range of tools to promote critical engagement with gender inequality at the local level and to promote sexual and reproductive health issues in community contexts (Adams, Salazar and Lundgren, 2013; Igras et al., 2014), more needs to be done globally to address patriarchal belief systems and social norms that underpin gendered and sexualised forms of violence.

3.5 Resource implications

Involving vulnerable C&YP in participatory research has significant resource implications. These must be considered and realistically reflected in funding bids and project planning. Funders must recognise the real and often hidden costs of good participatory research practice. Enabling trauma-informed practice, onward referrals, meeting additional support needs and planning for proper dissemination and sustainability all require additional resources, which should be anticipated at the outset. Helping funders recognise the costs involved with participatory research with C&YP is essential to promoting the development of safe and ethical practice.

3.6 Promoting understanding of sexual violence

Many of the challenges discussed in this report demonstrate the need to foster critical reflection and engagement with the topic of sexual violence and with patriarchal social norms and beliefs (see Dartnall and Gevers, 2017). Due to their ability to promote critical reflection and their potential to build the capacity of those involved, participatory research projects addressing SWV can contribute to promoting better understanding of sexual violence, both at individual and collective levels. Again, this raises pertinent questions about the level of preparation, the content of training, and the support that is needed to adequately group adult and young researchers for participatory research in this field.

3.7 Promoting ethical research practice

Ethical research practice needs to be underpinned by high levels of expertise and research infrastructure, including capable ethics committees who can scrutinise and apply sound ethical judgment to participatory research proposals. Instead of taking an overly risk-averse or punitive approach to reviewing ethics applications, however, it may be helpful if ethics boards offered clear guidelines, advice and support on how to navigate the risks identified in research proposals. This can enhance the creation of participatory research on sensitive and difficult topics and build the capacity of researchers to involve vulnerable C&YP in safe participatory ways.

The report highlighted three key areas for improvement:

(i) There is a need to promote understanding of participatory approaches, and the value of these, across ethics committees. In addition to facilitating appropriate assessment of relevant project proposals, this could include more systematic promotion and dissemination.

(ii) There is a need to engage with ethical and legal issues arising from international research projects. Clarity about who holds responsibility for ethical and legal obligations relating to child protection, and how these can be enforced and monitored across different countries, is critical. This is especially significant when undertaking research in contexts where referral mechanisms may not work well and relevant services and support for subjects to sexual violence are not readily available.

(iii) There is a need to further develop capacity, infrastructure, knowledge and awareness of ethical considerations in research involving vulnerable groups across the wider research community. Strengthening the global ‘ethics infrastructure’ is necessary to facilitate a more consistent enforcement of high ethical standards across diverse contexts. Partnerships between institutions with high levels of experience

3.8 Redressing geographic biases

Due to the limitations discussed in Part 1, the report did not review the literature emerging from LMIC as much as might have been desirable. The broader literature highlights a gap in knowledge on issues relating to sexual violence against C&YP including prevalence data, from LMIC. This highlights the need to encourage and fund more research activities in these regions to reduce biases towards HIC and establish a more representative picture of sexual violence affecting C&YP globally.

3.9 Validating different types of knowledge and knowledge creation

The scepticism toward participatory research, its scientific rigour, and the validity of evidence resulting from such approaches is well documented (Challenging Heights, 2013; McLean and Mod, 2016; Plan, 2009; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017). In the face of this, there is a clear need to confirm the values of participatory approaches, indicating that more research and evaluation activity is needed to rigorously assess and document the impact of participatory research.

At the same time, the report has highlighted the need to accommodate and validate a variety of ways of conducting research in this field and to recognise different types of knowledge and methods of knowledge creation. This also requires acknowledging C&YP’s role in this process, to recognise their competencies to meaningfully contribute to the evidence base and their capacity to enhance our understanding of sexual violence.

3.10 Choosing appropriate levels of participation

A key message emerging from the scoping review is that the desire to promote C&YP’s engagement in research on sexual violence should not override the principle of ethical and meaningful participation. Despite offering some clear benefits, it should not be assumed that participatory research never produces ‘better’ research (Holland et al., 2010, p. 373), nor should it be assumed that participatory research is automatically an ‘empowering’ experience for those involved, particularly if the aims of the research are not linked to advocacy for social change (Dorner, 2007).

Different forms and levels of C&YP’s participation in research have validity, if it for purpose. The focus should therefore be on ‘how’ C&YP are engaged in the research process rather than on ‘how much’ participation is achieved (Gallagher, 2008; Holland, 38 More information and resources can be found on the GREAT website, see www.stories.irh.org/download-resources/
et. al., 2010; McCarr, 2012). It is argued here that it may be more appropriate to offer differentiated degrees and levels of involvement in various stages of the research, and enact these well, rather than “...trying to ensnare C&YP in all aspects of the research.” (McCarr, 2012, p. 64).

Researchers and funders should critically examine on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate to involve vulnerable C&YP in participatory research, to consider what purpose and whose needs their involvement serves, and whether participation can be enacted ethically and meaningfully in a given context. The following questions, though by no means an exhaustive list, may be helpful for professional researchers when considering adopting participatory approaches in this field of work:

What is the scope in the research process for C&YP to exert influence?

- What are the external and internal structures that define the context in which the research takes place and how do these affect power-sharing arrangements between those involved in the research project, and specifically between adults and C&YP?
- Is the locus of power and responsibility to manage the research transparent to all involved, i.e. does everyone know who holds ultimate responsibility, or how responsibility is shared?
- What are the funders’ responsibilities and levels of input within the process of research?
- To what extent are we, as professional researchers able to, or consider it right to, hand over responsibility to C&YP?

How do participatory approaches add value?

- How will a participatory approach add value to the research process and outcome?
- Does it help to identify research questions of relevance to C&YP and their communities?
- Will it help to answer the research question(s)?
- Which C&YP should or can be involved?
- How can we promote inclusive practice and enable participation of C&YP with different needs and perspectives?
- Whose voices will be missing?

Is the participatory approach considered appropriate in the context?

- Is it appropriate for researchers and others involved in the research, considering individual characteristics and vulnerabilities?
- Is the approach feasible and appropriate in the context in which the research takes place (e.g. community, policy discourse, academic field)?
- How can we ensure involvement of C&YP in the research is meaningful rather than tokenistic, i.e. how do we ensure we are not involving C&YP to tick the ‘participation box’ or validate our findings?

Are the approaches considered safe and ethical?

- Does the research adhere to rigorous ethical standards? Are these internationally recognised and comprehensive?
- Do adult and young researchers understand the importance of confidentiality, anonymity and data protection?
- What are the benefits and risks of involving a child or young person in the research and how are these identified and assessed?
- Can we take time to understand the specific situation of the individual child/young person, their needs, vulnerabilities and competencies?
- Can any identified risks be mitigated or managed effectively?
- Are we able, where appropriate, to actively involve C&YP in risk and need assessment processes?
- What are the possible negative implications of excluding C&YP from the research process?

What is the remit of safeguarding responsibilities in the research context?

- Have we put in place robust safeguarding measures and referral pathways?
- How are adult and participant researchers supported to deal with disclosures?
- Given that safeguarding standards vary across the globe, how do we ensure consistency in international projects?
- Is it sufficient to refer safeguarding responsibilities to local partners and if so, how do we monitor that safeguarding obligations are met?
- What are the research expectations with regard to improving outcomes for C&YP who have been victimised? How do we clarify and manage expectations, in terms of what level of support C&YP can expect to receive?

REFERENCES


Aparajeyo-Bangladesh, Bangladesh and ECPAT. (2012) Inducement and compensation in research, considering individual characteristics and vulnerabilities.


Initiatives in the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SEARCH PROTOCOL

PARTICIPATION LITERATURE REVIEW: SCOPING DOCUMENT

Title of the project:
‘Being Heard’: Promoting ethical and meaningful participation of children in research on sexual violence

Project outline:
One of the key aims of the ‘Being Heard’ project is to investigate and support ways for young people to be actively involved in research on sexual violence. To this end, we will conduct an international scoping exercise to explore models of engaging children and young people in research on sexual violence. The aim of the scoping review is to investigate participatory research initiatives with children and young people to share good practice and enable more researchers to ethically and meaningfully involve children and young people in studies on sexual violence.

The scoping will explore such issues as:

Definitions
- How is ‘participation’ conceptualised in the research, policy and professional literature?
- How do we define ‘children and young people’? What are the specific issues relating to different age groups, capabilities, experience, etc.?
- What meanings are given to ‘participation’ in the context of research on sexual violence involving children and young people? What concepts are agreed, which are contested?
- How do we operationalise ‘participation’ for research?

Participation models and techniques
- What is the range of participative models and techniques deployed in sexual violence research and/or participatory research with children and young people?
- What do we know to work, or not work, with specific groups and in different contexts?
- What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of these different approaches (e.g. consultations, action research, etc.)?
- What initiatives exist internationally that engage young people in studies on sexual violence? Have outcomes of such initiatives been evaluated or documented?

Evidence base
- What evidence exists regarding the replicability of participative research models?
- What do we know about the effectiveness of participation work?
- What are the benefits of engaging young people in studies on sexual violence and what is the supporting evidence base?
- What evidence exists regarding the conditions that need to be in place to make participative research on sexual violence with different groups of young people possible and effective? Are there examples of good practice?

Feasibility
- What needs to be considered when involving young people in research on sexual violence?
- What are the (ethical, logistical or other) challenges surrounding young people’s participation in research on sexual violence?
- How can researchers make good decisions about weighing up the risks versus benefits of involving young people in studies on sexual violence? Which considerations need to inform decisions as to whether participatory models are appropriate?

Ethics
- What ethics guidelines exist? What needs to be included in ethical protocols to ensure the safety and well-being of participants during their involvement in a research project?
- What skills and knowledge do ethics boards need to assess research protocols for ethical compliance?
- What skills and knowledge do ethics boards need to assess research protocols involving young researchers undertaking research on sexual violence for ethical compliance?

Capacity building
- What are the support and training needs of researchers interested in participatory research?
- What support and training do young people need to be able to successfully engage in participatory research?
- What examples of effective and meaningful participatory research are there?
- How can learning on youth participation in sexual violence research best be shared and disseminated?
- How can this learning be operationalised? Are there case studies and other good practice examples that can inform the development of a ‘toolkit’ for researchers interested in participatory research with young people on sexual violence that would pull together guidance on how to engage with an ethics committee, check lists for risk assessments, ethical protocols, and other tools, to support capacity building?

Summary of key questions
1. How is participatory research on sexual violence with children and young people conceived and defined?
2. What is/are the rationale(s) for children and young people’s participation in research about sexual violence?
3. What strategies or approaches have been used to support children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
4. What challenges face researchers undertaking participatory research with children and young people on sexual violence?
5. What are the key ethical, methodological and logistical issues emerging from children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
6. What are the benefits or contributions of participatory research methods in this field?

Which sectors will the scoping cover?
- Sexual violence against children and young people
- Gender-based violence
- Child sexual abuse
- Child abuse, maltreatment and neglect
- Commercial child sexual exploitation
- Child trafficking

Participatory research methodology
- Participatory and community research
- Community development including models and methods of community-led development of services?
- International development?
- Children’s rights/human rights
- Ethics

Marginalised C&YP (non sexual violence specific)
- Street-based youth
- Public health
  - Sexual and reproductive rights
  - Sexual and reproductive health
- Youth justice (overlapping issues relating to ethics e.g. in group work)?

What is the geographical remit?
International
APPENDIX A: SEARCH PROTOCOL (continued)

**Range of sources**
- Research reviews – specifically those relating to sexual violence/participation of young people in research
- Academic papers – theoretical/evaluative/practice examples
- Evaluations
- NGO/voluntary sector reports/practice examples/evaluations (including grey literature)
- Official reports (including from national governments/statutory agencies and international agencies, organisations and institutions)
- Key informants/experts – send out email requests for literature from experts and existing networks (SVRI, ECPAT, ISPCAN etc.).

**Other inclusion and exclusion criteria?**

**Include if:**
- post 1989 (based on CA1989 and fact that small amount of key participation literature emerged in the 1990s)
- all countries if material is available in English
- relates to young people under 25 (unless specific to sexual violence/abuse)

**Exclude if:**
- not focused on ‘marginalised’ children and young people
- not related to the definition/discussion/practice of a participative approach
- doesn’t include any potential for methodological learning

**Databases**
NB also databases produced as part of International Centre projects to date
1. Social Care Online
2. ASSIA
3. Discover
4. SociINDEX
5. Sage Premier
6. Google scholar
7. British Library EthOS
8. Cochrane Library
9. Campbell Collection
10. PsycARTICLES
11. PsycINFO
12. pubmed
13. Hand searches of organisational websites (websites of NGOs; INGOs; UN agencies; relevant networks; research/academic institutions, Childhub, Participatorymethods, Save the Children, CRIN, SCIE, NSPCC’s Inform)

APPENDIX A: SEARCH PROTOCOL (continued)

**Relevant search terms, key words etc.?**

All in relation to ‘marginalised’ C&YP; and in combination

**First level search terms:**
- Participat*
- Sexual violence/child abuse/maltreatment/neglect
- Consultat*
- Child*
- Youth/young people/adolescent(s)/young person(s)
- Sexual violence

**Methodology set:**
- participation and variations of participatory approaches
- consultation(s)
- research with children/young people
- consultation with children/young people
- children’s rights
- human rights
- children’s/young people’s voice(s)
- ethics
- sensitive issues
- compliance
- advocacy

**Violence set:**
- violence
- maltreatment
- neglect
- abuse
- sexual violence
- sexual abuse
- (child/commercial) sexual exploitation
- risk
- grooming
- internet grooming/cyber violence

**Children and young people set:**
- child*
- young people/youth/young person
- adolescent(s)

**Correlates set:**
- marginalised/marginalisation
- vulnerability/ies
- gender
- sexuality/ies
- ethnicity/ies
- ‘race’
- disability/ies
- accessibility/ies
- poor health outcome(s); poor (adolescent) sexual/mental/physical health
- youth offending/offences
- crime/criminalisation/criminal

**NB:** The large number of ‘variants’ terms may need to be limited and revised in view of time.

APPENDIX B: CONCEPT NOTE

**Warrington, C. (2017): Participatory research and children’s participation: Concept note**

**BEING HEARD:**

**Concept note: Defining ‘participatory research’ and children’s participation (abbreviated version)**

**Overview**

Defining participatory research

For the purposes of this review ‘participatory research’ is taken to mean any research in which there is a degree of collaboration between those who are normally solely the ‘subjects’ of research and those undertaking research. For these purposes ‘collaboration’ is defined broadly as including any opportunities to inform the research process which extend beyond solely providing data (e.g. undertaking an interview; completing a survey). This may include informing research questions; sampling; research design; governance; data collection; analysis; reporting and dissemination. Degrees of collaboration (and therefore ‘participatory practice’) will vary along a spectrum from opportunities to consult on some of these issues to research which is fully instigated and led by participant/researchers. A useful model to characterise this spectrum is a three-tier typology of consultative, collaborative and participant-led practice (Lansdown and O’Kane, 2015).

Qualitative research practice which involves interviews, surveys or focus groups but does not enable participants to inform the research process in any way (beyond providing personal data) is NOT classed as participatory research in this project.

While creative research methods, ethnographic research and consultation work are NOT synonymous with participatory research we recognise some clear overlap. In cases where creative and participant-led research (at the consultative end of the spectrum) is fully instigated and led by participant/researchers, a useful model to characterise this spectrum is a three-tier typology of consultative, collaborative and participant-led practice (Lansdown and O’Kane, 2015).

Qualitative research practice which involves interviews, surveys or focus groups but does not enable participants to inform the research process in any way (beyond providing personal data) is NOT classed as participatory research in this project.

To complete the scoping review of participatory research on sexual violence affecting children and young people we start from a shared understanding of the meaning of ‘participatory research’ as follows:

“A range of methodological approaches and techniques, all with the objective of handing power from the researcher to research participants... Participatory research involves inquiry, but also action.” (participatdgs.org, n.d.)

The language of ‘participatory research’, though used variably in different contexts, can be taken to denote some shared principles
Rationale and benefits: Redressing traditional power dynamics

Considered together, these three characteristics mean that there is an underlying concern in all participatory research with issues of power. Specifically, this means a commitment to redressing some of the traditional power dynamics inherent within normative processes of research and associated dissemination activities: what Fals Borda defines as ‘bottom up’ approaches to knowledge generation (1982).

As a result, participatory research is unlikely to position itself as ‘politically neutral’ but rather actively seeks to address issues of social justice. As Pain notes:

“...one of the main benefits of participatory research... is its ability to forefront the perspectives of marginalized groups and actively challenge social exclusion with them.” (Pain, 2004)

Broadly speaking, the rationale for participatory research can be split into two themes: epistemological (or instrumental) and political (or moral). In epistemological terms, participatory research may be providing means of accessing unique insights into social processes that others may only be able to hold by those with direct experience of a phenomenon. This rationale suggests that participatory research approaches improve understanding of phenomena. In political terms, participatory research recognises the control of knowledge production and related discourses are fundamental acts of exerting power. This suggests a role for research in creating...

“...social spaces where people can make meaningful contributions to their own well-being and not serve as objects of investigation.” (Benmayor, 1991)

Opportunities for research participants to self-represent:

A collaborative approach at the heart of participatory research offers research participants – or those whose lives, concerns or communities are being investigated – an opportunity to represent themselves and/or their concerns more directly rather than being depicted by others. This marks a critical shift in traditional research relationships and specifically addresses some of the key concerns about power relationships, hierarchies and assumptions. Three key characteristics of participatory research are:

A concern with social action: this means that research is concerned with outputs and influence beyond the generation of knowledge or theory to generate tangible benefits and changes for those involved – either as individuals or communities. Social action may include the capacity building inherent in these processes, campaigning work, and/or influencing and changing practice (as in a participatory action research project). As Williams and Brydon-Miller note (2004), participatory action research

...combines aspects of popular education, community-based research, and action for social change. Emphasising collaboration within marginalized or oppressed communities, participatory action research works to address the underlying causes of inequality while at the same time focusing on finding solutions to specific community concerns” (p. 245)

Diversity and degrees of participation

Despite these shared characteristics, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of research practice that may be considered participatory. Participatory research takes on several guises and uses a range of diverse techniques. It is used in a range of research disciplines and settings, including, but not limited to, social geography; health research; applied social research; international development; child and youth studies and practice and community settings.

Another key aspect of this diversity is the degree to which ownership and control are transferred to different stakeholders – and specifically to those who have traditionally solely been the subjects of research. This will vary both between research projects and within different aspects of the same research project. So, for example, a research project led by academic researchers may work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders during data collection and possibly analysis phases but may also retain opportunities for (effectively) dictating the writing up or representation of that research. Alternatively, community-based organisations who employ a researcher to support their own work may lead and manage an entire action research process and take control of how the findings are used. Equally, different individuals among the same stakeholder groups within a project will experience different levels of influence and control within the research processes.

Defining children’s participation

In line with Article 12 of the UNCRC, one common definition of children’s participation (not specific to research) is: the right of all children and young people to be involved and influential in decisions about issues which affect their lives and those of their communities, in accordance with their evolving capacity. Other writers highlight a need to also focus on evidence of children’s influence and of research resulting from children’s involvement in decision-making (Galagher, 2008). Similarly Save the Children define the core purpose of children’s participation as...

“...[empowering] children as individuals and members of civil society, thus giving them the opportunity to influence their own lives.” (Save the Children, 2006)

Several frameworks have been developed to help assess and characterise children’s participation (Hart, 1992; Tisdell, 1997; Lansdown, 2001; Sher, 2001 and Reddy and Ratta, 2002). All of these models share a concern with differentiating participatory practice by the degree to which children hold ownership and control. Lansdown and O’Kane’s recent framework for monitoring and evaluating children’s participation (2007) provides a broad and accessible summary of these degrees into three levels of participation: consultative, collaborative and child-led (see Figure 1 in the report).

Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011) have mapped these levels onto the research process depicted diagrammatically (see Figure 2 in the report) – showing increasing levels of research involvement:

- Children as research subjects
- Children consulted on aspects of research process
- Children collaborate and work in partnership with researchers
- Children supported to lead and have ownership of research activity

It is possible for children and young people’s participation to take place at several of these levels simultaneously within a single research project. Many writers (including Hart, 2009) stress a need to avoid viewing different levels of children’s participation as a ‘hierarchy’. Instead they highlight that different levels of participation are possible or appropriate at different times, depending on the capacity, interests and circumstances of individuals, the funders’ requirements, and resources available to the project. It is valid to recognise, however, that collaborative research and the facilitation of child-led research initiatives are undertaken more infrequently due to intensive resource requirements and more challenging power-sharing arrangements. Children’s involvement may take place during part or all of the research process including (but not limited to) the following activities: defining research questions; research governance and planning; data collection; analysis and reporting; and dissemination.

Finally it is worth noting that an important consideration when thinking about children’s participation (as opposed to adult participation) both in research and practice is the interplay between children’s rights to participation and their rights to protection. While the UNCRC proposes the principle of ‘the indivisibility of rights’ and highlights their mutual dependency, much has been written about the tension between protection and participation rights (Healy, 1986; Orchard, 2004; Hinton, 2008; Healy and Darlington, 2009). In reality it would appear that a pragmatic approach is often adopted that has tended to prioritise children’s protection rights above those of participation (Feinstein and O’Kane, 2008). There is evidence that this tension may be particularly pronounced in work addressing children and young people viewed as particularly marginalised or vulnerable.
REFERENCES:


Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011) Guidelines for research with children and young people. London: NCB.


APPENDIX C: ACADEMIC LITERATURE REVIEW

List of final inclusions after two stages of coding

Category 1: Literature on participatory research methods, children and young people and sexual violence (or other relevant marginalised groups/issues)

DATABASE: ASSIA


DATABASE: NSPCC Inform


DATABASE: International Journal of Qualitative Methods


DATABASE: Sage Premier General


DATABASE: Reflective Learning in Action Research


DATABASE: Social Index


Category 2: Literature on participatory research methods and children and young people

DATABASE: DISCOVER


DATABASE: ASSIA


**DATABASE: Sage Premier General**

**AKERSTRÖM, J. AND BRUNBORG, E. (2013) ‘Young people as partners in research: experiences from an interactive research circle with adolescent girls’, *Qualitative Research*, 13(5), pp. 528-545.**


**FLEMING, J. (2011) “Young people’s involvement in research: Still a long way to go?”, *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(2), pp. 207-223.**


**KRAL, M. J. (2014) “The relational motif in participatory qualitative research”, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(2), pp. 144-150.**


**MCMANARA, P. (2013) “Rights-based narrative research with children and young people conducted over time”, *Qualitative Social Work*, 12(2), pp. 135-152.**

**PORTER, G. (2016) ‘Reflections on co-investigation through peer research with young people and older people in sub-Saharan Africa’, *Qualitative Research*, 16(3), pp. 293-304.**


**DATABASE: Sage Premier General**


**DATABASE: Sage Premier General**


**DATABASE: Sage Premier General**


**DATABASE: Sage Premier General**


APPENDIX D: RESULTS OF GREY LITERATURE SEARCH

DATABASE: Eurochild


DATABASE: Participatory Methods


Publications identified on ‘Participatory Methods’ that were no longer accessible:


Gosh, K. (ed.) ‘Learning from Children’, South and Central Asia’s Children, 8 (no page number).


World Bank (n.d.) Hear our voice: the poor on poverty.
APPENDIX E: MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR EVIDENCE


APPENDIX F: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORMS

BEING HEARD: A scoping review to inform developing guidance for children and young people’s participatory involvement in research about sexual violence

The ‘Being Heard’ research project

The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire, has been commissioned to undertake a scoping review to inform developing guidance for children and young people’s participatory involvement in research about sexual violence.

The ‘Being Heard’ research project seeks to collect and review international evidence on young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence – including a consideration of the meaning, purpose, challenges and opportunities of doing so. It will then seek to apply this evidence base to the development of new draft international guidance to support researchers considering or undertaking participatory consultation or research with young people on sexual violence.

Interviews with key informants

As a professional with experience of conducting participatory research activities with children and young people to explore or address sexual violence, we would like to ask you to take part in a research interview as part of the review; whether or not you participate is entirely up to you.

The interview would last approximately one hour and take place at a time suitable for you over the phone, via Skype, or in person. It would be semi-structured and cover questions such as:

- What is/are the rationale(s) for children and young people’s participatory involvement in research about sexual violence?
- What are the key ethical issues emerging from children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
- What challenges face researchers undertaking participatory research with children and young people on sexual violence?
- What are the ethical issues emerging from children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
- What are the benefits or contributions of participatory research methods in this field?

The interview would be audio-recorded and transcribed (with your agreement) to ensure we have an accurate record of what you have told us.

Use of information

All information that you share in the course of an interview will only be used for the purposes of the research project, unless you or someone else is at risk of significant harm if we do not pass that information on. When information is to be used publicly (e.g. in a publication or presentation) any information identifying you will be removed. Participants will be identified by professional grouping e.g. ‘project manager’ or ‘researcher’, and not by name. You will have four weeks following the interview to withdraw your consent or retract any information you have shared, if you wish.

Notes of the interview will be transcribed, anonymised and securely stored in locked cabinets and password-protected computers. All original data ( handwritten notes, recordings, etc.) will be securely destroyed 12 months after the completion of the project.

Complaints

If you have any questions or require any further information about the research please do not hesitate to contact Dr Silvie Bovarriick (silvie.bovarriick@beds.ac.uk).

Please review the statements in the consent form below and if you agree with them and are happy to take part in an interview, please sign a copy of the consent form and return via email/post.
CONSENT FORM
for key informant interviews

Please sign at the bottom of the page to confirm that you have read and agree with the following statements:

- I have read and understood the information sheet about the Being Heard research review.
- I understand that taking part will mean being interviewed by a researcher over the phone, via Skype, or in person for approximately one hour.
- I understand that taking part is voluntary and I can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that information from the interviews will be stored securely and treated confidentially.
- I understand that if I share any information about professional practice that raises concerns about significant harm to a child or young person (or vulnerable adult) this will be responded to by the research team in keeping with Keeping Children Safe standards (www.keepingchildrentofsafeforyou.org.uk) and information may be passed on to my manager or others responsible for safeguarding in my organisation.
- I understand that everything I say will be anonymised so that no one can identify me in the final report.
- I give my consent to be interviewed.

Signed:

Please print your name:

Are you happy for us to record the interview?

☐ Yes

All recordings will be stored securely, will not include your name, and will be destroyed 12 months after the project ends.

NOTE: if this form is returned by email, proof of signature will be obtained by printing a copy of the accompanying email and storing it with the completed form. Additional recorded verbal consent will be confirmed at the beginning of the interview audio-recording.

APPENDIX G: TOPIC GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

1. Introduction to self and relationship to research on sexual violence with children and young people (C&YP) (or closely associated issues)
2. Definition: What is your understanding of participatory research; what does it look like in practice?
3. Practice examples: Can you describe some of the participatory research initiatives on sexual violence with C&YP that you have been involved with (either as researcher; facilitator; research manager; funder; participant)?
4. Benefits: In your experience, what are the benefits of these types of research approaches in exploring sexual violence?
5. Limitations: What are the limitations of these research approaches in exploring sexual violence?
6. Strategies (or useful learning) for undertaking or enabling participatory research with C&YP to address sexual violence. Possible prompts:
   a. strategies linked to particular research ‘stages’ – funding; planning; sampling; governance; data collection; analysis; reporting; dissemination, etc.
   b. strategies linked to involvement of different research stakeholders: funders; participants; community organisations; research institutions; research audiences, etc.
7. Challenges (and associated useful learning) when undertaking or enabling participatory research with C&YP to address sexual violence. Possible prompts:
   a. challenges linked to particular research ‘stages’ – funding; planning; sampling; governance; data collection; analysis; reporting; dissemination, etc.
   b. challenges linked to involvement of different research stakeholders: funders; participants; community organisations; research institutions; research audiences, etc.
8. Ethical issues/dilemmas that have emerged in this work.
9. Resources: What do you perceive a researcher needs in order to support more work of this kind to take place (including practical guidance or toolkit type resources)?

APPENDIX H: PRACTICE RESOURCES

Blogs


Conference Paper


Manuals, toolkits and guidance


Webinars


Websites


Participate (n.d.) Participatory Research Methods. Available at: http://participateresdgs.org/methods/


StoryCenter (n.d.) Available at: https://www.storycenter.org (Last accessed: 13 November 2017).


