THE NSPCC’S PROTECT & RESPECT CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PROGRAMME

A DISCUSSION OF THE KEY FINDINGS FROM PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND SERVICE USE

Mike Williams

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Impact and Evidence series

This report is part of the NSPCC’s Impact and Evidence series, which presents the findings of the Society’s research into its services and interventions. Many of the reports are produced by the NSPCC’s Evidence (formerly Evaluation) department, but some are written by other organisations commissioned by the Society to carry out research on its behalf. The aim of the series is to contribute to the evidence base of what works in preventing cruelty to children and in reducing the harm it causes when abuse does happen.

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The people pictured are models.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse (DFE, 2017). It is a process that involves the exchange of a resource for sexual activity with a child or young person. The recipient of the resource could be the child or young person with whom the sexual activity takes place. It could be a third party who is able to control the child or young person (DFE, 2017, p5). While the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation is not new (see Hallett, 2017) use of the term ‘child sexual exploitation’ is. The term appeared in government statutory guidance for the first time in 2009 (DCSF, 2009). The 2009 guidance gave Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) in England responsibility for protecting children from exploitation and preventing it (DCSF, 2009). The guidance led to professionals, statutory services and third sector organisations developing responses and services focused on sexual exploitation (Walker et al, 2019; Barnado’s, 2019; The Children’s Society, 2019: Harris et al, 2017; Shuker and Harris, 2018).

In 2014, the NSPCC started an evaluation of its Protect & Respect programme of sexual exploitation services. The programme was provided from 15 service centres located in towns and cities in England and Wales. This report presents the key findings from the evaluation of the NSPCC Protect & Respect programme. The programme comprised five types of service delivered to children and young people aged 11 to 19:

- **Preventative group work** aimed at reducing the risk posed to children and young people judged to be vulnerable to exploitation but not judged to be at risk of exploitation in the short-term. The group work was to be delivered over six weekly sessions.

- **Four types of one-to-one work:**
  - **Preventative work**, which had the same aim as the group work.
  - **Risk reduction work** aimed at reducing the risk posed to children and young people judged to be at risk of exploitation in the short-term.
  - **Child protection work** aimed at stopping the exploitation and reducing the risk of exploitation of children and young people judged to be being exploited.
The NSPCC’s Protect & Respect child sexual exploitation programme

Recovery work aimed at reducing the trauma and risk of being exploited of children and young people traumatised because of exploitation.

The one-to-one work was to be delivered in two parts. Engagement and assessment work were to be done within the first six weeks of the work. A period of three to six months was then to be spent working on an intervention plan agreed with the child and young person at the end of the assessment. Staff were recommended to use socio-educative work, resilience work, rights and advocacy work, and therapeutic approaches:

- Socio-educative work was described as work done with ‘young people’s thinking or cognitions ’to help the young person recognise the deliberate nature of the targeting and grooming that is so indicative of exploitation’ (NSPCC, 2014a, p3). Topics to be covered were grooming, consent and healthy relationships, gangs and recruitment, technology and substance misuse.

- Resilience work was described as work done to ‘positively influencing a young person’s coping strategies’ (NSPCC, 2014a, p12) including a focus on: self-image; identity; confidence and positive attributes (NSPCC, 2014a, p41).

- Rights and advocacy work was focused on emphasizing to children and young people that being at risk of exploitation did not mean that they had ‘bad’ or criminal behaviour and that the responsibility for exploitation lay with the abuser (NSPCC, 2014b, p9).

- A range of therapeutic approaches was recommended. These included creative therapies (Axline, 1964), symbolic play (Goodyear-Brown, 2009), motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick, 2012), cognitive behavioural therapy (Cohen et al, 2010) and trauma focused play therapy (Gil, 2006) (NSPCC, 2014b, pp13-24; NSPCC, 2014d, pp23-24).

Evaluation

A key ambition of the Protect & Respect programme when it was first launched was to subject each of its five services to an impact study. A review conducted one year into the delivery of the programme concluded that the organisation was not in a position to deliver on the ambition of an impact study. This was because, in practice, the service delivery models were not being delivered according to programme guidance. The review findings triggered a decision to amend the aim of the evaluation. The evaluation was refocused on studying and documenting:

- The challenges that the NSPCC had encountered in implementing its services and conducting an impact study.
The work that was done, in practice, by NSPCC practitioners with children and young people, carers and professionals.

The challenges faced in assessing, preventing and stopping exploitation and what was done to attempt to overcome those challenges.

The majority of data collected for this evaluation report came from interviews with NSPCC practitioners, but also from interviews with children and young people and referring professionals. Some of the data came from case notes written by NSPCC practitioners, where children and young people consented to the notes being used in the evaluation. This report also draws on quantitative data collected on:

- The characteristics and needs of the children and young people allocated to the service.
- Length of service.
- Service attrition and evaluation attrition.

The findings in this evaluation cover the programme’s operation between June 2014 and November 2017.

Although the NSPCC faced several barriers to conducting an impact study the amount of qualitative and quantitative data collected makes it one the largest evaluations of child sexual exploitation service provision. The qualitative data set comprises:

- 45 interviews with programme staff.
- 20 group interviews with programme staff.
- 11 interviews with staff referring children and young people to the programme.
- 10 interviews with children and young people.
- 17 reviews of case file notes.

The quantitative data set comprises:

- 2,273 cases for which demographic and evaluation attrition data were collected.
- 2,166 cases for which service attrition data were also collected.
- 187 group work cases for which before and after measure data were collected.
- 47 one-to-one cases for which before and after measure data were collected on risk.
Set against the existing evidence base on the implementation and effectiveness of interventions to address child sexual exploitation interventions (Walker, 2019) the findings in this report constitute a detailed contribution on implementation, attrition and effectiveness. This report provides detailed findings, based on qualitative data, collected on the processes of referral and allocation, assessment, engagement and intervention. Furthermore, it provides detailed insight, again based on qualitative data, on what works in helping to reduce the risk of exploitation and stopping exploitation. It should also be noted that a final aim of the amended evaluation plan was to study patterns of service and evaluation attrition and the reasons for attrition. While some reference is paid to the topic of attrition in this report, a more detailed analysis will be presented in a future report.

This discussion report is being published along side two separate reports drawing on the evaluation findings of the Protect & Respect programme:

- An evaluation report on the one-to-one work done during the Protect & Respect programme (Williams, 2019b).
- An evaluation report on the group work done during the Protect & Respect programme (Williams, 2019c).

An unpublished rapid evidence assessment of the research and evaluation of existing service approaches to child sexual exploitation was also conducted during the period of the evaluation (Walker et al, 2019).

A note on language

Risk in the short-term and medium to long-term

This evaluation report uses the terms ‘being at risk of exploitation in the short-term’ and ‘being at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term’. The need for this distinction came about because practitioners talked about children and young people who were not at risk of exploitation in the immediate future or short-term but who, if nothing was done to intervene, were at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term. Being at risk of exploitation in the short-term should be taken to mean having an increased chance of exploitation happening within the next month when compared with the average child or young person. Being at risk in the medium to long-term should be taken to mean being judged to have an increased chance of exploitation happening within the next six months (i.e. in the medium term) or any time up to the end of the young person’s childhood (i.e. in the long-term), when compared with the average young person.
Risk avoidant actions

The Protect & Respect programme aimed to reduce the likelihood of children and young people being exploited partly through providing direct support to them. In particular the programme was designed to improve children and young people’s ability to take actions, which could help reduce the likelihood of their being involved in situations and relationships, where the risk of sexual exploitation was heightened. In this way the programme was focused on working with and through children and young people’s agency. During the delivery of the Protect & Respect programme experts and researchers working in the field of child sexual exploitation developed a critique of interventions focused on teaching children and young people risk-avoidant actions. It was suggested that in focusing preventative initiatives on educating children and young people, professionals placed the responsibility for keeping safe on children and young people rather than on the people who perpetrate exploitation or on the adults whose role it was to keep children safe from exploitation (Eaton, 2017; Eaton and Holmes, 2017). The NSPCC recognises that there is merit in the point that children and young people should not be made to feel responsible for exploitation. It has also recognised that it has used terms, which on reflection, were felt to be unsatisfactory in that they implied that:

- It was within the power of the child or young person to stop exploitation.
- Children and young people had a responsibility for avoiding situations where they could be exploited.

Since the beginning of the development of the programme the NSPCC has moved on from the use of such terms and has sought to develop a language, which communicates that:

- The responsibility for exploitation lies with those who perpetrate it.
- The responsibility for safeguarding children and young people lies with carers and child protection professionals and agencies.

However, whilst the NSPCC has been keen to adopt a language which removes responsibility and blame from children and young people it maintains an open mind as to the possibility that educating children and young people and supporting them to take risk-avoidant action could play a limited role in helping to reduce victimisation. In this report the author describes attempts to build children and young people’s skills to take what are termed ‘risk-avoidant actions’. This term ‘risk-avoidant actions’ is used without meaning to imply that children and young people have a responsibility for avoiding or lowering the risks of exploitation posed to them or that children...
and young people are to blame for being in situations or relationship where the risk is heightened or where exploitation occurs.

**Key findings from the evaluation of the group work service**

NSPCC Service Centres provided a total of 84 groups to a combined total of 521 children and young people. Almost all groups were held in schools and the composition of almost all groups was determined by school staff. The majority of children and young people who were accepted for groups, who attended at least one session and where demographic data had been collected were female (n=420, 85 per cent), White British (n=304, 63 per cent) and under the age of 16 (n=507, 98 per cent). The needs of children and young people allocated to group work varied. Some were felt to have a risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term although they were not at risk of exploitation in the short-term. Some were in situations where it was felt there was a risk of them being exploited in the short-term and others were being exploited at the time they were participating in the group work.

In many cases school staff were not sure what was happening to the child or young person at the point they referred. In these cases school staff referred because they were anxious that something might be happening. Not all children and young people were informed about the group work or given the choice of saying no to the work by school staff. When NSPCC practitioners started to engage with children and young people in these situations, they realised the child or young person had not been asked for their consent or had not felt free to turn the service down. The school setting was a significant context, as children and young people may not be used to feeling they could make such choices there. Some of the children and young people who had not been asked for their consent did subsequently consent when asked by NSPCC practitioners, although others did not and left the group.

When group work was delivered the topics covered by NSPCC practitioners could vary. There could also be a difference in the emphasis placed on group discussion vis-à-vis providing information on a list of set topics. NSPCC practitioners felt that the group work had been beneficial to some children and young people through: improvements in understanding, awareness and the ability to recognise anxiety and fear; and being better able to take actions, or having taken actions already that in theory could reduce the risk of exploitation happening. Nevertheless some NSPCC practitioners felt that the ability of group work to lower the risk of exploitation was limited by the intention and behaviour of peers and adults within the school, home and community.
Key findings from the evaluation of the one-to-one work

In total, 1,014 children and young people were allocated to the Protect & Respect service during the period of the evaluation. The majority of children and young people who were accepted for groups and where demographic data had been collected were female (n=766, 93 per cent), White British (n=533, 68 per cent) and under the age of 16 (n=738, 90 per cent). In some cases, children and young people were referred and allocated without being informed about the service and some did not feel free to turn the service down. When NSPCC practitioners started to engage with children and young people in these situations, they realised the child or young person had not been asked for their consent or had not felt free to turn the service down. Some of the children and young people who had not originally been asked for their consent did subsequently consent to the service when asked but others did not consent even after getting an allocated practitioner. Ensuring that consent to receiving a service is voluntary, informed and meaningful may be problematic in the context of child sexual exploitation, given the manipulation and abuse in relationships the child or young person is already experiencing. Practitioners tried various approaches to address this, including phasing the consent and renegotiating with the child or young person throughout. It could be challenging however and should be the focus for further study.

Engagement

In practice, children and young people could be allocated to an NSPCC practitioner without being ‘ready to engage’ in the activities outlined by the programme model. This meant more time was needed to engage, assess and deliver model activities than was specified by the programme guidance. It also meant some practitioners felt there was a need to work with children and young people on issues that mattered to or that were affecting the child or young person, rather than focusing their work on exploitation and an assessment of risk. In some cases, as the work progressed, NSPCC practitioners became clear that the child or young person needed involvement from other agencies. Fostering engagement was helped by:

- Writing chronologies, which helped professionals address the question of what could be done to lower the risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term.
- Providing training for local authority professionals on sexual exploitation and the push and pull factors. This was done to facilitate discussions about why children or young people might be involved in relationships or situations that heightened the risk of exploitation.
• Making the case that children and young people who were being exploited were being subject to abuse and by definition required a child protection plan. This could help counter a view that child protection plans did not apply to children and young people who were being sexually exploited.

Assessment
Where assessments were conducted to reach judgement on the extent to which the child or young person was at risk of exploitation, the assessment could be focused on the risk of exploitation in the short-term but not on the medium to long-term. This meant that some cases, where the risk of exploitation in the short-term was low, were closed with an acknowledgement that the risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term remained high.

NSPCC practitioners reported that the assessment process had not always enabled them to arrive at an accurate judgement of the risks posed to children and young people. Uncertainty over risk was the result of several factors:

• Children and young people did not want or were not able to talk about their personal experiences.
• Practitioners, attempting to complete the assessment within the six-week time period required by the model guide, did not have enough time to first establish a relationship with the child or young person.
• The indicators that practitioners used to estimate risk were felt to be poor indicators of risk.
• Practitioners received inaccurate information from professionals.
• The situations and relationships that a child or young person was involved with were too complex and dynamic.

Effectiveness
Practitioners felt that the risk of exploitation was lowered when:

• Work was done to ensure children and young people had a relationship with an adult who was caring and nurturing.
• Actions were taken to disrupt perpetrators’ ability to access the child or young person.
• Children and young people were supported to take risk-avoidant actions.
Practitioners identified four steps that children and young people needed to be supported across to deploy risk-avoidant actions:

1. Increase understanding about key concepts concerning exploitation.
2. Accept the applicability and utility of the key concepts to their life.
3. Accurately assess the risks they face.
4. Have a belief that things could change for the better.

The feedback provided by practitioners and children and young people suggested that children and young people could face challenges at each of these steps. Key activities that helped overcome the challenges were:

- Reflective discussion with the child or young person to help them apply the key concepts to assess the risks experienced in their own life, and to think about possible steps that could be taken to lower those risks.
- Modelling a caring and nurturing relationship, which helped the child or young person to develop a belief that the types of relationship they could be involved in and could experience, could be improved.

Crucially, NSPCC practitioners felt that experiencing a nurturing relationship and ensuring that perpetrators were not able to access the child or young person were preconditions for children and young people being able to take the four steps above. Hence rather than risk-avoidant actions being a measure for reducing the risk of exploitation, adults ensuring the safety of the child or young person was a precondition for the child or young person being able to take risk-avoidant actions.

Practitioners also felt that providing long-term therapeutic support to some children and young people could have helped them address the symptoms of trauma. Coping and managing the symptoms of trauma were felt to sometimes explain why some children and young people were involved in situations and relationships where there was a heightened risk of exploitation. For example some children and young people were said to have used alcohol and drugs to manage the symptoms of trauma, and sought to gain access to alcohol and drugs through relationships and situations where there was a heightened risk of exploitation. In practice NSPCC staff reported that they were not able to provide long-term therapeutic support. This was for two reasons. The first was that they did not feel the time permitted by the model allowed them to do this work. The second was that, in some
cases, practitioners did not feel they had the skills and training to provide this support.

Discussion

Professional responses to concerns around sexual exploitation should identify ways of ensuring that children and young people are able to give meaningful consent that is voluntary and informed. There are many challenges to ensuring that and services should work with children and young people to identify ways of developing practice for this. In addition workers and services should:

- Be focused on ensuring that the child or young person is provided with a caring and nurturing adult in their life, disrupting perpetrators’ access to children and young people and providing therapeutic support.
- Accept that reaching a clear judgement on whether the child or young person is being exploited or at risk of exploitation may not be possible in the short-term, which means they need to work with uncertainty.
- Look beyond risks that are posed to the child or young person in the short-term and take into account factors that pose a risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term.
- Involve strategies for promoting professional engagement.

This study identified several challenges to conducting an impact study of a new multi-site programme of services focused on sexual exploitation. A question remains about whether it is possible and feasible to consistently deliver an intervention model to a group of children and young people who are affected by sexual exploitation. This evaluation highlighted the work that would need to be done at the referral, assessment and allocation stages to ensure that users selected were willing and able to engage with an intervention model. Given the challenges other options for evaluating service delivery should be explored. One way forward would be to build a programme of action research, which links data collection, analysis, theory development, and service design and development (see e.g. Scott et al, 2017a; Shuker and Harris, 2016). In light of the key findings from this evaluation and the experience gained in the delivery of the Protect & Respect programme, the NSPCC has gone through a process of redesigning its programme of service delivery. It is also considering an evaluation methodology that promotes the participation of children and young people in setting the outcomes by which the work can be judged (Harris, 2014).
Chapter 1: Introduction

About this report

This report presents a discussion of the key findings from the evaluation of the NSPCC’s Protect & Respect programme, which ran from June 2014 to November 2017. The Protect & Respect programme, provided support to children and young people affected by sexual exploitation, and included the following:

- A group work service, where NSPCC practitioners did work with small groups of children and young people (numbering between 2 and 10) on a weekly basis over a period of one to two months.

- Four different types of one-to-one service. One-to-one work involved an individual NSPCC practitioner doing work with a child or young person to support them on issues relating to exploitation. The four different services covered prevention, risk reduction, child protection and recovery. Work was sometimes done with carers and professionals who supported the child or young person.

- The commissioning of research into child sexual exploitation.
  - One piece of research, on the link between child sexual exploitation and neglect, was commissioned and completed during the evaluation period (Hanson, 2016).
  - An unpublished rapid evidence assessment was conducted on research on service delivery responses to child sexual exploitation published between 2006 and 2018 (Walker et al, 2019)\(^1\).

In particular this report summarises and discusses:

- The implementation of the Protect & Respect programme.

- The findings from the group work service and the one-to-one service, which are detailed more fully in two separate accompanying reports (Williams, 2019a; 2019b).

This introductory chapter sets the context to the report by:

- Providing a note on the NSPCC’s position on the use of child sexual exploitation films and the lessons that the NSPCC has learned over the course of the programme.

- Providing a note on the NSPCC’s position on children and young people’s agency, the use of victim-blaming language and the lessons that the NSPCC has learned over the course of the programme.

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\(^1\) A copy of this report can be requested by email to researchadvice@nspcc.org.uk
• Summarising recent policy developments in the area of sexual exploitation.
• Looking at the evidence base for the effectiveness of professional responses and services in working on sexual exploitation.
• Describing the NSPCC’s recent involvement in working with sexual exploitation and the reasons for establishing the Protect & Respect programme.
• Summarising the guidance provided to NSPCC managers and practitioners on providing the Protect & Respect programme.
• Describing the evaluation methodology used. The description includes an account of how the focus of the evaluation changed over the course of the data collection period.

A note on child sexual exploitation films

Prior to and during the course of the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme, a number of agencies in the UK, including the NSPCC, created films containing dramatised accounts of grooming or child sexual exploitation. These films were used in the Protect & Respect programme with children and young people with the intention of raising their awareness of how grooming and exploitation worked. In 2018 (the year following the end of the evaluation data collection period), a campaign was launched to stop professionals showing dramatised accounts of grooming and exploitation to children and young people. The campaign was accompanied by a report. Drawing on what the report author acknowledged was a limited evidence base around ‘trauma informed practice’ it reasoned that showing children and young people dramatised accounts would be likely to harm them (Eaton, 2018; 2019).

In reflecting on the concerns raised by the campaign the NSPCC has recognised that its use of child sexual exploitation films in the Protect & Respect programme therefore may have caused distress for some children and young people and therefore could have caused harm. The NSPCC is in agreement with the view that child sexual exploitation films should not be used if they are going to cause harm. However it acknowledges that there is a place for using appropriate film in work with children and young people as long as this meets specific criteria. To this end, the Protect & Respect service has agreed to sign up to the working principles identified by Barnardo’s in its ‘basic practice checklist for schools work on child sexual abuse’ (Barnado’s, 2018b). Some of the key points that the checklist requires practitioners to address include:
• Preparing children and young people so they are aware and ready for the content and have been given the option of saying no to the work.

• Ensuring that resources that include ‘victim-blaming language’ are not used.

• Ensuring films that depict scenes of explicit abuse stories or scenes of violence are not used.

A note on agency and the use of ‘victim-blaming’ language

The Protect & Respect programme aimed to reduce the likelihood of children and young people being exploited partly through providing direct support to them. In particular the programme was designed to improve children and young people’s ability to take actions, which could help reduce their likelihood of being involved in situations and relationships, where the risk of sexual exploitation was heightened. The guidance provided to NSPCC staff was premised on the theory that:

“If the young person has timely and proportional access to information, advice and guidance they will be able to appropriately process it in order to make safe decisions… The young person will have a greater understanding of sexual exploitation and the grooming process, and so be less vulnerable to sexual exploitation.”

NSPCC, 2014a, p1

The guidance pointed out that the aim of risk reduction and child protection work was to improve the decision-making of children and young people who were felt unable to keep themselves safe. The criteria for children and young people allocated to risk reduction or child protection work was:

“The young person is unable to keep himself or herself safe; they are exposed to high levels of risk in relation to CSE and/or their own behaviour demonstrates an impaired ability to process information sufficiently to make safe decisions.”

NSPCC, 2014b, p1; 2014c, p1

Similarly, the author of the guidance, when interviewed as part of the evaluation, explained that the programme services were designed to lower risk through impacting on children and young people’s behaviour:
“The focus of intervention for P&R is on risky behaviour and risk-taking behaviour, with the consistent aim to stop it escalating into CSE or into exploitative behaviour. For the prevention group you’re trying to stop it getting from risky, and in [the risk reduction work] you’re trying to stop it getting from risky to exploitation. Then almost, [in the child protection work], you’re trying to get it from exploitation back down to risky. And then in the recovery, you’re trying to maintain healthy behaviour and stop risky behaviours re-emerging.”

During the delivery of the Protect & Respect programme NSPCC workers, in line with the model guidance, attempted to deliver interventions, which were designed to improve children and young people’s ability to avoid or withdraw from situations and relationships which heightened the risk of exploitation. However during this time academics and researchers working in the field of child sexual exploitation began to develop a critique of such interventions. It was suggested that by focusing preventative initiatives on educating children and young people, professionals placed the responsibility for keeping safe on children and young people, rather than on the people who perpetrate the exploitation or on the adults whose role it is to keep children safe from exploitation (Eaton, 2017; Eaton and Holmes, 2017). Placing the responsibility on the child or young person, in turn, was said to lead to the child or young person feeling to blame for exploitation where it occurred (Eaton, 2017; Eaton and Homes, 2017).

The NSPCC recognises that there is merit in the point that children and young people should not be made to feel responsible for exploitation. Terms like ‘young people keeping themselves safe’, ‘young people making safe decisions’, and ‘young people engaging in risky behaviour’, used in NSPCC guidance and sometimes by NSPCC staff, were on reflection, felt to be unsatisfactory in that they implied that:

- It was within the power of the child or young person to stop exploitation.
- Children and young people had a responsibility for avoiding situations where they could be exploited.

Since the beginning of the development of the programme the NSPCC has moved on from the use of such terms and has sought to develop a language, which communicates that:

- The responsibility for exploitation lies with those who perpetrate it.
- The responsibility for safeguarding children and young people lies with carers and child protection professionals and agencies.
However, whilst the NSPCC has been keen to adopt a language which removes responsibility and blame from children and young people it maintains an open mind to the possibility that educating children and young people and supporting them to take actions, which reduce the risk of exploitation, could play a limited role in helping to reduce victimisation. In this report the author describes attempts to build children and young people’s skills to take ‘risk-avoidant actions’. The term ‘risk-avoidant action’ is used without intending to suggest that children or young people:

- Have a responsibility for avoiding or lowering the risks of exploitation posed to them.
- Are to blame for being in situations or relationship where the risk is heightened or where exploitation occurs.

**Child sexual exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse (DFE, 2017). Over the last decade a definition of sexual exploitation has been provided by each of the governing authorities from across the United Kingdom’s four nations. Beckett and Walker (2018, p11) state that common to all four nations’ policy positions is a recognition that exchange is key to differentiating between CSE and broader definitions of child sexual abuse. Whilst exchange of a resource for sexual activity with a child is central to the current definition of child sexual exploitation the recipient of the resource can vary. The recipient could be the child or young person with whom the sexual interaction takes place or a third party who sells sexual activity with the child or young person. This can be seen in the definitions provided in England and Wales, the two nations where the Protect & Respect programme was provided during the period of the evaluation. Guidance for England defines child sexual exploitation as being:

“…a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity

(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or

(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.”

DFE, 2017, p5
It adds:

“The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”

DFE, 2017, p5

Guidance issued from the Welsh Assembly Government, which at the time of writing is currently under review (Hallett et al, 2017) states that:

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

Welsh Assembly Government, 2010

Beckett and Walker (2018, p11) also point out that common to all four nations’ policy positions is a recognition that CSE:

- Is an umbrella term covering many different manifestations of abuse; both contact and non-contact.
- Can affect both males and females.
- Can be perpetrated by a range of abusers – male/female; adult/peer; any social class or ethnicity, operating alone, in groups or organised gangs.

Whilst use of the term ‘child sexual exploitation’ first appeared in statutory guidance in 2009 the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation has been documented as far back as 100 years ago (Hallett, 2017). Prior to 2009 the term commonly used to describe child sexual exploitation was ‘child prostitution’ (Hallett, 2017; Phoenix, 2012). In 2009, a switch to ‘child sexual exploitation’ was made to promote an understanding that children involved in exploitation were ‘victims of abuse’ rather than ‘criminals’ (Sparks, 2000; DOH, 2000, p10; Beckett and Walker, 2018). Beckett and Walker (2018) point out that because early definitions of child sexual exploitation were created
to foster a move away from use of the term ‘child prostitution’ the concept of exchange, which made child sexual exploitation different from child sexual abuse, referred to financial gain only. However in the years since the birth of the concept of ‘child sexual exploitation’ the notion of ‘exchange’ has been widened to include other types of gain including love, acquisition of status and protection from harm. Widening the concept of exchange in this way has caused some to question the value of the concept of child sexual exploitation, given that exchange can be found across many types of child sexual abuse, many of which wouldn’t be considered exploitation (Beckett and Walker, 2018, pp13-15). The key question is whether the presence of exchange within a sexually abusive relationship presents distinct challenges to identifying, preventing and stopping abuse, that make it useful and meaningful to draw out child sexual exploitation as a distinct sub-type of child sexual abuse. The findings in this evaluation report speak to this question and a discussion of the utility of the concept of child sexual exploitation is held in the discussion chapter at the end of this report.

The definition of child sexual exploitation used in the United Kingdom can be contrasted with the definition of child sexual exploitation used in other places. Europol, the European Union’s law enforcement agency, rather than treating child sexual exploitation as a sub-category of child sexual abuse, equates child sexual exploitation with child sexual abuse:

“Child sexual exploitation refers to the sexual abuse of a person below the age of 18, as well as to the production of images of such abuse and the sharing of those images online.”

Europol, 2019

The United Nations, too, have adopted a more expansive notion of sexual exploitation, directed both at adults and children, which includes all forms of child sexual abuse:

“The term “sexual exploitation” means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.”

United Nations, 2003
Guidance on working with child sexual exploitation

The development of child exploitation services within the UK is a recent phenomenon. Over the last decade, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) in England have overseen the establishment and development of child sexual exploitation services. Professionals, statutory services and third sector organisations have developed responses and services focused on sexual exploitation (Walker et al, 2019; Barnado’s, 2019; The Children’s Society, 2019; Harris et al, 2017; Shuker and Harris, 2018). This work has been as a direct response to statutory guidance on sexual exploitation issued to LSCBs in 2009 (DCSF, 2009), which gave LSCBs responsibility for protecting children from exploitation and preventing exploitation (DCSF, 2009). The guidance issued in 2009 was in place for much of the period data were collected for the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme. In 2017 the Government replaced the 2009 guidance with new non-statutory guidance (DFE, 2017), accompanied by an extended guidance (Beckett et al, 2017). The Government’s guidance has been accompanied and informed by the publication of a range of research publications, which have issued recommendations and guidance for practice (Gilligan, 2016; Gorin & Jobe, 2013; Phoenix, 2012; Hickle & Hallett, 2016; Lefevre et al, 2017; Pearce, 2006; Barnardo’s; 2011; Hallett, 2013; Eaton and Holmes, 2017; Harris et al, 2017). The rest of this section summarises the guidance, drawing on government and research sources. The summary covers guidance issued on prevention, identifying exploitation, assessment, referring concerns, safeguarding procedures and engagement.

Preventing exploitation

Government guidance on preventing sexual exploitation lists a range of activities for members of Local Safeguarding Children Boards to consider (DCSF, 2009, pp18–19; DFE, 2017, pp18–22):

- Educating all children and young people about the nature and risks of child sexual exploitation and how to access support.
- Promoting the resilience of children and young people and families.
- Targeting group work with ‘particularly vulnerable children and young people’.
- Providing complementary educative messages to parents, carers, professionals and the community.
Assessment and identifying exploitation

Government guidance states that all local authorities and safeguarding boards should work on the assumption that child sexual exploitation is happening in their area (DFE, 2017a, p7). Professionals are expected to be alert to the signs of exploitation and to the areas and locations where victims are targeted (DCSF, 2009, p27). Having said that, it is recognised that identifying and assessing exploitation is difficult (Beckett et al, 2017, p44). In particular it is recognised that “the signs of abuse rarely present in clear, unequivocal ways” (DFE, 2017, p4). Nevertheless, professionals are encouraged to be “probing in their assessments” and to “ask deeper questions” (DCSF, 2009, p43). It is expected that assessments be conducted to understand “the totality of a child’s experiences in order to assess the nature and level of risk faced by children” (DFE, 2017, p4).

Government guidance identifies a range of indicators of exploitation (DCSF, 2009, p42; DFE, 2017, p9). However the 2017 guidance caveated such lists by pointing out that exploitation can occur without indicators being present and that indicators can be present without exploitation occurring (DFE, 2017, p9; Beckett et al, 2017, p44). This guidance was informed, in part, by a review of the assessment tools that have been used to assess the risk of sexual exploitation (Brown et al, 2016). The review concluded that although tools had been developed to assess risk, no tool had been evaluated or tested using large-scale methodologically rigorous research (Brown et al, 2016, p4; see also Brown et al, 2017). It highlighted the fact that, to date, no studies have sought to test whether the CSE risk factors commonly used in risk assessment tools accurately predict current or future exploitation (Brown et al, 2016). This makes creating an evidence-based assessment tool, based on indicators, difficult to achieve. It also means assessment tools based on the identifications of indicators cannot be relied upon to accurately predict the risk of exploitation or the likelihood of exploitation happening. The review concluded that an overreliance on indicators could lead to professionals reaching the wrong conclusion (Brown et al, 2016). The review also noted that assessment tools based on indicators of exploitation mixed indicators of being exploited with indicators of being at risk (Brown et al, 2016, p5).

The findings from this review were relevant to the Protect & Respect programme and in particular to the assessment carried out during the one-to-one work. During the period subject to evaluation, NSPCC practitioners were expected to assess the risk of exploitation posed to the child or young person using a tool that was based on 17 indicators of exploitation. Like some of the tools mentioned in the review (Brown et al, 2016):
• The assessment tool contained indicators of risk as well as indicators of whether the child or young person was being exploited.
• The power of the assessment tool in predicting actual or future experience of sexual exploitation had not been tested.

Engagement
Government guidance asserts that a ‘meaningful’ relationship between the practitioner and the child or young person and their carers is critical to the success of addressing concerns around exploitation (DCSF, 2009; DFE, 2017). Although the guidance does not define what a ‘meaningful’ relationship is, further advice stresses the importance of:
• Responding to the needs, sensitivities and wishes of children and parents.
• Being proactive in seeking to prevent, identify and disrupt exploitation.
• Ensuring victims do not feel or think that exploitation is their fault.
• Ensuring families feel confident that they will be believed when they report exploitation.
• Seeing children and young people and carers as part of the solution.
• Understanding that being effective may mean avoiding an explicit discussion around concerns about exploitation at the beginning of the work with the child or young person. (Beckett et al, 2017, p46; DCSF, 2009, pp13–16; p47; DFE, 2017, p6, p14)

Published research on the views of children and young people affected by sexual exploitation has, in addition, recommended that professionals:
• Be friendly, flexible, persevering, reliable and non-judgemental.
• Provide safe places where children and young people can drop-in.
• Ensure children and young people feel cared for and special. (Gilligan, 2016)

Both government guidance and published research recognises challenges to achieving engagement. Government guidance points out that children and young people, introduced to a professional who would like to help, can be perceived as “defensive” and reluctant to disclose or engage (DCSF, 2009, p47; DFE, 2017, p11, p13). Similarly, research recognises that children and young people can be “aggressive” in their response (Pearce, 2006, p338). Reasons provided for defensiveness and reluctance are that the child or young person:
• Has a strong relationship with the perpetrator.
• Has a sense of loyalty to the perpetrator.
• Is of the belief that he or she has entered voluntarily into the relationship with the perpetrator.
• Has a fear of the perpetrator.

Research findings suggest further reasons:

• Having a set of expectations around relationships and sexual boundaries, based on prior experiences, which lead a child or young person to accept experiences that professionals understand to be exploitative (Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p306; Lefèvre et al, 2017).
• Alternating between care seeking and rejecting behaviour, which is claimed to be a common aspect of normal adolescent behaviour (Pearce, 2006, p338; Barnardo’s, 2011, p13).
• Being sceptical about the support that can be offered by child protection social workers. This results from situations where children and young people are engaged in a relationship, which professionals think is exploitative, but which children and young people are able to use to gain access to a resource that they cannot access from anywhere else. This resource could include money, accommodation, food, affection, drugs and alcohol. Where professionals emphasise the importance of the child or young person coming out of the relationship, but do not offer an alternative means for their needs to be met, such professional intervention can be rejected. This is because the offer of intervention can be experienced as an attempt to disrupt the means through which a child or young person gets their needs met (Pearce, 2006, p329; Gilligan, 2016, p121; Hallett, 2013; Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p309).

Government guidance recommends several ways in which professionals can work to overcome challenges to engagement:

• Take a slow and sensitive approach to the building of a relationship. Guidance points out that victims might need years of support before they can disclose (DFE, 2017, p13).
• Ensure that the offer of support is not dependent on formal disclosure (DFE, 2017, p13).
• Hold off on making a formal referral of concerns to local authority social care departments if to do so would compromise engagement (DCSF, 2009, p48).
• Prioritise building up a trusting and caring relationship, where the focus is on building “relationship and psychological security” (Beckett et al, 2017, p46).

• Work to priorities negotiated with the child or young person (Beckett et al, 2017, p46).

Research evidence, similarly, has suggested:


• Negotiating working priorities with the child or young person (Hallett, 2015; Hickle & Hallett, 2016; Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,466).

Being given the opportunity to develop a relationship is felt to allow the child or young person to learn what it means to have a healthy relationship and to provide the opportunity to learn, first hand, about consent, rights, wellbeing and safety (Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p307). This is felt to foster the capacity to think, reflect and plan (Dodsworth, 2014, p196). These approaches, taken together, are in turn felt to help:

• Improve understanding and expectation of what is possible in relationships (Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,465).

• Trigger reflection on the state of their current relationships (Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,456).

• Prompt consideration of alternative relationships and means through which the child or young person can have their social, emotional and economic needs met (Pearce, 2006, p328).

• Nurture a sense of self-worth, which puts the child or young person in a better position to make positive decisions (Dodsworth, 2014, p196).

Following all of this, the overall effect should be a reduction in involvement in relationships, where exploitation is taking place or where there is a risk of exploitation (Hallett, 2013; Hickle & Hallett, 2016, pp308–309).

An important additional point made by researchers is that until a trusting and caring relationship is built, professionals should hold back from:

• Engaging the child or young person in an explicit discussion about exploitation at the beginning of the work, even if a concern for exploitation triggers the child or young person’s referral (Hickle & Hallett, 2016).

• Challenging the child or young person’s beliefs about the acceptability, normality and desirability of the relationships and circumstances they are in (Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p306).
• Challenging behaviours used by the child or young person to cope with the effects of harmful experiences, including drug taking, unprotected sex, substance misuse, criminal activity and dropping out of school (Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p308).

Furthermore it is recommended that professionals should accept children and young people’s need to alternate between being receptive and rejecting (Pearce, 2006, p338; Barnardo’s, 2011, p13; Lefevre et al, 2017, p2,466).

**Intervention**

The 2009 government recommended a range of interventions for helping children and young people ‘move on’ from exploitative situations. These were:

• Outreach work.
• Mentoring to assist a return to education or employment.
• Helping to secure appropriate health services.
• Pursuing leisure activities.
• Developing a positive network of friends and relatives.
  (DCSF, 2009, p52)

Other intervention recommendations, from non-governmental sources, include:

• Building up a trusting and caring relationship with the child or young person (as detailed in the section above on engagement).
• Accommodating children and young people with carers who have experience of building “trusting” relationships and have “skills at containing children and young people” (Barnardo’s, 2011, pp13–14).

Government guidance is clear that where professionals identify concerns, those concerns should be referred to the local authority children’s social care departments and in some cases to the police (DCSF, 2009, p47; DFE, 2017). Local authorities are instructed to implement agreed local safeguarding children procedures where it is clear that a child or young person is involved in or at risk of being involved in sexual exploitation (DCSF, 2009, p41; DFE, 2017).
The development of responses to child sexual exploitation and child sexual exploitation services in the UK

Professional child protection responses to child sexual exploitation

The purpose of this section is to summarise the different statutory child protection professional responses that have been developed to address concerns for child sexual exploitation. Professionals working for child protection and safeguarding agencies have been documented as responding with some combination of the following interventions:

- Disclosure-focused interventions, where professionals encourage children and young people to disclose information leading to a prosecution (Lefevre et al, 2017, p2,466; Hallett, 2013).

- Encouraging or demanding abstention from relationships\(^2\) where exploitation is understood or suspected to be taking place (Hallett, 2015; Pearce, 2006, p328). This can be accompanied by:
  - Attempts to explain to the child or young person that what they are doing is ‘wrong’ (Gasper et al, 2016, p12).
  - The threat of removal of the child or young person from the family home if abstention is not achieved (Thomas & D’Arcy, 2017, p1,701).

- Techniques to disrupt the child or young person’s communication with people who are understood to pose a risk. This can involve denying young people access to communications technology and social media (Lefevre et al, 2017, p2,466).

- Socio-educative work with the child or young person to help them understand what exploitation is and how it works (Phoenix, 2012, p5), with the hope that increased understanding results in children and young people using risk-avoidant actions.

- Removal of the child or young person from home to reduce their accessibility to people with an interest in exploiting them (Lefevre et al, 2017).

- Relationship building, where the practitioner starts off by getting to know the child or young person and builds up trust (Lefevre et al, 2017).

- Work to disrupt the activities of people with an interest in exploiting the child or young person (DFE, 2017, p9).

\(^2\) This approach has also been labeled the ‘child protection’ approach (Hallett, 2015) or the ‘abolitionist’ approach (Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p39).
Child sexual exploitation services

While professionals across the country have been developing ways of responding to child sexual exploitation, there has also been a growth in the development of services with the specific purpose of addressing sexual exploitation with children and young people and their carers. In 2018, the NSPCC commissioned a team of researchers to conduct a review of services focused on sexual exploitation (Walker et al, 2019). The review identified 28 different interventions. Several interventions offered one-to-one support to children and young people. They had differing aims, but collectively sought to address prevention, risk reduction, protection and recovery (see Walker et al [2019] for full list and Appendix A in this report for some examples). The review also identified preventative group work initiatives intended to raise awareness and encourage risk avoidant actions (see Appendix A for more detail). The development of the preventative group work services can be considered part of a wider movement, which began in the 1970s in the US, of using child education to prevent child sexual abuse (see Williams, 2018, pp11–12, for more detail).

Evidence for the effectiveness of professional and service responses to child sexual exploitation

Using child education to prevent child sexual abuse

The use of child education to prevent child sexual abuse has a history stretching back to the 1970s and in the UK over the last decade. However, despite almost 50 years of provision, there is little evidence to demonstrate that it reduces victimisation. In 2009, Finkelhor reported that:

“No studies based on strong research designs have looked at the question of preventing abuse. Two observational studies that tried to assess the issue yielded somewhat mixed findings.”

Finkelhor, 2009, p181

The first study, based on a survey of 825 college students, concluded that women who had participated in a school-based prevention programme were half as likely to have been sexually abused as children as those who had not (Gibson & Leitenberg, 2000). Another study based on a two-wave national survey of youth aged 10 to 16 found no differences in victimisation rates between those who had and those who had not been exposed to comprehensive prevention programs (Finkelhor et al, 1995). More recently, the rapid evidence assessment commissioned by the NSPCC found that no studies, dated from between 2006 and 2018, had been conducted into whether
child education initiatives impact on victimisation from child sexual exploitation (Walker et al, 2019).

Evaluation of child education services, rather than studying the impact on victimisation within the population, commonly focus on knowledge gains, skill gains, disclosures, negative effects, perceptions of risk and intended behaviours (Smallbone et al, 2008, p139; Barron & Topping, 2008). Studies suggest participation in prevention programmes can lead to increases in children’s knowledge about sexual abuse (Krivacska, 1992 reported in Taal & Edelaar, 1997, p399; see review by Barron & Topping, 2008; see commentary by Finkelhor, 2009, p180); increase in skill gains (Finkelhor et al, 1995, p129); and knowledge of appropriate behaviours (Barron & Topping, 2008). Meta-analytic studies indicate that, overall, children participating in prevention programmes perform better on knowledge outcome measures than children who do not get the programmes (Davis & Gidycz, 2000; Rispens et al, 1997). However, such studies leave unaddressed the question of whether improving knowledge, attitudes, communication and confidence effectively reduces victimisation. The use of such outcomes as indicators of effectiveness in reducing victimisation rests on several questionable assumptions:

- Gains in knowledge and attitudes trigger the implementation of risk-avoidant actions.
- Child reports of taking risk-avoidant actions are accurate.
- Taking risk-avoidant actions effectively lowers the likelihood of victimisation.

However, evaluations of prevention programmes suggest that:

- Improved understanding does not always lead to an increase in actions, which in theory reduce the risk of abuse (Stillwell et al, 1988).
- Taking risk-avoidant action to guard against threats or attempted assault does not always stop abuse from occurring (Finkelhor et al, 1995).
- Children and young people who understand prevention messages can go on to be sexually abused (Pelcovitz et al, 1992).

The lack of evidence for demonstrating the impact of education on prevention has led to the recommendation that, while education is a good in itself, it should not be labelled as preventative (Eaton and Holmes, 2017, pp57–60; Eaton, 2017). Furthermore, the setting of objectives for children and young people within educative initiatives, which assume that it is within the power of children and young people to avoid exploitation, such as ‘keep safe work’ and ‘making safe choices’, have been criticised for:
• Assuming children and young people have the capacity to protect themselves from people interested in abusing them (Smallbone et al, 2008, p53; Eaton and Holmes, 2017).

• Failing to address the fact that emotional, economic and physical dependency on the abuser, together with limitations in physical and mental development, can stop children and young people from being able to recognise and resist attempts at abuse (Kaufman et al, 2006).

• Giving children and young people the impression that they would be to blame were they to become exploited (Eaton, 2017a).

Despite these concerns and criticisms the question of whether educative work has a preventative role remains an open one. It is conceivable that education could help some children and young people in some situations to take actions to avoid or extricate themselves from situations where the risk of exploitation is heightened.

Effectiveness of professional responses to concerns about sexual exploitation

No impact studies have been carried out to test the effectiveness of professional responses on children and young people. However a relatively small amount of qualitative data has been produced, based on case studies and interviews with professionals and children and young people, which give some insight into the effectiveness of the different methods. The following section presents the findings from this research, under the headings of engagement, risk reduction and responding to concerns about harm.

Engagement

Key findings from the research on effectiveness in engaging children and young people are that:

• Relationship-building approaches can foster engagement.

• Abstentionist approaches and approaches that seek disclosures can lead to children and young people disengaging with professionals. (Hallett, 2015; Pearce, 2006, p328; Thomas & D’Arcy, 2017, p1,701; Gilligan, 2016; Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p304; Lefevre et al, 2017, p2,466; Hallett, 2013).

Feedback from children and young people suggested that engagement could take up to two years to achieve, because it could take children and young people a long time before they were willing to trust an adult professional (Gilligan, 2016, p211). Professionals have fed back that:
• Time is needed to learn about how best to communicate with children and young people and help them feel safe, which requires an understanding of their patterns of behaviour (Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,465).

• This in turn requires spending time with children and young people in informal settings, such as going for a walk or to a cafe and talking about ‘everyday’ issues (Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,465).

• Offering children and young people choices on the nature, location and direction of the work encourages engagement (Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,466).

• Being available to talk to the child or young person when they need it, in contrast to setting fixed appointments, can promote engagement (Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,466).

Outcomes and risk reduction
The Walker et al (2019) review found that evaluation studies, drawing on qualitative data, documented service users reporting positive outcomes as a result of accessing one-to-one work. Outcomes that improved included increases in awareness of child sexual exploitation, changes in knowledge and attitudes, and improvements in health and wellbeing. However, services that aimed to reduce the risk of exploitation did not seek to study the impact of the work on the risk of exploitation or the incidence of it. Some quantitative data were collected by studies on the risk of exploitation, but where this happened the number of children and young people who completed measures was small – between 11 and 20. In one study a practitioner fed back that being able to listen to the child or young person, and get them to a point where they realised that they had been groomed and exploited, helped reduce the risk of exploitation (Harris et al, 2017, p34). In another study, removal of a child from a home was felt to have saved their life, although no detail was given on why (Lefèvre et al, 2017, p2,466).

Responding to concerns about harm
Research findings suggest that child protection procedures do not always get triggered when concerns are raised about sexual exploitation. In 2014 an Ofsted review found that child protection processes were not always implemented when professionals identified children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation (Ofsted, 2014, p4). Research published a year before the Ofsted review found that the needs of young people over the age of 14 could be responded to without taking formal child protection procedures (Gorin & Jobe, 2013).
Services

*Implementation and engagement*

The recent review commissioned by the NSPCC concluded that there was a dearth of evidence on the implementation of sexual exploitation services and the effectiveness of engagement techniques. In particular, it found that there was a lack of evidence on:

- The detail of the intervention models used to plan interventions.
- How interventions were delivered in practice.
- Referral processes, referral types and numbers.
- Allocation processes and the difference between the children and young people who were allocated to the service and those who were not. (Walker et al, 2019)

*Attrition*

The review found that only three of the 28 services identified by the review reported on service attrition. Evaluation attrition rates were reported on in six of the 20 studies. However, when attrition was reported on, it was not accompanied with data on the reasons for attrition or on which types of group experienced most attrition (Walker et al, 2019).

*Assessment tools and assessment*

The review found a range of assessment tools being used by services focused on working with children and young people affected by exploitation. However, it found that the studies identified did not include information on how these assessments informed intervention planning (Walker et al, 2019). Neither was information provided on the involvement of children and young people in assessment (Walker et al, 2019). In 2017, a piece of research was published based on feedback from professionals who had had experience in completing assessments. It found that risks posed to children and young people could be missed if insufficient information had been gathered (Brown et al, 2016, p6). The authors noted that some tools did not allow the inclusion of a narrative, which was felt to be a weakness given that narratives enabled an understanding of risk and protective indicators (Brown et al, 2016, p6).
The Protect & Respect programme

The NSPCC’s history in providing sexual exploitation services

The development of the Protect & Respect programme had its roots in work that the NSPCC had been doing to help children affected by exploitation, which stretched back to the 1990s. In 1995, the NSPCC established the London Refuge for Runaway Children (Heathcoate, 2000; Rees et al, 2009, p49), which involved work with young women who appeared to be “selling sex” or who were vulnerable to sexual exploitation (NSPCC, 2001; 2010). This led, in 1999, to the development of two London-based services supporting young women affected by sexual exploitation (NSPCC, 2000, 2001; 2004; 2006; 2007). The projects provided one-to-one work, group work and outreach, as well as training to professionals. In 2011, a decision was made to reshape the organisation’s provision of sexual exploitation services, in response to the following strategic objectives adopted in 2009 (NSPCC, 2009):

1. To develop learning about what was effective in working with children and young people from minority ethnic communities. With the NSPCC’s first sexual exploitation service focused on children and young people from ethnic minority communities, it was assumed that the new service would be provided to a large number of users from ethnic minority communities, and so would help develop the evidence base for what worked with children and young people from ethnic minority communities.

2. To create and test innovative services, where the evidence base was weak but where there was interest from government and commissioners. While sexual exploitation had received a large amount of attention from the media and government, there was little evidence on the effectiveness of service responses.

3. To improve the UK child protection system by identifying effective intervention models, which service providers could use to benefit the children they worked with. The NSPCC wanted to design and deliver standardised models of intervention and then subject those models to impact studies.

Set against this context, a decision was taken to create a standardised intervention model for working with children and young people affected by sexual exploitation. A long-term aspiration was to subject the model to an impact study. The new service was designed and rolled out in 2011 and was named ‘Protect & Respect’. It was delivered from several service centres in England.
The development of the Protect & Respect service and programme

Initially, ‘Protect & Respect’ was the name given to the single service and intervention model developed in 2011. However, in 2013 a decision was taken to expand the service into a programme of services. This decision was taken on the basis of a review of the service, which had concluded that:

• The service was dealing with a large range of need, from children and young people vulnerable to exploitation to children and young people being exploited.
• The model guide for the service did not give sufficient guidance on how to tailor responses to different levels of need.
• Given the NSPCC’s aspiration to conduct an impact study on an intervention model, it was felt that a suitable way forward would be to categorise the main types of need, create an intervention model for each type of need, and then conduct an impact study on each model.

In May 2014, a new ‘Protect & Respect’ programme was launched, consisting of five different intervention models, including group work and one-to-one work.

Group work guidance

Protect & Respect group work was intended for ‘small gathering[s]’ of children and young people, between the ages of 11 and 19, who were vulnerable to sexual exploitation, but for whom there were ‘no specific concerns of exploitation’ (NSPCC, 2014a, pp13–18). The aim of group work was to reduce the likelihood that the child or young person would be exploited in the medium to long-term, by improving children and young people’s ability to take actions that helped lower their exposure to situations and relationships, where there was a heightened risk of exploitation (NSPCC, 2014a, p18). A semi-structured model of group work was detailed in the first service guide (NSPCC, 2014a). NSPCC practitioners were instructed to deliver six weekly sessions with key topics to be covered in each session:

1. Week 1: Introduction to sexual exploitation and the legal concept of a child.
2. Week 2: Sexual exploitation, relationships, consent, domestic abuse and drugs and alcohol.
3. Week 3: Grooming.
4. Week 4: The push and pull factors of exploitation.
5. Week 5: Healthy relationships.
One to one work guidance

One-to-one work was to be provided to children and young people between the ages of 11 and 19 (NSPCC, 2012) who were ‘ready to engage’ with the practice model (NSPCC, 2012). Following allocation, the practitioner was expected to spend:

- The first six weeks engaging the child or young person and completing an assessment.
- The next three to six months delivering the agreed intervention work plan with the child or young person.

Assessment was to involve the administration of two self-report measures, measuring the wellbeing and traumatic symptomology of the child or young person. Assessment was also to involve the completion of a risk assessment tool, which required that the child or young person and the practitioner assess risks posed across 17 areas of life (see Appendix B). At the end of the assessment, the NSPCC practitioner was expected to provide a total score for the risk of exploitation posed to the child or young person. The practitioner was expected to use the score as a guide, and together with other information, reach decisions on:

- Whether the child or young person was being exploited.
- The extent to which they were at risk of exploitation.
- Which, if any, of the four types of ‘one-to-one’ service was appropriate to their needs.

If a decision was reached that one of the one-to-one services was appropriate, the NSPCC practitioner was expected to devise an intervention plan, in consultation with the child or young person, to address those needs. When planning and delivering intervention work, NSPCC practitioners were expected to do so in line with guidance that had been issued for each of the four types of one-to-one work (NSPCC, 2012; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d). Each guide recommended several approaches, including socio-educative work, resilience work, rights and advocacy work and therapeutic approaches:

- Socio-educative work was described as work done with ‘young people’s thinking or cognitions (NSPCC, 2014a, p3). The guide suggested a range of topics and a ‘socio-educative session plan’ (see Appendix E). Topics to be covered were grooming, consent and healthy relationships, gangs and recruitment, technology and substance misuse. The guide instructed NSPCC practitioners to use the work ‘to help the young person recognise the deliberate nature of the targeting and grooming that is so indicative of exploitation’ (NPSCC, 2014a, p3).
• Resilience work was described as work done to ‘positively influencing a young person’s coping strategies’ (NSPCC, 2014a, p12). The guide suggested a range of topics to be covered in a Resilience Session Plan (see Appendix E). Topics to be covered included coping, self-image, identity, confidence and positive attributes (NSPCC, 2014a, p41).

• Rights and advocacy work was focused on emphasizing to children and young people that being at risk of exploitation did not mean that they had ‘bad’ or criminal behaviour and that the responsibility for exploitation lay with the abuser (NSPCC, 2014b, p9). NSPCC practitioners were required to help children and young people ‘speak out’, express their view, defend their rights, access information and services, and explore choices and options (NSPCC, 2014b, pp10-11).

• A range of therapeutic approaches were recommended. These included creative therapies (Axline, 1964), symbolic play (Goodyear-Brown, 2009), motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick, 2012), cognitive behavioural therapy (Cohen et al, 2010) and trauma focused play therapy (Gil, 2006) (NSPCC, 2014b, pp13-24; NSPCC, 2014d, pp23-24).

Service delivery in numbers

In the period covered by the evaluation, between June 2014 and November 2017, 15 NSPCC service centres delivered Protect & Respect services across England and Wales. Each service centre had:

• A service manager with overall responsibility for the service.
• One or more team managers with operational responsibility for the service.
• A team of NSPCC practitioners who delivered the service.

During the period covered by the evaluation:

• 195 members of staff were allocated to work with one or more children and young people on the Protect & Respect programme.
• 2,273 children and young people were recorded as having been referred to the service.
• Where the gender of the children and young people referred to the service was known, around 90 per cent were female:
  – 1,920 were girls.
  – 279 were boys.
• 1,728 children and young people were recorded as having been allocated to an NSPCC practitioner to do one-to-one work or group work:
  – 1,014 were accepted for one-to-one work.
  – 714 were accepted for group work.
A note on language

Use of the term ‘children affected by exploitation’

The Protect & Respect programme covered services focused on prevention, risk reduction, child protection and recovery. In some parts of the report, reference is made to children who receive any services covering these areas. Where this is the case, the children are referred to as ‘children affected by exploitation’.

Vulnerability and risk

The concepts of vulnerability and risk were central to the implementation of the Protect & Respect programme. Two of the programme’s services were focused on meeting the needs of children and young people who were considered vulnerable to exploitation and one of the services was designed to meet the needs of children and young people who were at risk of exploitation. In this way, the programme guidance drew a clear distinction between children and young people who were vulnerable to sexual exploitation and children and young people who were considered at risk of exploitation:

• Children and young people who were vulnerable to exploitation but not at risk of exploitation were considered to be those who had some characteristic or condition, which meant they were more likely to be exploited in the long-term, although they were not deemed to be involved in situations or relationships that suggested they were about to be exploited.

• Those who were deemed to be ‘at risk’ were those who were involved in a relationship or situation where there was felt to be a heightened risk of exploitation in the immediate future. The term ‘at immediate risk’ was sometimes used by programme staff in addition to ‘at risk’ to refer to this type of risk. Although the term ‘at immediate risk’ together with the term ‘at risk’ implied the child or young person was more likely to be exploited in the short-term, the guidance did not indicate the period of time that was indicated by these terms.

While this evaluation report attempts to understand how NSPCC practitioners used and worked with the categories of vulnerability and risk defined by the guidance, the report also uses the terms ‘being at risk of exploitation in the short-term’ and ‘being at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term’. In some cases, it makes reference to involvement in situations or relationships that ‘heightened the risk’, with the implication being ‘risk in the short-term’.
The use of ‘being at risk of exploitation in the short-term’ is preferred to the term ‘at risk’ or ‘at immediate risk’, which was often used by programme staff. While risk itself cannot be qualified by time, the type of experience to which the risk refers can be. This means the description ‘being at immediate risk’ does not convey what is intended when the phrase is used. If use of the word ‘immediate’ is to be used, a more suitable wording would be ‘at risk of being exploited in the immediate future’. Use of the term ‘being at risk of exploitation in the short-term’ is preferred in this report. Furthermore, use of the term ‘being at risk of exploitation in the short-term’ is preferred over the term ‘being at risk’ when used to refer to risk in the short-term, because the term ‘at risk’ could also be used to refer to the risks of exploitation in the medium to long-term.

The use of ‘being at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term’ was used because NSPCC practitioners talked about children and young people who were not at risk of exploitation in the immediate future or short-term but who, if nothing was done to intervene, were at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term. For example, one practitioner talked about how a young person, who was safe from exploitation because work had been done to improve the care and nurturing received from a carer, had increased chances of being exploited in the next six months because the conditions within the family were likely to deteriorate once the practitioner had stopped supporting the young person’s carers.

‘Risk of being exploited in the medium to long-term’ was also a useful concept for understanding the aim of the preventative one-to-one work. The preventative work, while directed at children and young people who were classified as being ‘vulnerable’ but ‘not at risk’ was expected to ensure that children and young people’s score on the programme’s risk assessment tool remained low. The assumption was that the risk assessment tool would provide an indicator of the likelihood of the child or young person being exploited in the medium to long-term. This report’s use of the term ‘being at risk in the medium to long-term’ covers some of what the programme guidance meant by the term ‘vulnerability’. This report prefers use of the term ‘being at risk in the medium to long-term’. This is because the term ‘vulnerable’ could also include children and young people who were not at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term, but who did have a characteristic that, were they not receiving support, would have made them more likely to be exploited.

The terms ‘being at risk of exploitation in the short-term’ and ‘being at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term’ were used in conversations with practitioners without being strictly qualified by a specification of the time period. It is nevertheless suggested that the terms presented in this report, in line with the understandings that
implicitly underpinned the report author’s use of them, are understood as having the following qualifications:

- ‘Being at immediate risk’ or ‘at risk’ or ‘at heightened risk of exploitation in the short-term’ should be taken to mean having an increased chance of exploitation happening within the next month when compared with the average child or young person.
- ‘Being at risk in the medium to long-term’ should be taken to mean being judged to have an increased chance of exploitation happening within the next six months (i.e. in the medium term) or any time up to the end of the child or young person’s childhood (i.e. in the long-term), when compared with the average child or young person.

The evaluation

Evaluation aims

The aim of the evaluation was to study:

- The implementation of the Protect & Respect programme, its services and the attempt to conduct an impact study.
- The work done between NSPCC practitioners, children and young people, carers and professionals.
- The challenges to preventing and reducing the risk of exploitation and what professionals, carers and children and young people did to address those challenges.
- The patterns of service and evaluation attrition and the reasons for attrition.

Data collection methods

A mixed method approach was taken to data collection. Qualitative data were collected from interviews and a study of case file notes. Two types of interview were conducted:

- Overview interviews, which sought to gain a general view of the themes and issues that staff, children and young people and family members had experienced.
- Case-focused interviews on the work done between an NSPCC practitioner and a particular child or young person.

The need to draw a distinction between the overview and case study interviews came about as a result of a discussion with the NSPCC’s Research Ethics Committee. The Research Ethics Committee instructed the evaluator to only discuss individual cases with practitioners where the people involved in the case consented.
NSPCC practitioners had worked on cases, in which a child or young person had not consented, the evaluator was permitted to collect feedback on the general issues that had come up over the cases but without specific reference being made to individual cases themselves.

64 overview interviews were conducted with NSPCC staff and members of staff from partner agencies (see Table 1). Partner agency interviewees included local authority child sexual exploitation coordinators, police officers, school staff and a care home manager. Overview interviews with NSPCC practitioners could be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting. Groups could be composed of NSPCC practitioners from one service centre or from across several centres.

Table 1: Number of overview interviews conducted as part of the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC manager</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC administrator</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff working for partner agency</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Group</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff from the same Service Centre</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff from across several Service Centres</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22 case-focused interviews were also conducted with NSPCC staff, staff from partner agencies and children and young people (see Table 2). Where the child or young person had consented to a ‘case-focused’ interview, they also had the choice of consenting to the evaluator reviewing the case file notes that the NSPCC practitioner had written on the work with them. Data were collected from 12 cases of group work and nine cases of one-to-one work. Interviews were conducted with 10 children, nine girls and one boy.

Table 2: Number of case-focused interviews and analysis of case notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case-focused work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of case file notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the child/young person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the NSPCC practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with a worker from a referring agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative data included data on the characteristics and needs of children and young people, their progress through the service and evaluation, and on outcomes. Demographic data were collected on all 2,273 cases referred for Protect & Respect work. Service attrition information was available for 95 per cent of these cases (n=2,166). Data on outcomes were collected using outcome measures, which were administered at different points during the service.

In group work data on wellbeing were collected via the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) (Better Outcomes Now, 2018) at the beginning (data collected at this point is referred to as Time 1 in Table 3) and end of the service (data collected at this point is referred to as Time 2 in Table 3). Over the course of the evaluation period, just over half of all the children and young people who had attended at least one session of group work were recorded as having completed a Time 1 measure, and one third had completed both a Time 1 and a Time 2 measure (see Table 3).

Table 3: Completion of Outcome Rating Scale measure for users of the Protect & Respect group work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Number of Users Completing the Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 and Time 2</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In one-to-one work, the plan was for data to be collected on:

- Wellbeing, through the administration of the Outcome Rating Scale (Better Outcomes Now, 2018).
- Trauma, through the administration of the Child Report of Post-Traumatic Symptoms (CROPS) (Greenwald and Rubin, 1999; Greenwald, 2005).
- Risk, through the administration of the Outcome Measurement Tool.

Data were collected at eight time points:

- At the beginning of the assessment.
- At the end of the assessment.
- At the beginning of the implementation of the intervention work plan.
- 90 days into the implementation of the intervention work plan.
- At the end of the implementation of the intervention work plan.
- 1 month after the end of the work.
- 3 months after the end of the work.
- 6 months after the end of the work.
In practice data collected at 90 days into the implementation of the intervention work plan and follow-up data were not collected in great amounts, so those data were excluded from this report. The data included in this report were those collected at:

- The beginning of the work, referred to in this report as Time 1.
- The end of the assessment work, Time 2.
- The beginning of the intervention work, Time 3.
- The end of the intervention work, Time 4

Table 11 in Appendix D details the completion rates of the outcome measures used in the one-to-one work. It compares the number of measures that could have been completed with the number of measures that were completed. The table also looks at the number of cases where enough data were collected to allow for a measure of change. Across all cases, a measure of change was possible in less than 50 per cent of cases:

- In 42 per cent of cases, it was possible to measure change in wellbeing.
- In 23 per cent of cases, it was possible to measure change in traumatic symptomology.
- In 21 per cent of cases, it was possible to measure change in professionals’ rating of the risk of sexual exploitation.
- In 5 per cent of cases, it was possible to measure change in children and young people’s rating of the risk of sexual exploitation.

Strengths and limitations of the study methods
The qualitative data collected from NSPCC practitioners, foster carers, children and young people and external partner organisations provided this study with insight into how the service was experienced by those who delivered, received and managed it. However, there are several limitations of the study design:\footnote{A detailed explanation of these limitations is provided in Appendix C, which describes the methodology used to evaluate the group work, and Appendix D, which describes the methodology used to evaluate the one-to-one work.}

- The representativeness of the data. The data collected in this report is representative of:
  - Girls rather than boys, because most of the service users were girls (Williams, 2019a; 2019b).
  - Children and young people under the age of 16, because most of the service users were under the age of 16 (Williams, 2019a; 2019b).
The NSPCC’s Protect & Respect child sexual exploitation programme

• White British children, because most of the service users were White British (Williams, 2019a; 2019b).

• The experiences of particular service centres. Certain service centres provided more outcomes data and more interviewees and case studies for the evaluation (see Appendices C and D for more details).

• Adult perspectives rather than the perspectives of children and young people. A total of 76 interviews were conducted with staff or staff groups, while only 10 interviews were conducted with children and young people.

• Participants who felt positive towards the service. The children and young people and adults who participated in the service generally felt positive about it and volunteered their time to feedback about the service.

• The limitation of qualitative interview data. While interview data can provide rich insight into how and why things happen, such accounts may not be accurate (Powney & Watts, 1987). Inaccurate perceptions can result from a limited ability to recognise and understand one’s own behaviour and the behaviour of others (Wegner & Vallacher, 1977; Caudle, 1994). Inaccurate perceptions can also result from a preference for seeing the world and oneself in a particular light (ten Have, 1999) or from feeling a pressure to paint a picture of the world in a particular way to gain the approval of others.

• The utility of the quantitative data that was collected, owing to the large variation in the way in which group work and one-to-one interventions were provided, and in the large amount of service and evaluation attrition in measure data. The high levels of evaluation attrition meant that, in one-to-one work, only one fifth of the children and young people who completed an intervention completed a ‘before and after’ service measure. The results from this fifth of service users would have been unlikely to be representative of the service users more widely.

• The accuracy of the quantitative data, owing to ways in which measures were administered and the measure data were recorded and collated. More detail is provided in Appendices C and D.

• The extent to which the study was able to address the question of whether group work and one-to-one work could prevent child sexual exploitation or lower the risk of exploitation. Given the challenges in delivering the one-to-one work model and in collecting data, this study needed to rely on the perspectives of
NSPCC practitioners, children and young people and external professionals to provide answers on the question of effectiveness. In practice, interviews were conducted quite soon after the one-to-one work had finished, which meant not enough time had passed for participants to understand whether children and young people’s risk had increased or decreased as a result of the work.

Analysis

A thematic analysis was carried out on the data collected in this project. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were developed around the establishment, implementation and experience of different stages of the delivery of the Protect & Respect group work and one-to-one services, and the impact that it had on the lives of the children and young people and foster carers who accessed the service.

Report structure

The rest of this report is dedicated to detailing the key findings from the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme. The next chapter explores the implementation of the Protect & Respect programme, looking at the key aims of the programme and its evaluation, what got implemented, what the challenges were to implementation and the attempts made to overcome those challenges. The third chapter draws on the key findings from the evaluation work that was done. It summarises the findings from two more detailed service evaluation reports (Williams, 2019a; 2019b). The discussion chapter draws a conclusion on what, from the perspective of the NSPCC staff, was felt to have worked in helping reduce the risk of exploitation. It also pays attention to the challenges of conducting impact studies on standardised intervention models and looks at alternative evaluation methodologies that could provide useful information on effectiveness.
Key Findings from the Introduction

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse (DFE, 2017). It is a process that involves the exchange of a resource for sexual activity with a child or young person.

In 2014, the NSPCC started an evaluation of its Protect & Respect programme of sexual exploitation services. The programme was provided from 15 service centres located in towns and cities in England and Wales.

The programme comprised five types of service delivered to children and young people aged 11 to 19. The NSPCC group work service was intended to deliver group work to children and young people who were considered to be vulnerable to exploitation but not at risk of being exploited in the short-term. Four NSPCC one-to-one work services were intended to support children and young people who were vulnerable to exploitation, at risk of exploitation, being exploited and in need of recovery from exploitation.

The evaluation of the programme sought to study programme implementation, the experience of delivering and receiving the services, the challenges to preventing and reducing risk and service and evaluation attrition.
Chapter 2: Key findings on programme implementation

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the key challenges that were faced in implementing the Protect & Respect programme and the attempts that were made to overcome those challenges. In particular, it describes how and why the programme was implemented in ways that departed from the programme requirements. Each section starts with a summary of programme requirements before moving on to discuss why, on occasion, they were not met. The programme requirements presented in this section are, in part, documented in:

- The model guides that were issued to staff at the beginning of the evaluation period (NSPCC 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d; 2017).
- Evaluation guidance and training documentation.
- Notes of meetings between programme staff.

The following points about programme development and the communications around it are significant for understanding how different understandings could develop:

- Some guidance described programme requirements differently. For example, by the end of the final year of the evaluation period, there were two sets of group work guidance, recommending different topics and approaches.
- Not all expectations and requirements were documented. One initial expectation, not documented, was that each service centre would provide the full range of services offered as part of the Protect & Respect programme. Modifications to the model guides, made in the course of meetings and discussions between programme staff, were not documented and did not result in revisions of the model guidance.
- The communication of expectations and requirements did not always reach all staff. Some staff did not receive model training, were not aware of the model guides, did not have frequent exposure to the model guides and did not receive news about modifications to programme requirements.
- Understanding of programme requirements could vary across managers and practitioners. For example, during the implementation of the programme, the guidance on who practitioners could do recovery work with was modified. While the original guidance had made it clear that recovery work could only be done if the child or young person was not at risk of exploitation,
practitioners were informed halfway through the programme that they could do recovery work with children and young people who were at risk of exploitation. However, despite this communication, one service centre manager continued to understand and communicate to staff the original guidance that recovery work could only be done if the child or young person was not deemed to be at risk of exploitation.

Varying understandings of programme requirements make it difficult to provide an authoritative and indisputable account of programme requirements and expectations. It is therefore important to point out that the summary of expectations and requirements provided in this report is based on the programme documentation and the author’s recollection and notes made on the modifications to those requirements during his involvement in the implementation of the programme and its evaluation.

Providing a ‘platform’ service

The Protect & Respect programme of service delivery consisted of the following five services:

- **Preventative group work**: reducing the risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term of children and young people judged to be vulnerable to exploitation but not at risk of exploitation in the short-term.

- **One-to-one preventative work**: reducing the risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term posed to children and young people judged to be vulnerable to exploitation but not at risk of exploitation in the short-term.

- **One-to-one risk reduction work**: reducing the risk of exploitation in both the short-term and medium to long-term posed to children and young people judged to be at risk of exploitation in the short-term.

- **One-to-one child protection work**: stopping the exploitation and reducing the risk of exploitation in both the short-term and medium to long-term posed to children and young people judged to be being exploited.

- **One-to-one recovery work**: Reducing the trauma and the risk of being exploited in the short-term and medium to long-term of children and young people traumatised because of a previous experience of exploitation.
One expectation held of service centres in the early days of the programme (not explicitly stated in the model guides) was that each centre was to provide services across the five areas of work. It was hoped that children and young people, in the areas where the Protect & Respect programme was being provided, who might need a range of interventions, could use the programme to access those services from the same centre. For example, a young person, who first needed a service to stop exploitation, might then need a service to help them recover from the effects of exploitation. It was also hypothesised that some children and young people, who might be referred to the service as in need of preventative work, may in actual fact be at risk of exploitation or be being exploited without professionals being aware. In cases such as these, the children and young people who were initially referred for a preventative service could, once the risks or experience of exploitation were identified, be transferred on to a risk reduction or child protection service within the same centre. Being enabled to access a range of services from the same centre, and in some cases, keeping the same practitioner during this journey, was felt would lower the stress that children and young people would otherwise feel having to become accustomed to a range of different service providers.

The provision of all five programme services from one service centre was referred to as the ‘platform’ service, with ‘platform’ being used as a metaphor, in part, to symbolise the sense of support and continuity that children and young people would feel as they moved from one service to another. It was felt that if the NSPCC could offer the ‘platform’ approach from its NSPCC service centres then it would be the first organisation to achieve such a broad range of services, focused on exploitation, from one single location. It was also felt that documenting and describing how a ‘platform service’ could be implemented would be useful information for other agencies interested in providing the same approach.

While the 15 NSPCC service centres delivering the Protect & Respect programme, collectively, delivered the five programme services, no single NSPCC service centre proactively sought to offer the complete range of services during the evaluation period. Provision tended to be focused on one or two services. In the first two years of the programme, while some service centres occasionally provided a recovery service to a child or young person, no service centre was proactive in encouraging referrals for a recovery service. Some centre staff would refer children and young people to a different service provider, if they had needs appropriate to one of the Protect & Respect services, that they were not focused on providing. Service centres were not able to deliver the ‘platform’ service because:
• Managers perceived that service centres did not have the capacity to deliver the full set of services.

• Service centres had preferences for delivering particular types of service. This could be based on:
  – Partner agency preferences. In some areas there was a local preference for referring children or young people who were known to be exploited or thought to be at risk of exploitation. In one centre area lack of appetite for group work amongst local schools and the local education authority meant that work was focused on providing one-to-one work.
  – Team members’ preferences and interests.
  – Concerns that NSPCC teams could not work safely with children who were considered to be at risk of exploitation in the short-term or who were being exploited. One Centre chose not to work with children and young people being exploited or who were deemed at risk of exploitation, because it was felt that they required a level of support that NSPCC workers, by the nature of their working hours (9-5), were not able to meet safely.
  – A perception that staff had not received sufficient training to deliver recovery work. One Centre did not provide recovery work because in the opinion of the managers the workers had not been sufficiently trained in therapeutic techniques.
  – A desire to meet an organisational expectation placed upon Service Centres to maximise the number of children and young people that they were seeing, which led to a preference for group work.

Preparing staff to deliver the programme

Accessing the Protect & Respect model training was a prerequisite of providing the Protect & Respect programme. Training was offered to staff on the Protect & Respect model and on working therapeutically with children and young people. However, in practice, not all staff who delivered Protect & Respect programme services received training on the model. Some practitioners felt they had not been equipped to deliver the therapeutic approaches and recovery work recommended by the model guides. When asked, as part of the evaluation, if they were aware of the model guides, some staff who were delivering the service said they were not, while others said they were aware of the model guides but reported that in practice they did not consult them when planning their work, as here:
“You’ve got… an intervention guide that people don’t look at, because actually about a third of it makes sense…. they’re not trained in some of the areas.”

NSPCC Service Centre Manager

The resources that were accessible to and used by NSPCC practitioners varied across service centres, who maintained their own separate resource banks.

The need for training had outstripped the capacity to provide that training and in practice, a rolling programme of training was required because:

- New NSPCC service centres were added to the programme during the course of the evaluation.
- There was a constant turnover of staff across service centres who were delivering the programme.

In practice, however, while several opportunities to receive training were provided, the capacity had not been put in place to deliver a rolling programme covering all new starters across England and Wales. That some NSPCC practitioners were not aware of the model guides can be explained in part because they had not attended the training. However, training was not the only means through which the practitioners could have been made aware of the guides. Both managers and practitioners acknowledged that they did not tend to make explicit reference to the model guides when planning their work with children and young people.

**Delivering the services according to the programme model**

During the course of the programme the group work and one-to-one work were not delivered in a manner that was consistent with the programme model. The delivery of group work could depart from programme requirements in the following ways:

- Children and young people at risk of being exploited or being exploited were allocated to group work. In one centre, staff completed group work with groups of boys who were referred and accepted for group work because they were felt to pose a risk of exploiting children and young people.
- The term ‘healthy relationships’ was preferred to ‘child sexual exploitation’ as a way of describing the focus of the group work.
• Children and young people were not always informed about the purpose of the group work and did not always feel free to say no to participation.

• The number of sessions held in each group could be higher or lower than the six sessions recommended by the programme guidance.

• In some groups practitioners preferred reflective discussion within the group over being able to cover all the topics in the model guide.

Reasons for the variation from the programme requirements around group work included:

• School staff and NSPCC staff had limited understanding and knowledge about the lives of the children and young people who were referred and allocated to the group work.

• Some NSPCC practitioners and school staff did not make a conceptual distinction between being vulnerable and being at risk of exploitation. Consequently in some cases children and young people at risk of exploitation were encouraged to attend the group work.

• Some NSPCC practitioners and school staff saw group work as a good way of providing a service to children and young people, who were experiencing a type of exploitation that it was felt Children’s Services would not respond to. In some cases, children and young people for whom there were concerns of exploitation in peer groups, via the sharing of naked images or in an online environment, were deemed to have needs suitable for group work.

• A perceived need amongst NSPCC workers for more than six sessions to cover the material they felt they needed to discuss with the group.

• NSPCC practitioners fearing that using the term ‘child sexual exploitation’ would put some young people off wanting to attend.

The delivery of one-to-one work could depart from programme requirements in the following ways:

• Children and young people were allocated to ‘one-to-one’ work without being ‘ready to engage’ with the assessment process, discussions about risk and sexual exploitation and seeing the practitioner on a weekly basis.
• The informed and freely given consent of the child or young person was not obtained prior to them being allocated to the service. When NSPCC practitioners started to engage with children and young people in these situations, they realised the child or young person had not been asked for their consent or had not felt free to turn the service down.

• Engagement took longer than two weeks to complete and sometimes up to six months.

• The child or young person was not always seen weekly during the work.

• An assessment was not always carried out prior to intervention work being provided. Sometimes, an assessment was not carried out at all. Other times, assessment and intervention work were carried out at the same time.

• Practice measures were not always administered and used.

• Assessment took longer than six weeks to complete. The average time taken to complete the assessment in the 304 cases where data were available was just under 12 weeks.

• Intervention work took longer than the six months to complete, with some cases taking up to two and a half years.

Reasons for the variation from the programme requirements around the one-to-one work included:

• The practice of allocating children and young people who were not ‘ready to engage’ with the assessment process, which had a knock-on impact on being able to conduct an assessment, administer practice measures and work within the time frames set by the programme model.

• The challenge and work required to engage Children’s Services and other agencies to support and protect the child or young person. This took time, which meant that more time was needed than recommended by the model to achieve professional engagement and deliver the assessment and intervention work plan.

• Professional judgement on the appropriateness of the model activities and time frame to the needs of the child or young person. Where children and young people had experienced what was to be considered an isolated incident of sexual exploitation or grooming, but had a supportive family and professionals, some NSPCC practitioners opted to provide a six-week period of work, where assessment and intervention were mixed together.
The delivery of an impact study evaluation

The Protect & Respect programme of services was established and delivered with the intention of conducting an impact study on the group work and one-to-one services. A first step towards conducting the impact study was an attempt at implementing the services in line with the model guidance and the administration of a set of standardised measures. It was felt that if the models could be delivered consistently and the measures administered then an impact study could be conducted with a control group.

A review of the programme’s development, one year into the evaluation, demonstrated that there was still much to do to get into the position of being able to deliver an impact study. The principal issues that persisted throughout the programme during the period subject to evaluation were:

- The five different services were not being delivered in a consistent manner or in a manner consistent with the requirements laid out in the model guides.
- There was a high level of service attrition and evaluation attrition, which meant that not enough users were completing the programme service and completing measures for an impact study.
- Problems with data entry. In some cases, measure data that had been collected was not entered into the evaluation data collection system or was entered incorrectly.

A variety of reasons were given for service and evaluation attrition. In summary, they can be grouped into the following themes:

- Consent and readiness to engage.
- The complexity of the evaluation, given the demands of the service.
- Concerns about the consequences of practitioners administering follow-up measures.
- A reluctance to collect outcome measure data.
- Grievances about the lack of organisational responsiveness to practitioner ideas and opinions.
- Data recording and collation problems.
- Lack of organisation around training.
- Lack of organisational leadership.
The practice of allocating children and young people to the programme who were not ready to engage with the requirements of the model made it difficult to deliver the service delivery model, which in turn made it difficult to deliver an impact study. Partly this was because some children and young people never completed the service and partly because some children and young people did not sign up to the evaluation. Some NSPCC staff reported that the more adversities that the child or young person was facing, the less likely they would be to want to participate in the evaluation. In other cases, where the child or young person had signed up to seeing the practitioner in principle but had wanted to focus on issues other than sexual exploitation and risk, practitioners would not mention the evaluation to the child or young person, and not attempt to complete the Outcome Measurement Tool or administer the other outcome measures for fear that to do so would lead to the child or young person disengaging.

NSPCC staff reported that the frequency, size and number of outcome measures created a large and complex burden to have to deal with. They mentioned that this burden could feel overwhelming when combined with:

- The complexity of the service model.
- The stresses brought about by the challenges of the work.
- The difficulty with meeting the service delivery model requirements.
- The fact that the work and models were new to staff.

“It’s a very structured evaluation for a service that isn’t very structured.”

NSPCC practitioner

Some staff reported how in some cases the feeling of being overwhelmed could lead to practitioners switching off and no longer trying to collect the measure data:

“I just don’t think people have embraced it. I don’t think people have really got a routine in place of how to ask for consent and really make sure that they get that consent and I think that perhaps as well, because it’s such a big new thing to get your head around, that getting your head round the whole… doing the work part, was enough.”

NSPCC practitioner
A further factor influencing measure data collection related to the relationship and communication between service centre staff and the organisation’s senior managers. A service centre manager observed that practitioners had felt they had not been listened to when they had voiced their concerns about the programme. As a result, the manager felt that practitioners, having concerns about the requirements for assessment and measure data, started to disengage with the requirement for collecting measure data for the purpose of evaluation. Another manager spoke about how communication between service centre staff and those involved in the coordination of the programme had stopped for a period, and how within this context “evaluation had taken a back seat”.

During the planning stages for the evaluation, and then during the delivery of the evaluation, NSPCC staff raised concerns about the requirement for NSPCC practitioners to visit children and young people after service delivery had come to an end, in order to collect outcomes data on wellbeing, risk and trauma. NSPCC practitioners did not want to, and in many cases did not, collect follow-up data with children and young people. This was for two reasons. First, they felt that returning to see the child or young person to collect personal information could lead to a situation that would cause distress to that child or young person. In particular, it was felt that it could lead to the child or young person disclosing information about current abuse and triggering an expectation of support that the practitioner would not be able to provide:

“I don’t want to go back into someone’s life and open things up and then not be able to offer the support around that.”

NSPCC practitioner

The second concern was that if practitioners were to return to administer outcome measures, it was anticipated that they could find that the child or young person was at risk of being exploited again. This in turn, it was felt, would require a large amount of support and advocacy work to ensure that appropriate safeguards be put in place. However, managers did not feel that organisational targets placed on service centres for seeing children and young people factored in the extra time that NSPCC practitioners might have to spend supporting the needs of children and young people. For this reason, they were reluctant for their staff to get involved in the collection of follow-up data.
Some NSPCC practitioners were said not to like collecting measure data generally:

“I don’t think anybody enjoys doing evaluation. It’s always seen as an onerous thing… It’s always seen as a backburner. It’s always seen as not the priority on the list. Service delivery comes first… and evaluation if there’s time, comes last.”

NSPCC administrator

Across several roles, staff acknowledged that service centres did not appoint a lead officer for monitoring and improving evaluation data collection:

“I was really busy doing other things, and that was not something that was on the top of my head.”

Team manager

One team manager talked about practitioners “losing their way” with the evaluation. Given that not all NSPCC practitioners were said to have enjoyed collecting outcome measure data, lack of leadership confounded the problem, with implications for the amount of measure data collected generally:

“I’ve come in and I’ve started supervising on this and realised [the team] are not even doing the evaluation [i.e. not using the outcome measures].”

Team manager

A proactive and confident administrative team could drive data collection, although in one service centre it was felt that where administrators took a lead, practitioners began to see evaluation as something that was ultimately the responsibility of the administrative team, i.e. it was not something they needed to take responsibility for. In some centres, administrators did not feel able to count on the support of the managers to ensure measure data were fed through and discrepancies resolved.

A further problem exacerbating evaluation attrition, related not to whether measure data were collected, but rather to how data were recorded and collated. Sometimes, NSPCC practitioners provided incorrect data on the measure or form. For example, in some cases the NSPCC practitioner indicated the wrong time point or put in the wrong date. NSPCC practitioners did not always complete the details on the measure forms, which meant that administrators who entered the details onto the computer system did not always understand which
time point the measure was for. In some cases, administrators found it difficult to get a response from NSPCC practitioners and so would make an educated guess, which sometimes turned out to be incorrect.

On other occasions, NSPCC practitioners completed the measure, but the data were not fed into the evaluation data collection system. In some cases, the NSPCC service centre manager perceived that the centre, given its other responsibilities, did not have the capacity to enter the measure data collected into the data collection system. Consequently not all the data that was collected for this evaluation was entered into the system.

Finally, a lack of organisation around training led to one case where staff in one service centre did not receive evaluation training and so were not in a position to implement the evaluation and collect data.

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**Key Findings from programme implementation**

Initial programme aspirations included delivering the full set of Protect & Respect services from each service centre, delivering services in a manner consistent with the service guides and conducting an impact study on each service.

In practice individual NSPCC service centres participating in the Protect & Respect programme focused on providing a selection of the programme’s services.

Programme services were not delivered consistently and delivery was not consistent with programme expectations.

Variation in service delivery, service attrition and evaluation attrition meant it was not possible to achieve the initial aspiration of conducting an impact study.

Barriers to delivering programme aspirations included a lack of capacity to deliver the full set of services and assumptions underpinning the programme not being upheld.

By the end of the first year of the programme the focus of the evaluation had switched to a study of programme implementation, the experience of delivering and receiving the services, the challenges to preventing and reducing risk and service and evaluation attrition.
Chapter 3: Key findings from the evaluation of the Protect & Respect services

Introduction
This chapter provides a summary of the key findings from the evaluation of the group work and one-to-one services. A more detailed presentation of the findings can be found in the separate service evaluation reports (Williams, 2019a; 2019b).

Key findings from the evaluation of the group work

Consent
Although informed consent was gained from many young people, not all children and young people were informed about the group work or given the choice of saying no to the work by school staff:

“The teacher said we would be doing it. I didn’t really think about [whether I wanted to attend or not] to be honest.”
Young Person

When NSPCC practitioners started to engage with children and young people in these situations, they realised the child or young person had not been asked for their consent or had not felt free to turn the service down. The school setting was a significant context, as children and young people were not used to feeling they could make such choices there. Some of the children and young people who had not been asked for their consent did subsequently consent when asked by NSPCC practitioners, although others did not and left the group. A further constraint to meaningful consent involved the barrier of language. NSPCC practitioners reported that carers who could not read English could not consent to the service, because consent was gathered via forms written in English.

Engagement
NSPCC practitioners found that children and young people engaged when the group work was based around a discussion of their lived experiences. The behaviour of some children and young people could be challenging, although some of these could still engage with the work. During the group work, children and young people contributed
accounts of their own experiences. They talked about experiences of sexual activity and relationships, abusive experiences and life in general. NSPCC practitioners noted that child sexual exploitation films were sometimes useful in engaging children and young people in discussions around the subject.

Children and young people’s experience of group work

NSPCC practitioners reported that children and young people could enjoy finding out about issues relating to sexual health, relationships and sex because they had not previously been able to discuss these topics with adults. Some enjoyed the opportunity to share personal experiences and problems – for some, the group represented the only opportunity they had for a safe space in which they could discuss their problems and issues without fearing condemnation or criticism:

“Loved it. They’re really nice and friendly. It was my happy place. I felt safe. They make you feel comfortable; I could talk if something was wrong.”

Young Person

Children and young people who disclosed exploitation or concerns were said by practitioners to have felt relieved by the end of the group because disclosing had allowed them to get a weight off their mind. Some children and young people were said not to have enjoyed the group work experience and had not engaged in the activities and discussions. NSPCC practitioners felt that smirking, laughing and giggling during discussions indicated embarrassment with the topics. Practitioners also felt that some children and young people could find it difficult to watch films of dramatised accounts of exploitation because the films prompted children and young people to come face-to-face with the risks they faced in their own lives.

Change, impact and effectiveness

NSPCC practitioners identified a range of outcomes for children and young people – although not all children and young people experienced change. Children and young people accessing group work were reported to have experienced positive improvements in:

- Understanding of a range of concepts including those relating to sexual exploitation.
- Awareness of the risks of exploitation and assault they had experienced in the past.
- Awareness of their vulnerability, fear and powerlessness in situations they had experienced.
• Ability to recognise anxiety and fear.
• Preparedness to take action to avoid situations where the risk of abuse was heightened or to lower risk where the risk was already heightened.
• Taking actions to reduce the risk of abuse, grooming and exploitation.

Aspects of group work that were felt to have improved outcomes were:

• Having the opportunity to hear other children and young people recount their experiences.
• Watching films dramatizing children and young people being groomed and exploited in situations, which reminded young people of situations that they had experienced or been involved in, e.g. being groomed whilst playing online video games.
• Listening to NSPCC practitioners explain how exploitation and grooming worked.
• Doing exercises that helped children and young people recognise anxiety and fear.
• Doing exercises that helped children and young people think through what could be done to help them exit situations where risks had been heightened.
• Being given a positive group experience, which allowed children and young people to feel the contribution they had made had been welcomed, and which gave them the opportunity to bond with other children and young people.

NSPCC practitioners were divided on whether the positive outcomes identified were enough to reduce the risk of exploitation. When practitioners felt group work had reduced the risk of exploitation, it was felt that this was because group work had helped children and young people:

• Become more aware of how grooming worked, which meant children and young people were better able to identify and respond to possible attempts at grooming.
• Become more aware of their vulnerability to exploitation or risk of being exploited, which meant they would be more sensitive to attempts at grooming.
• Develop expectations about healthy relationships and the right to consent, which meant they were more likely to avoid relationships that were controlling, abusive and exploitative.
• Be better able to recognise feelings of anxiety and fear, and better prepared to take action were they to find themselves in a dangerous situation, both of which meant they could identify dangerous situations that they needed to leave.

• Reduce the amount of personal information they made available on social media and/or become determined to reject offers of relationships from strangers online, both of which meant they could reduce the likelihood of being manipulated and groomed.

While NSPCC practitioners and children and young people felt that having the opportunity to learn about exploitation was a good thing, some raised doubts as to whether this could lower the risk of exploitation. It was felt that children and young people could not through their own volition effectively change the risk of exploitation to themselves, even if they had improved understanding and took risk-avoidant actions. Factors that influenced the risk faced by children and young people, which lay outside of the control of children and young people, and which was not felt to be affected by group work were:

• The widespread and constant harassment of girls by boys for naked images and sexual activity. While young girls could understand the concept of consent, they were, by being harassed, not in an environment that enabled them to exercise that consent.

• The normalisation and acceptance of sending, receiving and handling naked images among children and young people.

• The culture of attending parties and informal gatherings involving alcohol and inebriation, which were not supervised by responsible adults, where boys would wait until girls got drunk to assault them.

• Community and familial values that did not respect a female’s right to have her consent sought before sexual activity was initiated.

• Being neglected by carers, which meant the validation and acceptance provided by people who exploited them felt like the best thing on offer.

One practitioner reported that work she had done with one young person in a group work setting had led to the young person becoming wary about developing new relationships. The practitioner reported a general concern that the group work had the potential for triggering hypervigilance in children and young people, because the early steps in the ‘grooming line’ were similar to aspects of the development of a normal friendship (see Barnado’s, 2018a, p14 for information on the ‘grooming line’). This could lead to a situation where some children and young people could confuse the development of normal friendships for attempts at grooming.
Key findings from the evaluation of the one-to-one work

Consent

In some cases, children and young people were referred and allocated without being informed about the service and some did not feel free to turn the service down, as here:

“My worker said they were going to transfer me to the NSPCC to do work with them, that was it really...They didn’t tell me [what it would involve] to be fair. It wasn’t really a description. I remember a practitioner coming out to school and I didn’t know she was coming, I didn’t realise what was going on.”

Young person

During their initial visit the NSPCC practitioner could find carers and professionals insisting that the child or young person see the NSPCC practitioner. Some of the children or young people who had not originally been asked for their consent, did subsequently consent to the service when asked. There were other children and young people, however, who did not consent even after getting an allocated practitioner. The challenge of giving children and young people the right to turn down a service, or part of a service, was something that NSPCC practitioners could struggle with too. One challenge to gaining informed freely given consent that NSPCC practitioners identified was that children and young people could not, when they were referred, always fully comprehend the aims and nature of the service. NSPCC practitioners felt that the complexity of the service, the stresses of having to deal with adversity and abuse and an initial reluctance to talk about personal issues and child sexual exploitation, meant that not all children and young people were in a position to comprehend what was on offer.

A further challenge came when children and young people did not turn up to appointments or instructed the NSPCC practitioner that they did not want to see them. One practitioner view was that when children and young people did not turn up to appointments, this should be taken as an implicit withdrawal of consent to service, which in turn should be respected and lead to case closure. However another practitioner view was that the value of the work lay in the relationship that was developed, hence staff could persist over a period of weeks and months. In some of these cases it was felt that children and young people could value the fact that they had a worker, even when the child or young person did not turn up to appointments, and that with time, the feeling of being cared for by the worker, could lead to the child or young person attending.
Practitioners could find that children and young people did not want to discuss their personal experiences and the risks they faced. In some of these situations NSPCC practitioners would still try to have those discussions, in trying to meet the agency expectations to complete the service assessment within the first 6 weeks. On reflection, practitioners who reported these experiences, felt they had made the wrong choice and needed instead to work to the pace and focus of the child or young person.

In one one-to-one case the practitioner explained that consent had not been obtained from the child or young person because she did understand English very well, had learning difficulties and the practitioner had not been able to get access to an interpreter.

Engagement between children and young people and NSPCC practitioners

There were several aspects of the working relationship between the child or young person and the NSPCC practitioner, where work was done to promote engagement:

- Agreeing on a time and a place to meet.
- Establishing a common language through which to communicate.
- Being physically and emotionally responsive to one another.
- A willingness to engage in the activities set out in the assessment.
- Agreement over the type of support that should be offered by the practitioner to the child or young person.
- Acceptance of concerns about sexual exploitation.
- Involvement in activities set out by the practitioner to address concerns about exploitation.

Several challenges were identified that made it difficult to achieve these types of engagement. These can be summarised as:

- Children and young people feeling compelled to see the NSPCC practitioner.
- Children and young people not being able to or not wanting to see the NSPCC practitioner.
- The NSPCC being unable to provide a practitioner to work with the child or young person.
- Children and young people preferring drop-in arrangements rather than appointments.
- A need for support outside of NSPCC service centre working hours.
• Demands made on the time of children and young people by other people and events.

• Disaffection for professionals.

• Discomfort with talking about issues to do with sexual exploitation, abuse and risk.

Where children and young people felt compelled to attend, they could minimise the emotional and mental investment in the work. These experiences highlighted how even when NSPCC workers provided children and young people with the freedom to say no to seeing them, expectations placed on the child or young person by carers and referring professionals could mean that they only reluctantly saw the worker. Where children and young people could not or did not want to see the practitioner, the practitioner spent more time working with professionals and family members, rather than with the child or young person. In some cases, when the NSPCC was unable to provide a practitioner to work with the child or young person (which could happen when the practitioner was ill, went on leave or when the centre was closed down), it meant that the child or young person had to wait to see their practitioner or the case was closed.

Children and young people sometimes wanted to see a practitioner by dropping in at the service centre and without booking an appointment. To cater for this, one centre had made an informal commitment to see children and young people when they dropped in. Reliance on appointments did not work for children and young people who did not have the habit of diarising appointments and did not have someone who could remind them of their appointments. Some children and young people wanted support outside of the 9am–5pm weekday working hours. Some turned up at the centre at closing time. Others contacted the NSPCC practitioner by text or telephone. In response, some practitioners engaged with children and young people out of normal working hours.

A child or young person’s capacity to see the practitioner could sometimes be diminished by the demands made on that child or young person by people who were exploiting them, by professionals and as a result of family crises. Practitioners attempted to engage children and young people with limited time by reducing the length of sessions. Practitioners also went out to meet children and young people wherever they were, whenever they indicated they had a small amount of time free. Another method was to move the child or young person into safer accommodation, which helped move them out of relationships and situations that placed demands on their time.
NSPCC practitioners reported that children and young people could feel disaffected with professionals and would test the practitioner to see how they responded and if they were committed. Tests would include not turning up to appointments, being hostile towards the practitioner and leaving appointments earlier than planned (similar findings are reported in Harris et al [2017, pp34-5]). Practitioners would respond by persevering with the child or young person and sending them text messages to demonstrate that they were thinking about them. To win the affection of the child or young person, practitioners would advocate for them in meetings with professionals, show an interest in their life, suggest activities that were sensitive to their mood and in this situation, use humour:

“The practitioner is funny as well, so, like, when, like, we talk about stuff, you can tell it’s getting a bit deep, he’ll make a little joke out of it, which is good ‘cos it makes you realise it’s not that serious...older people can manipulate you and it’s easy for them to get into your head, so we’ll talk, he’s like making out it’s not my fault and he’s just chilled, you know how some people are intense, like asking you questions and then, like, trying to write it all down, like he’s more chilled and relaxed.”

Young person

Children and young people experiencing exploitation or involved in situations and relationships that heightened the risk of exploitation could face a range of abuses and adversities. Not all children and young people who were allocated to the service felt comfortable talking about their personal experiences of sexual abuse or risk. In some cases, practitioners used self-report measures or physical ‘props’ to help the child or young person communicate feelings and describe their life. In other cases, children and young people just wanted to spend time with the practitioner; while others wanted support on particular issues not relating to exploitation. Where this was the case, NSPCC practitioners:

• Spent more time at the beginning of the work, building a relationship with the child or young person and discussing and working on the things that were important to them.

• Avoided explicit mention and discussion of sexual exploitation and risk. Use of the word ‘sexual exploitation’ to describe the service and in discussion with children and young people could be avoided, in preference for terms like ‘healthy relationships’, ‘working together’ and ‘risks’.
Avoided focusing assessment discussions on whether the child or young person had been exploited, was being exploited or was at risk of exploitation.

Assessment

When conducting assessments, NSPCC practitioners drew on information from children and young people, professionals, professional reports and family members.

Assessment focus

Not all assessments were focused on establishing whether children and young people had been or were being sexually exploited. Some assessments contained their focus to the 17 areas of risk detailed in the Outcome Measurement Tool (Appendix B). Where assessment was conducted on the risk of exploitation, this could cover:

• The risk in the short-term, given the situations and relationships that the child or young person was currently involved in.
• The risk in the medium to long-term, taking into account the state of relationships in the family home, whether the child or young person was traumatised and whether they had experienced neglect.

In some cases, assessment, intervention planning and case closure were solely focused on risk of exploitation in the short-term, without consideration being given to risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term.

In attempting to understand why children and young people were at risk, practitioners focused on identifying any combination of:

• Factors that ‘pushed’ or ‘pulled’ children and young people into situations where exploitation was more likely.
• ‘Protective’ factors, present in the child or young person’s life, which helped lower the risk of exploitation.
• ‘Vulnerability’ factors, which were factors that were sometimes felt to increase the likelihood of children and young people being exploited over the medium to long-term.

Assessment accuracy

Where attempts were made to judge whether the child or young person was being exploited or at risk of being exploited, being able to arrive at an accurate judgement was helped when the child or young person could be open about what was going on in their life. Arriving at an accurate judgement could be difficult when:
• Children and young people did not want to talk about their personal experiences. NSPCC practitioners said that one of the reasons for this was that children and young people were facing danger, perceived that they had no way out but could not emotionally face up to this fact. Where this was the case, NSPCC practitioners prioritised getting the child or young person access to a nurturing relationship with an adult and disrupting perpetrators’ access to the child or young person. Once they were in a safe place and being nurtured by a carer, practitioners could start to talk with them about their experiences.

• Practitioners, attempting to complete the assessment within the six-week time period required by the model guide, did not have enough time to first establish a relationship with the child or young person. In some cases, it was felt that assessments were based on professional views and information, because the practitioner had been unable to spend much time with the child or young person.

• Practitioners received inaccurate information from professionals.

• The situations and relationships that a child or young person was involved with were complex. In some cases, it was felt that children and young people faced a heightened risk of exploitation in several different situations and from different groups that they interacted with. These situations were felt to change often, which meant the risk faced in each situation or with each group changed too.

• The indicators that practitioners used to estimate risk were poor indicators of risk.

NSPCC practitioners reported that sometimes the assessment process had not enabled them to arrive at an accurate judgement of the risks posed to children and young people. In some cases, practitioners had arrived at a conclusion that the child or young person was not at risk, to later find them reporting exploitation or leaving home without telling their parents of their whereabouts. Where NSPCC practitioners did not attempt to ascertain whether the child or young person was being exploited, or where they did not feel confident enough to reach a judgement, they remained uncertain on whether the child or young person had been, was being or was likely to be exploited. This made it difficult for them to reach a judgement on which of the four one-to-one services was most appropriate. This uncertainty could remain for the duration of the work with the child or young person.
Intervention planning

Practitioners took a variety of approaches to working with children and young people. Approaches used included:

• Goal-based work, which involved working on issues that were of concern to the child or young person, but which were not necessarily about sexual exploitation.

• Socio-educative work, which involved providing children and young people with information about how grooming and exploitation worked.

• Situational risk management, which involved supporting children and young people to think about what they could do to lower the risk of exploitation or assault in particular situations, real or imagined.

• Modelling a supportive caring relationship with the child or young person.

• Providing practical and emotional support when the child or young person experienced a crisis.

• Narrative-based identity work, which involved working with the child or young person to explore how they understood past events, how that understanding could impact on how they felt about themselves, and how these things could be changed for the better.

• Teaching children and young people about being able to recognise, articulate and respond to fear and emotions.

• Advocating for children and young people in meetings with professionals and service providers.

• Supporting children and young people through the process of taking an alleged perpetrator to court.

• Providing practical support, by taking children and young people to appointments, helping them to move house and to complete forms.

NSPCC practitioners often interwove several approaches. For example, socio-educative work was often interwoven into modelling a relationship and situational risk management. While practitioners created an intervention plan to be done with children and young people at the beginning of the intervention period, in practice the work they did could change and depart from that plan. Changes to or departures from the plan were triggered by circumstances that children and young people could find themselves in and by practitioners finding out more about the needs of children and young people as the work progressed.
Working together with professionals

The engagement of professionals in the safeguarding and supporting of children and young people was often felt to be a crucial element in helping reduce the risk of exploitation. Working together with professionals was something that could apply at all stages of the work:

- The work done between NSPCC practitioners and children and young people was often initiated as part of the development of multi-agency plans to address concerns about exploitation.
- During the work, NSPCC practitioners sought to engage professionals, because their support was deemed to be crucial in lowering the risk of exploitation for the child or young person.
- When cases were closed, NSPCC practitioners worked to ensure that children and young people who needed ongoing support received it through the provision of a multi-agency plan or a service.

The types of work NSPCC practitioners sought to engage professionals in included:

- Creating child protection plans or multi-agency sexual exploitation plans to manage the risks posed to the child or young person.
- Focusing multi-agency assessment, planning and service provision on whether the child, who was safe from exploitation in the short-term, might be at risk of exploitation in the long-term.
- Getting professionals to take actions that diminished the factors that both ‘pushed’ and ‘pulled’ children and young people into relationships, where the risk of exploitation was raised. This included:
  - Moving the child or young person to a safer environment.
  - Providing more support to the child or young person at school.
  - Providing support on drugs and alcohol.
  - Providing therapeutic support.
  - Providing support to address the neglect experienced by a child or young person.

NSPCC practitioners reported a range of challenges to achieving professional engagement, together with techniques that they used to attempt to overcome these challenges. Multi-agency groups of professionals sometimes focused their work on the question of whether the child or young person was at risk of exploitation in the short-term, neglecting the question of whether they were at risk in the medium to long-term. To counter this narrow focus, NSPCC practitioners wrote chronologies, based on case file reads, to widen the focus of assessment to factors that raised the child or young person’s risk of being exploited in the medium to long-term. In some cases, it
was felt that multi-agency groups of professionals reached judgements about the types of intervention that might help a child or young person’s situation, without addressing the question of why they might be involved in relationships or situations that heightened the risk of exploitation. In response, NSPCC practitioners could provide training for local authority professionals on sexual exploitation and the push and pull factors.

In certain cases, there was a professional view among Children’s Services departments that child protection plans did not apply to children and young people who were being sexually exploited, because they were only for:

- Families where the carers were not providing a sufficient amount of care and protection for their children in the home.
- Children and young people who were experiencing risks from known family members within the home.
- Children and young people who were under the age of 16.

In such cases, NSPCC practitioners needed to make the case that children and young people who were being exploited were being subject to abuse, and by definition required a child protection plan. NSPCC practitioners reported that getting the support of the police officer in the case for support to be provided by Children’s Services could help with engagement.

NSPCC staff also reported that a pressure to minimise expenditure and costs could lead to a tendency to want to close child protection plans once the NSPCC had agreed to provide a service or as soon as the NSPCC had stopped providing the service. To avoid the closure of child protection plans while the child or young person remained at risk, NSPCC managers made the provision of service conditional on the local authority keeping the child protection plan open. Sometimes, where Children’s Services were not taking the actions felt necessary to safeguard the child or young person, the case could be escalated to an NSPCC manager who would hold a discussion with an equivalent in the local authority. This evaluation did not study the discussions that took place and the issues that arose when concerns were escalated in this way.

On some occasions, where the NSPCC practitioner was not able to engage local authority professionals, they:

- Provided the support that it was felt local authority professionals should be providing.
- Kept cases open for a long time and until the point that the local authority was willing to become involved to help manage the risks posed to the child or young person.
Impact on risk

Introduction

In practice, the risk experienced by children and young people was said to fluctuate during the course of the work. It fluctuated in line with the different people and situations the child or young person encountered, and the events that took place within the family home and at school. NSPCC practitioners identified that the risk of exploitation could be reduced when the following happened:

- The child or young person experienced an improvement in the care received by a caring adult or other young person.
- Things were done to disrupt perpetrators’ ability to access children and young people.
- The child or young person was supported to take risk-avoidant actions.

Improving the care and nurturing received by a child or young person

The risk was felt to be reduced for children and young people when they experienced an improvement in the care and nurturing received by a caring adult or other young person. This could be brought about via:

- Improvement in the support from carers.
- Improvement in the relationship with the carers.
- Involvement in education and youth clubs.
- Improved relationship with friends.
- The development of a therapeutic relationship with the NSPCC practitioner.
- The development of a romantic relationship.

When children and young people experienced an improvement in the care and nurturing received, NSPCC practitioners felt this could help reduce risk in the following ways:

- The relationship reduced the child or young person’s dependency on alcohol and drugs, which reduced their motivation for entering into relationships that were exploitative but which had provided the child or young person with alcohol and drugs.
- The relationship was able to provide support to the child or young person at times of stress, enabling them to cope with the stress, which could lessen the likelihood of them entering into situations and relationships where the risk of exploitation was heightened.
• The relationship became a preferred relationship, which meant the child or young person saw less of the people who posed a risk of exploitation.

Disrupting perpetrators’ ability to access children and young people

Risks were also reduced when actions were taken to disrupt perpetrators’ ability to access children and young people. This could be brought about by:

• Removing the child or young person from their family home or accommodation (when they were already living in care). This could include moving them from one town to another.
• Escorting children and young people to and from school, and thus protecting them from people who they could meet in between the home and school who posed a risk.
• Introducing children and young people to activities supervised by responsible adults. For example time spent in the youth club, under the supervision of responsible adults, was felt to mean less time spent on the streets, where they could meet people who would be interested in exploiting them.

Encouraging risk avoidant actions

NSPCC staff felt risks were lowered when children and young people were supported to take risk-avoidant actions, including:

• Reducing involvement in relationships and situations where there had been a heightened risk of exploitation, control or abuse.
• Reducing their attempts to meet ‘new’ people.
• A reduction in the amount of personal information made available on social media accounts.
• Being assertive within relationships and when meeting new people for the first time:

  “I don’t go out on the street and look at everyone as a sex pest but if I go out on a night out and you get them idiot boys that come up to you and start flirting with you, I know when to say no. And I know how to be like ‘Move!’, do you know, like, ‘Just get gone! I don’t want to talk to you’. So there’s loads of things that I look out for.”

  Young person
Practitioners identified four steps that children and young people needed to be supported across to arrive at the point of being able to deploy risk avoidant actions, and things that could be done to help them to take these steps:

1. Increase understanding about key concepts around exploitation. The use of sexual exploitation films was felt to help children and young people understand the key concepts.

2. Accept the applicability and utility of the key concepts to their life. In providing dramatised depictions of grooming and exploitation happening to people with whom the children and young people could identify, films could help them appreciate how grooming and exploitation could be happening to them.

3. Accurately assess the risks they face. Reflective discussion with the child or young person helped them apply the concepts to assess the risks experienced in their life, and to think about possible steps that could be taken to lower those risks.

4. Have a belief that things could change for the better. Modelling a caring and nurturing relationship could help children and young people develop a belief that the types of relationship they could achieve could be improved.

Crucially, practitioners felt that ensuring that the child or young person had a relationship with an adult who cared for them was a precondition of the child or young person being able to take these steps. Hence children and young people who were already involved in relationships and situations where there was a heightened risk of exploitation, and who were not being cared for by an adult, were not felt to be in a position where they could take risk-avoidant actions. NSPCC practitioners said children and young people in such a situation were too scared to be able to face up to the dangers, abuse and risks they faced in their life. It was therefore more appropriate to consider risk-reduction interventions as a preventative strategy. However even when children and young people did take risk-avoidant actions, there was no guarantee of a decreased risk to exploitation. The effectiveness of risk-avoidant action leading to decreased risk was felt to be dependent, in part, on the intentions, determination and strategies of people, in whose presence, the risk was raised.

Lowering the risk in the short-term, but not the medium to long-term

In some cases, it was felt that while the risk of being exploited in the short-term had been reduced, the risk of being exploited in the medium to long-term remained. This was for two reasons:
While there had been a reduction of involvement in situations and relationships which heightened the risk of exploitation in the short-term, factors that were likely to push or pull the child or young person back into those relationships and situations at a later date had not been resolved. Factors that went unaddressed and unresolved during the period of the work included mental health problems, trauma and the impact of neglect.

While a reduction in risk of exploitation was made possible as a result of the child or young person’s carers receiving support, long-term support could not be provided to the carer. When cases were closed with no guarantee of future support, practitioners could be concerned that there would be deterioration in the care provided by the carer. This could in turn trigger a child or young person to seek support from others outside of the family home.

The inability of the professional system working with some children and young people to provide the right type of nurturing environment was felt to be a factor in the child or young person remaining at risk of exploitation. Practitioners considered that children and young people who had problematic attachment resulting from neglect, or trauma resulting from previous abuse and adverse experiences, needed a nurturing therapeutic relationship. It was recognised, however, that NSPCC practitioners did not provide an intervention to address these issues as part of the Protect & Respect work, and in the absence of these issues being addressed by other professionals, the child or young person remained at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term.

**Key Findings from the Group Work**

The NSPCC group work service was intended for children and young people who were considered to be vulnerable to exploitation but not at risk of being exploited in the short-term. In practice there were challenges to targeting the group work at children and young people with the right level of need.

There were also challenges to ensuring that children and young people were informed about the service and felt free to say no to participating. Children and young people could feel compelled to attend as they were not normally given the freedom to say no to participation in the school setting.

Key outcomes for children and young people, reported by NSPCC practitioners, included improved understanding of exploitation and how it related to their lives. NSPCC practitioners felt that having the opportunity to hear from professionals and peers about exploitation, grooming and relationships helped children and young people improve their understanding.
Some children and young people were said to have taken actions, with the intention of reducing the risk of abuse, grooming and exploitation. NSPCC practitioners were divided however on whether the positive outcomes identified were enough to reduce the risk of exploitation. Some felt that the risk posed to children and young people came from people and factors, which were unaffected by children and young people’s understanding of exploitation and which lay outside of their control.

**Key Findings from the one-to-one work**

There were challenges to ensuring that children and young people were informed about and felt free to say no to participating in the service. In some cases children and young people had experienced pressure from professionals and carers to attend.

Correctly identifying if the child or young person had experienced exploitation or was at risk of exploitation could be difficult. Children and young people did not always want to talk about sexual exploitation or personal issues. The pace of change in the life of the child or young person and the complex set of relationships that they had meant practitioners’ sense of the risks posed could quickly change.

Engaging children and young people in a relationship could take up to six months. Not all children and young people wanted to see a practitioner on a weekly basis or visit the service centre. Some children and young people had demands placed on their time by other professionals, school, family or by people with an interest in exploiting them, which made it difficult to regularly attend appointments.

There was a tendency for assessment and intervention work to be focused on whether the child or young person was likely to be exploited in the immediate future. Where this happened the work could be closed even though it was felt that the child or young person would be exploited in the medium to long-term.

NSPCC practitioners felt that the risk of exploitation was lowered when work was done to ensure children and young people had a relationship with an adult who was caring and nurturing and when actions were taken to disrupt perpetrators’ ability to access the child or young person. Supporting children and young people to take risk avoidant actions was felt to be a useful preventative measure, though not one which helped reduce risk when the risk was already high.
Chapter 4: Conclusion and Discussion

Introduction

This report presents the key findings from the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme of sexual exploitation services. The Protect & Respect programme of services was developed to realise two key objectives. One was to provide a ‘platform’ service where each participating NSPCC service centre, in providing all five services, could give children and young people a sense of stability as they accessed services to address a range of needs relating to exploitation. The second objective was to be the first organisation to develop intervention models in the field of sexual exploitation and subject those models to an impact study. While NSPCC service centres, collectively, provided the full range of programme services, the ambition of delivering a ‘platform’ service was not achieved in any individual service centre. In practice, centres focused on delivering some but not all of the programme’s services. Furthermore, a review of the programme’s development, one year into the evaluation, demonstrated that there was still much to do to get into the position of being able to deliver an impact study:

• The intervention models were not being delivered consistently in line with the programme guidance.
• There was a high level of service attrition that meant that not many users were completing the service.
• There was a high level of evaluation attrition, which meant that evaluation data were only available for a small proportion of service users.

The findings presented by this review triggered a decision to amend the aim of the evaluation. The aspiration of conducting an impact study was dropped, although a requirement remained for practitioners to administer outcome measures to children and young people wherever possible. Emphasis was placed on studying three aspects of the implementation of the programme, which are covered and summarised in this report:

• The implementation of the Protect & Respect programme and services.
• The work done between NSPCC practitioners, children and young people, carers and professionals.
• The challenges to preventing and reducing the risk of exploitation and what professionals, carers and children and young people did to address those challenges.

Emphasis was also placed on studying patterns of service and evaluation attrition and the reasons for attrition. While some reference is paid to this topic in this report, a more detailed analysis will be provided in a future report. The remainder of this report is focused on discussing the significance of the key findings in relation to key debates in policy and practice. Key topics discussed are:

• What works in lowering the risk of exploitation.
• Lessons on engagement.
• Addressing and measuring risk.
• Organisational learning.
• Research and evaluation.

What works in lowering the risk of exploitation

Feedback from NSPCC practitioners and children and young people suggested that key actions that need to be taken to reduce the risk of exploitation are:

• Working to ensure that there is an adult in the life of the child or young person who provides care and nurturing to them.
• Work to reduce perpetrators’ ability to access the child or young person.
• Working to ensure that children and young people experiencing trauma, attachment issues or mental health problems have access to long-term therapeutic support.

These findings suggest that relationships, being made safe from perpetrators and trauma should be central themes to assessment and intervention planning going forward. These findings are reflected in Shuker’s evaluation of Barnardo’s ‘Safe Accommodation Project, which found that ensuring physical safety and relational security were central to ‘unlocking wider outcomes’ (Shuker, 2013, p139).

An implicit theme in these findings is the idea that it is adults, rather than children, who need to take responsibility for reducing the risk of exploitation. Child protection plans and multi-agency plans for addressing concerns about exploitation should focus first on what adults can do to bring about these three key outcomes, rather on what the child or young person could or should do to extricate themselves from relationships and situations where the risk of exploitation is heightened.
Critiquing the ‘head on’ approach

The UK Government’s current strategy for preventing and reducing the risk of child sexual exploitation is based, in part, on the assumption that addressing concerns about exploitation ‘head on’ with children and young people and encouraging them to take risk-avoidant actions can prevent exploitation (DCSF, 2009; DFE, 2017; Beckett et al, 2017). Current government guidance implies that educating children and young people about risks protects them in occasions where they are subject to attempts at exploitation:

“If children and young people are not educated about the risk of child sexual exploitation (and other forms of sexual abuse) before perpetrators approach them, they are left unprotected.”

DFES, 2017, p21

The Government’s strategy has led to the development of sexual exploitation services within local authorities and across the third sector, providing spaces and opportunities for conversations about sexual exploitation, which children and young people have been encouraged and, in some cases, told to engage with (Walker et al, 2019). It has also informed professional approaches designed to prevent exploitation or lower the risk of exploitation (Hallett, 2015; Pearce, 2006, p328; Thomas & D’Arcy, 2017, p1,701). In the Protect & Respect programme, socio-educative work was done with the hope that increased understanding would prompt children and young people to make ‘safe decisions’ (NSPCC, 2014, p1, p8) or what this report refers to as ‘risk avoidant action’ (see Introduction for a discussion of terminology).

However, the feedback from NSPCC practitioners suggests that extreme caution should be exercised in using ‘head on’ approaches to teaching risk avoidant actions. This is for two reasons. First, not all children and young people affected by sexual exploitation want to talk about their personal life and the question of whether they are at risk of exploitation. NSPCC practitioners found that some children and young people had other priorities that they wanted addressing. Other children and young people wanted to spend time getting to know the practitioner first. In cases such as these, where workers insisted on discussing exploitation early on, this could sometimes lead to the child or young person dropping out of the work.

The second reason for why caution should be exercised is that ‘head on’ approaches imply that there exists a demographic of children and young people for whom sexual exploitation can be addressed in isolation from other issues or for whom sexual exploitation is the principal issue. Some practitioners conducting Protect & Respect one-to-one work suggested that this was the case where a child or
young person who had a supportive family and few problems at school experienced an isolated incident of grooming or exploitation. However, for some children and young people exploitation was interwoven into and sometimes caused by a wider set of experiences, which included:

- Conflict with and abuse from family members and peers.
- Neglect from or ineffective interventions taken by carers, school staff and the statutory services.
- Being subject to persistent attempts at exploitation, involving the use of intimidation, threats and trickery.
- Coping behaviours, including the use of alcohol, drugs, self-harming and aggressive behaviour.

Consequently, NSPCC practitioners perceived that lowering the risk of exploitation was better brought about by work that was focused on improving the care received by children and young people and lessening perpetrators’ access to them. Where the child or young person did not have a relationship with an adult who cared for them and whilst perpetrators could still reach them, practitioners could feel that discussing sexual exploitation and encouraging risk avoidant action was unhelpful. It could lead to the child or young person taking a decision to no longer see the practitioner, because:

- The child or young person was not in a position where they could acknowledge the risks they faced and the harm they experienced. The potential for harm and the actual harm experienced by the child or young person was too great for them to be able to deal with by themselves.
- The child or young person could perceive a suggestion to withdraw from a relationship where there was a risk of harm, as an attempt to impair their ability to meet their needs (see also Pearce, 2006, p329; Gilligan, 2016, p121; Hallett, 2013; Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p309).
- Even when children and young people accepted the professionals’ judgement that they were being exploited or were at risk of exploitation, they did not believe that they were capable of entering into a relationship where they would not be abused or exploited. This was because they had not had a prior experience of being cared for and feeling safe within the presence of an adult (see also Hickle & Hallett, 2016, p307; Lefevre et al, 2018, p2,456)

A further finding is that some children and young people declined to take up the offer of the service because to do so would suggest that they were being sexually exploited. This suggests that services which are labelled in such a way that they suggest the professionals working for it will take a ‘head-on’ approach to sexual exploitation, may put some children and young people off. The implication is that even
if a service is established principally to address sexual exploitation, it may be more palatable and acceptable to a child or young person if the service is presented and delivered as an advocacy and child-led support service.

There may be a limited role for teaching risk-avoidant actions in prevention and testing is needed

Although the feedback provided by NSPCC staff suggested that caution should be exercised in addressing concerns about sexual exploitation head on with children and young people, it also suggested that socio-educative work encouraging risk-avoidant action could have a role to play in prevention. NSPCC practitioners suggested that socio-educative work encouraging risk-avoidant action could play a preventative role, if used at the right point in time, providing the child or young person had an adult who cared for them, were in an environment that could not be accessed by a perpetrator and had access to therapeutic support when needed. Socio-educative work, it was felt, could help children and young people recognise and avoid situations where there was a heightened risk, or could give them the skills needed to take actions when in situations where the risk was heightened. NSPCC staff also pointed out however, that even when used preventatively, risk-avoidant action may have limited or no impact. Practitioners felt that the impact of risk-avoidant action could be limited by the levels of trickery, intimidation and persistence used by people who exploit. To date there has been no rigorous study into the effectiveness of child education as a means of preventing child sexual abuse and so there is no firm evidence to suggest that when applied to groups of children and young people, child education reduces the overall rates of victimisation (Finkelhor, 2009; Walker et al, 2019).

In arguing for the idea that there may be a limited role for teaching risk-avoidant action in prevention, it is worth addressing current criticisms of attempts to teach such actions. One such criticism is that by focusing preventative initiatives on educating children and young people as potential victims, professionals place the responsibility for keeping safe on children and young people. Instead, it is argued, the focus should be placed on the people who perpetrate the exploitation or on the adults whose role it is to keep children safe from exploitation. Placing the responsibility on the child or young person, in turn, is said to lead to them feeling to blame for exploitation where it occurs (Eaton, 2017; Eaton and Holmes, 2017).

There is merit in the point that children and young people should not be made to feel responsible for exploitation. However, none of this (which is a discussion about values and responsibility) rules out the possibility that helping children and young people take risk-
avoidant action reduces the likelihood of them being exploited.
What it does point towards is the importance of avoiding conflating
the limited agency children and young people have in reducing risk
with a responsibility for reducing risk and any acts of exploitation
that may be carried out against children or young people. This is
where the language used by professionals to describe what they are
doing and what they are trying to achieve, when delivering socio-
educative work, becomes crucial. More work needs to be done to
create a narrative, language and set of concepts, which while based on
the assumption that children and young people can be supported to
do things that theoretically lower the likelihood of being exploited,
locates the responsibility for keeping children and young people safe
with adults, carers and the state. Currently, terms like ‘keep safe’, ‘safe
decisions’, and ‘risky behaviour’ are unsatisfactory in that while they
convey the desire to help children and young people take actions that
lower the risk, they imply that:

- It is within the power of the child or young person to
  stop exploitation.
- Children and young people have a responsibility for avoiding
  situations where they could be exploited.

In this report, the term ‘risk-avoidant behaviours’ has been replaced
with ‘risk-avoidant action’, because the word ‘behaviour’ was felt
to imply a moral duty, and therefore a responsibility on the child
or young person to act in a particular way. However, when receiving
feedback on earlier drafts of this report it is clear that professionals
operating in the field also feel that the term ‘risk-avoidant action’
implies that children and young people are responsible for keeping
themselves safe and to blame for any exploitation that might occur.

Part of the problem lies with the way in which professional language
on risk tends to attach the risk to the child or young person, as if to
suggest ‘risk’ is a character or property of an individual. It might help
develop a clearer understanding of what risk is and what it is that
professionals are doing when they attempt to assess risk. Risk relates
to the likelihood of something bad happening to someone, given the
presence of certain factors or features in their environment. To assess
risk is not to say something about the character or property of the
child or young person, but rather to say something about the likely
outcome for them, given certain assumptions about what causes the
outcome. Risk therefore is about the science of prediction and the
language developed around describing risk ought to be in line with
this endeavour. For this reason it is inappropriate to talk about risk
in a way which locates risk within the child or young person. In this
way phrases like a child or young person ‘being high risk’, ‘at risk’
or engaging in ‘risky behaviour’ are inappropriate. Instead it is more
appropriate to talk about risk being a professional estimation of the
likelihood of exploitation given an understanding of the context to the life of a child or young person (a similar point is made by Eaton [2016, pp3-4]). This conclusion resonates with the conclusion of the work of Carlene Firmin, who studied nine cases where young people were raped or murdered by their peers (Firmin, 2014). Firmin concluded that there was a need to develop interventions, which treated the context and environment from which the abuse emerged:

This study has repeatedly recognised young people as social agents who make choices within fields in which they experience harm, largely independent of professional support. Rather than seeking to control young people, and their perceived ‘risky behaviours’, professionals may be better placed to create safe environments in which young people can in turn make safer choices… it was not choices that were necessarily risky but the menu of choices within given fields that were particularly problematic for the young people in the case files.

Firmin, 2014, p292

A similar point can be made on how professionals frame ‘vulnerability’ as a characteristic or property of an individual (Brown, 2017). Framing vulnerability in this way suggests that whilst some children or young people are vulnerable others are not or cannot be vulnerable (see e.g. Children’s Commissioner, 2017). Such use of the term vulnerability is problematic for two reasons. First it fails to take into account the fact that vulnerability, used as shorthand for the likelihood of being abused or exploited, is not a function of the child or young person’s characteristics, capacities or condition, but rather of the situation in which they find themselves. In particular vulnerability is the function of being targeted for abuse, coupled with having an insufficient level of skill, resource and power to fend off those who wish to perpetrate the abuse (see also Eaton and Holmes, 2017, pp26-9). Seen in this way, and consistent with the feedback received by children and young people participating in the evaluation interviews, even if a person has high levels of skill and power, they can find themselves in situations where they are vulnerable to abuse. The second reason for avoiding a conceptualisation of vulnerability that is rooted in the individual is because deploying such a conceptualisation nudges professionals’ focus:

- Away from interventions that require adults to take responsibility for improving the care and safety of the child or young person.
- Towards interventions, which are likely to have a limited impact i.e. focused on raising children and young people’s skill base (similar point made by Eaton and Holmes, 2017, p29).
Vulnerability, then, ought to be used more as a descriptor of the situations in which children and young people find themselves, with the focus being on adults taking actions to reduce the exposure to such situations, rather than a condition of the child or young person that needs addressing through one-to-one work. So for example this evaluation found that young people’s experiences of exploitation and sexual assault were embedded within the dynamics of a large social network of young people within and beyond the school. Vulnerability needed a ‘social network’ solution (Firmin and Hancock, 2018; Firmin et al, 2018; Walker, 2018;) rather than just one-to-one work focused on understanding, assessment and interaction.

Finally in the same way that prevention initiatives focused on children and young people have been criticized for suggesting that the responsibility for exploitation lies with them, the centrality of the concept of ‘exchange’ to British definitions of child sexual exploitation has also been criticized. Beckett and Walker point out that highlighting the ‘gain’ made by a child or young person through an exploitative relationship could lead professionals to fail to see the experience as abusive (2018, p12). In other words identifying the child or young person’s agency in a relationship which is abusive, for the purposes of accessing a resource, could lead professionals to conclude that the child or young person has the responsibility for the impact of the abuse and for extricating themselves from the relationship. However Beckett and Walker (2018) argue that the solution to this problem is not to redefine exploitation, but rather to improve the education of professionals, so that they can identify exploitation, even when there is a transactional nature to it.

**Addressing agency neglect**

During the implementation of the Protect & Respect programme a key challenge for NSPCC practitioners was encouraging Children’s Social Care departments and other agencies to provide the things that were felt essential to reducing the risk of exploitation to the child or young person. This suggests that when programme designers plan intervention models, they should encourage an assessment of the range of needs that a child or young person has that currently go unaddressed by Children’s Services, schools and other agencies. Intervention planning should include the drawing up of an explicit strategy to address agency neglect, and should involve a consideration of the barriers to agency engagement.

Part of the barrier to Children Services departments’ willingness to provide support is the traditional view that child protection work should be focused on abuse in the home and the role of the carers in safeguarding children from abuse. Children’s Services departments,
together with partner agencies, need to be able to respond to the risks of exploitation and abuse from a wider variety of sources. As was indicated in some of the cases detailed in this evaluation, effectively reducing the risk of exploitation means safeguarding the streets and places where children and young people socialise and which they frequent. Work also needs to be done in online environments to reduce the ability of would-be perpetrators to identifying, contacting and intimidating or luring children and young people into relationships. In cases where children and young people experience risk in a variety of relationships and situations, child protection work needs to focus on what professionals, together with the carer, can do to reduce perpetrators’ ability to access the child or young person in those settings.

Other barriers identified in this evaluation and the literature include a perception that child protection system resources are to be prioritised for younger children (see Gorin & Jobe, 2013; DCSF, 2010; Broadhurst et al, 2010), the challenges of engaging older children and young people (DCSF, 2010, p259) and general pressures within Children’s Services departments to minimise expenditure (Laming, 2003; Savage, 2018). In the absence of a shift in resources and perception, gaps will remain in the safeguarding of children and young people affected by exploitation.

Professionals seeking to provide preventative work to children and young people ought also to consider the extent to which children and young people have received an education on basic knowledge about the body and sex, prior to starting group work focused on sexual exploitation. Providing a six-week group work service focused on sexual exploitation assumes that children and young people are coming to the service with such basic knowledge. However, NSPCC practitioners providing group work found that schools had not always provided effective Personal, Social, Health and Education. Consequently, in some cases, NSPCC practitioners explained that some of their group work, which had started out with the intention of focusing on sexual exploitation, turned into a broader discussion of core subjects that children and young people needed to understand before they could engage with the idea of exploitation. These core subjects included the body, sexual organs, sex, emotions, and emotional and sexual relationships. These experiences highlight the need to assess children and young people’s existing knowledge and understanding and in certain cases, to provide additional sessions on basic concepts, which can make a discussion about sexual exploitation meaningful.
Lessons on engagement

NSPCC practitioners could spend a large amount of time to effectively engage children and young people at risk of exploitation in a relationship, where they were able and willing to meet with the practitioner and talk to them about issues relating to exploitation. These findings are in line with existing research findings and government guidance on engagement (Gilligan, 2016; Lefevre, et al, 2017, p2,466; DCSF, 2009; DFE, 2017, Beckett et al, 2017; Hickle & Hallett, 2016). Furthermore, feedback from NSPCC staff highlighted that children and young people could for varying reasons: find it difficult to make appointments; prefer a more flexible drop-in service; and require support outside of the 9am–5pm working hours. This was in part because the risks and support needs of children and young people could vary over the period of a week, in line with the situations and people they came into contact with. The need and preference of children and young people for support on issues that were concerning to them, and on occasion for more immediate forms of engagement, suggests that the development of new service approaches should give practitioners:

• Flexibility over for how long, how frequently and in what settings they work with children and young people. This might include encouraging practitioners to develop flexible and immediate forms of response, including outreach work and the development of a drop-in service.

• Up to at least six months to achieve engagement; although two years has also been suggested (see Gilligan, 2016).

• Permission to do goal-based work and advocacy work prior to any attempt at an explicit discussion and assessment of exploitation and the associated risks.

Is enough being done with boys?

Boys made up one fifth of the children and young people who accessed the group work and less than one tenth of all the children and young people who were being allocated to one-to-one work. Only one of the nine children and young people who were interviewed as part of the evaluation was a boy. The relatively low participation of boys in the Protect & Respect programme raises questions about how professionals, referrers and NSPCC practitioners worked with boys, and whether enough was being done to detect concerns about exploitation, refer them on and offer support on terms that were acceptable to boys.
Feedback from NSPCC practitioners and other professionals suggested that when boys were involved in situations which heightened the risk of exploitation, there could be evidence to suggest that they were involved in criminal or anti-social activity and that professionals tended to focus on that (a similar finding was reported in Brown, 2018, p181). Some groups of boys were selected for group work because they were seen as posing a risk of exploitation although the purpose of group work was to work with children and young people who were vulnerable to exploitation. Furthermore, one police officer reported that when the Protect & Respect service was presented to boys, some did not want to take up the service because they did not feel a service about sexual exploitation was relevant to them.

In some cases NPSCC practitioners and other professionals explained that boys were better at hiding their vulnerability than girls. It is worth subjecting this claim to critical analysis. This way of framing the challenges of engaging males presents lower engagement of boys as a fait accompli. It suggests boys have a responsibility for exercising agency in making their vulnerability clear to professionals if they want a professional response. However is the problem that boys are ‘hiding’ their vulnerability or that professionals are not accustomed to asking the question about whether boys might be vulnerable to exploitation and knowing what to look for when they do ask the question? A review of child sexual exploitation research and responses, written in 2014, found a heavy focus on girls and young women, ‘leaving fundamental knowledge gaps around the characteristics and needs of boys and young men’ (Cockbain et al, 2014).

One way forward to address the issue of how best to support boys affected by exploitation could be to develop a service for boys focused on advocacy and user-led support. This evaluation did not attempt to explore the experience of male service users in particular and did not seek to understand the barriers to boys accessing the work. Future evaluation work could usefully address this.

**Consent**

Several challenges have been highlighted for children and young people to give informed and voluntary consent for the Protect & Respect service. These included that children and young people: were not informed by referrers about the nature of the service; felt pressurised into attending; and hence did not feel they could refuse the service. These findings help to identify an inherent paradox within the child protection and school systems. On the one hand professionals and carers are keen to educate children and young people about healthy relationships and the importance of consent. On the other hand they can behave towards children and young people in a way that belies the messages they are trying to promote. These findings
suggest that child sexual exploitation services need to do substantial work with referring professionals and carers. Training may be needed to ensure informed freely given consent is provided in contexts where referrers can feel an intense pressure to have the child or young person see someone who might be able to help. In school settings, where the general expectation is for children and young people to follow the school’s rules, it may need to be emphasised with school staff that for the purposes of the group work, they have a responsibility to provide an extraordinary freedom to the child or young person to decline the offer of the group work.

These findings, arguably, also illustrate how child sexual exploitation interventions, focused on getting the child or young person to change, can compound the child or young person’s experience of being unable to exercise self-determination in their relationships. Arguably the notion that the child or young person has to change creates the impetus forpressuring them to see a professional who will help them change. In other words challenges of consent may be rooted in an understanding of child sexual exploitation, which sees the responsibility for reducing the risk of exploitation, as lying with the child or young person. Arguably, interventions premised on the idea that the responsibility for reducing risk lies with adults may be more accommodating of an approach that attempts to respect the child or young person’s right to turn down the offer of a service.

The challenge of giving children and young people the right to turn down a service, or part of a service, was something that NSPCC practitioners could struggle with too. Children and young people did not for example, always initially understand the aims and nature of the service. NSPCC practitioners described how they would slowly build up a child or young person’s understanding of the purpose of the service over time, as part of a strategy to slowly engage them in a working relationship. These experiences suggest that guidance on delivering sexual exploitation services might usefully recommend the option of a staged approach to gaining consent. The practitioner might first be focused on gaining a loose agreement from the child or young person to see the practitioner, building up to a long-term commitment to a defined programme of work.

There were contrary views among practitioners about how to respond to children and young people not turning up to appointments: as an implicit withdrawal of consent to service, which in turn should be respected and lead to case closure; or as part of the testing out process that children and young people can subject the professional to in order to see how genuine and reliable they are. This highlights a wider dilemma in engaging children and young people at risk of exploitation, where there is a professional perception that engaging them in a caring professional relationship could be the key to reducing the risk, but where the child or young person may not be able to
recognise that. Having an explicit up front conversation with the child or young person may put them off from engaging, whereas slowly developing a relationship with the child or young person over time without being clear about that end goal may be more effective in reducing the risk. This then, potentially, creates a dilemma over what is more important: obtaining informed consent prior to service delivery or reducing the risk.

Children and young people may not want to discuss their personal experiences and the risks they face. Again practitioner responses varied, from persisting, in order to meet the requirements of the prescribed assessment model, to working on the priorities of the young person. On reflection, practitioners who had taken the former course tended to feel they had made the wrong choice and needed to instead work at the pace and on the priorities of the child or young person. A final challenge faced in gaining the consent of children and young people and carers came when family members did not speak or read English. NSPCC practitioners reported that carers who could not read English could not consent to the service, because consent was gathered via forms written in English. An example was provided where consent had not been obtained from the young person because she did understand English very well, had learning difficulties and the practitioner had not been able to get access to an interpreter. This evaluation did not look in detail into the arrangements that Service Centres had for providing interpreting and translation services, but it was clear that more work needs to be done to ensure that children, young people and their carers who do not speak English have the same level of access to the service as English speakers.

Assessing and measuring risk

The requirement placed upon Local Safeguarding Children Boards to create and implement strategies for responding to child sexual exploitation has led, in some areas, to the creation of tools for assessing the risk of child sexual exploitation (see Eaton and Holmes, 2017, pp46-8 for a description of the range of tools used). In the Protect & Respect programme, a tool called the Outcome Measurement Tool was developed to measure risk. Several criticisms directed at tools for assessing the risk of exploitation can be applied to the Outcome Measurement Tool:

- The validity and reliability of the tools have not been tested using large-scale methodologically rigorous research (Brown et al, 2016, p4). This means the tools may not actually aid professionals in reaching an accurate judgement on the risks of exploitation.
Some assessment tools, based on indicators of exploitation, conflated indicators of being sexually exploited with indicators of being at risk of exploitation (Brown et al, 2016, p5) so it was not clear as to which of the two they were actually measuring.

The lack of psychometric testing of risk assessment tools brings into question the utility of risk assessment tools which attempt to quantify risk, in helping professionals reach accurate judgements. NSPCC practitioners who used the Outcome Measurement Tool sometimes found it difficult to accurately assess the risk of exploitation faced by children and young people at the point of assessment or allocation in the case of group work.

Beyond questions of accuracy, it is clear there is work to be done in enabling professionals to get the focus of their assessments right. The evaluation findings highlighted that sometimes the focus of the assessment was on the risk of exploitation in the short-term but not on the risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term. This is not a phenomenon unique to assessment of sexual exploitation; it is also a feature of the assessment of neglect for example (Williams, 2015, pp57–59). Cases could be closed on the basis that the child or young person was not likely to be exploited in the short-term but without a focus on the risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term. However, this could happen even though concerns remained that factors in the child or young person’s life were likely to push or pull them back into exploitation, and that Children’s Services and other agencies were unlikely to provide the support required to mitigate those factors. Future assessment guidance and procedures should explicitly guide practitioners to make a judgement on the likelihood of the child or young person being exploited in the medium to long-term as well as in the short term:

- Assessing the risk of exploitation in the short-term would be dependent on an analysis of the situations and relationships that children and young people were known to be involved with at the time of the assessment.

- Assessing the risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term would be dependent on an analysis of the factors that are felt to push or pull the child or young person into relationships and situations, where the short-term risk of exploitation is heightened:
  - Lack of an adult who provides care and support.
  - Being accessible to people who pose a risk.
  - Being unable to access therapeutic support where needed.
  - Threats posed to the child or young person by people within the communities in which they live.
The Protect & Respect programme was, in practice, expecting its assessment tool to provide a single score, which could be taken as an indicator of both risk in the short-term and risk in the medium to long-term. However, using a single score to cover short-term and long-term risk should be avoided because in theory these two phenomena are independent of each other. Furthermore, the indicators that in theory contribute to a score of risk in the short-term are different to those that indicate risk in the medium to long-term.

Having said this, there is no quantitative evidence demonstrating the power of any factor to predict any kind of risk of exploitation (Brown et al, 2016).

Assessing the medium to long-term risks also requires that professionals make the case for long-term intervention where children and young people and their families require it. Some of the children and young people who accessed the Protect & Respect service were felt to be vulnerable to exploitation because they had experienced trauma from previous abuse or had attachment issues owing to long-term neglect. Where this was the case, it was felt that children and young people needed long-term therapeutic support. Furthermore, some children and young people experienced abuse and neglect at home, in families where it was felt carers needed long-term therapeutic and practical support to improve the care provided. However, successfully making the case for long-term support may be a challenge where Children’s Services departments prioritise responding to recent incidents of abuse and exploitation (Gardner & Telford, 2010; Williams, 2015).

Another challenge in assessment is that professionals may not have a very good understanding of the needs and risks posed to the child or young person. Children and young people may be in denial about the risks posed to themselves or choose to be disingenuous when filling in measures or talking about their life. To accommodate this, one approach might be to get children and young people to fill in measures retrospectively, once trust and openness has been achieved and the child or young person is in a position where they feel they can reflect and assess risk. It might be that it is only at this point that the child or young person is able to consent to the use of the measures and to fill in the measures truthfully.

Finally it has been noted that whilst assessment of risk tends to be focused on the risks posed to a particular individual, there could be benefits from focusing assessment and interventions on the risks posed to young people in particular situations or places (Shuker, 2018).

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4 In the risk reduction work, the programme risk assessment tool score was taken to be an indicator of the risk of exploitation in the short-term. In the one-to-one prevention work, the risk assessment tool was taken to be an indicator of exploitation in the medium to long-term.
A need for guidance on working with uncertainty

In some cases NSPCC practitioners worked with children and young people, suspecting that they were being exploited or were at risk of being exploited, but without being sure. This was partly because it was difficult to establish what the level of risk was to the child or young person, but also because the practitioner judged that lowering the risks could be best achieved through means other than an explicit discussion and assessment of exploitation. What this suggests is that government guidance should pay more attention to the challenges posed by and techniques that practitioners can deploy in working with uncertainty. While government guidance recognises that identifying exploitation is not easy and that “the signs of abuse rarely present in clear, unequivocal ways” (DFE, 2017, p4), it tends to be focused on how to work with children and young people where exploitation is known to be happening. The non-statutory government guidance issued in 2017 was described as “advice…intended to help…understand child sexual exploitation and what action should be taken to identity and support victims” (DFE, 2017).

Questions around the prioritisation and utility of child sexual exploitation

Over the last ten years governments across the four nations have required local authorities and partner agencies to develop strategies and plans for tackling child sexual exploitation (DCSF, 2009; DFE, 2017). Whilst this has been happening questions have been raised as to whether the interests and needs of children and young people are best served by prioritising child sexual exploitation, vis-à-vis other forms of child sexual abuse, which do not have ‘exchange’ at the heart of the definition (Beckett and Walker, 2018).

The findings from this evaluation have identified ways in which the focus on child sexual exploitation may not always be helpful. In some circumstances children and young people’s experience of ‘exchange’ during an incident of sexual abuse sat alongside other experiences of sexual abuse, which did not involve ‘exchange’. These experiences included sexual assault, harassment and bullying (this finding was also reported in Coffey, 2014). Where children and young people are experiencing sexual exploitation as part of a range of sexual abuses, but are referred into a service that focuses specifically on sexual exploitation, there is a risk that professionals focus in on the ‘exchange’ element of the sexual abuse that is occurring, but fail to see the bigger picture. For example during the evaluation it was found that some girls who attended the group work services, experienced sexual exploitation alongside a range of sexual abuses. These experiences emerged from within peer relationships within a school setting. The salient factor that needed addressing was not the presence
of ‘exchange’ in the relationship, but rather the generation of abusive
behaviour within the wider peer group.

Further evidence for questioning the prioritisation of child sexual
exploitation came from one-to-one work. In some cases children and
young people were experiencing family neglect, abuse of types other
than exploitation and were using substances to cope with the effects
of trauma. In some of these cases, whilst exploitation was occurring
or where there were concerns that exploitation might be happening,
the view of the child or young person or the professional was that
concerns around exploitation was not the first issue that needed to
be addressed. In other cases, work was done to ensure that the child
or young person had an adult who cared for them. The work could
involve the carer directly and work to lower perpetrators’ ability
to access the child or young person could be prioritised. These
experiences suggest that whilst receiving support because they are
deemed to be at risk of child sexual exploitation, children and young
people’s deeper support needs may be overlooked because of the focus
on exploitation.

These experiences taken together raise further questions about
whether the concept of ‘child sexual exploitation’ is useful for
promoting effective assessment of and support to children and
young people. Critiques of child sexual exploitation identify that
the centrality of ‘exchange’ in the definition, which distinguishes
exploitation as a sub-category of sexual abuse, can be found across
many types of child sexual abuse that would not commonly be
considered as exploitation (Eaton and Holmes, 2017). A key question
is whether the presence of exchange within a sexually abusive
relationship presents distinct challenges to identifying, preventing and
stopping abuse.

Organisational learning

The experience of the Protect & Respect programme highlighted
the importance of having sufficient capacity in place to manage
the implementation and evolution of a new programme of services
provided by a large number of sites. The development of consistent
practice across five different services and 15 service centres in an area
of work that was new to some practitioners and managers required a
significant management, monitoring and administrative resource. The
capacity to carry out these roles, although present, was insufficient
in its size for the effective development of the programme across
the period covered by the evaluation. The consequence of this, in
part, was that the programme evolved differently across different sites
and practice diverged from programme requirements. Of particular
importance was the fact that children and young people who were not
‘ready to engage’ (NSPCC, 2012) were allocated to practitioners. This then made it more difficult to meet other programme requirements.

In light of the key findings from this evaluation and the experience gained in the delivery of the Protect & Respect programme, the NSPCC went through a process of redesigning its programme of service delivery (NSPCC, 2019). The new service offered provides a framework for practice intended to accommodate the high levels of uncertainty when working with exploitation. Several features of service, which the evaluation suggested had been effective, were retained:

- **Long-term support**: The evaluation acknowledged the need for support, which gave time for the child and practitioner to develop a trusting relationship. This required the practitioner to continually promote the child’s engagement, which could fluctuate at times. Perseverance was a necessary trait as developing trust was not easy to achieve.

- **Intensive support**: It was felt that many children had extensive needs across a range of domains. This required intensive support where the practitioner could respond to the child when they most needed it.

- **Flexibility**: The ability of the service to be flexible and meet the needs of the child or young person worked well. The practitioner and child or young person co-produce a work plan, which addresses areas they have agreed to explore together. The primary concern of the child or young person may not be exploitation but could be basic needs such as housing.

Several features of the service were revised in reflecting on the evaluation findings and contemporary research knowledge:

- **Assessing risk**: Protect and Respect has redeveloped the assessment tool to reflect a strengths-based, child-centred assessment, which uses professional judgement and an understanding of a child’s lived experience.

- **Trauma-informed approach**: The Protect and Respect service has reviewed its practices and resources in use as a result of an increased awareness of trauma-informed approaches, which seek to avoid re-traumatisation and victim blaming. The Protect and Respect service does not show any child films, which depict abuse, pending abuse or violence. The service has adopted Barnardo’s (2018) basic practice checklist for schools work on CSA, and seeks to ensure that practice is compliant with this checklist.
**Involving parents:** The revised service will offer an increased and consistent parent support offer. Children and parents will be allocated separate practitioners who will work closely together to provide support.

**Wider forms of exploitation:** The 1-1 service is framed as an exploitation service as opposed to a CSE service in recognition of the interconnected nature of wider forms of exploitation.

The NSPCC is also considering an evaluation methodology that promotes the participation of children and young people in setting the outcomes by which the work can be judged (Harris, 2014).

### An agenda for research and evaluation

**Impact studies need to grapple with the issues of engagement and uncertainty**

Pursuing the ambition of subjecting an intervention model to an impact study should be based on a consideration of some of the key challenges faced during this evaluation. By the end of the first year of the evaluation it was clear that, in practice, an impact study would be difficult to deliver, because the services were not being delivered in the manner required by the model guides. A key challenge to delivering the one-to-one services in line with the requirements of the model was the fact that children and young people were not able to attend sessions with the practitioner frequently and regularly and were not in a position where they immediately wanted to talk about personal issues, risk and exploitation. A similar finding was reported in the evaluation of the ‘Wigan and Rochdale Child Sexual Exploitation Innovation Project’ where professionals delayed initial assessment to first build engagement (Scott et al, 2017a, p41). This suggests a more flexible type of intervention model is needed than the one outlined in the programme guidance. Based on the findings from this evaluation, the model would need to contain extensive phases for engagement, both at the beginning, but then later on in the work, when children and young people might disengage for a while. The model would also need to be flexible with the amount of time the practitioner would be expected to spend working with the child or young person. Furthermore, a question remains about whether it is possible and feasible to consistently deliver a tightly defined intervention model to a group of children and young people who are affected by sexual exploitation. This evaluation highlighted the organisational investment that would be needed in the referral, assessment and allocation stages to ensure that users selected were willing and able to engage with an intervention model.
Assessing and measuring outcomes

Subjecting an intervention model to an impact study depends on having access to children and young people who have the type of need for whom the intervention is intended. One of the challenges the NSPCC practitioners found was that it was difficult to accurately assess the risk of exploitation faced by children and young people (a similar finding was reported by Shuker [2018, p5]). This made it difficult to get children and young people with the right level of need into the service. Another challenge faced by any study seeking to allocate children and young people experiencing the right level of risk or vulnerability is that there is currently no validated tool for calculating the risk of exploitation (Brown et al, 2016). Given the challenges to accurately measuring the risk and vulnerability of children and young people, the solution might be to do away with such attempts and rather focus on some other outcome felt to be important in reducing the risk of exploitation. However, there is currently no evidence base to inform the selection of such an outcome (Brown et al, 2016). One way forward would be to refocus intervention models and the evaluation of those models on to an evaluation of their ability to provide the key forms of support that are theorised to reduce risk of exploitation: the presence of an adult who cares for the child or young person, disrupting perpetrators’ ability to access children and young people and therapeutic support.

Testing multi-agency approaches

When NSPCC practitioners work with children and young people being exploited or at immediate risk, it is usually as part of a multi-agency plan, which involves other professionals doing work that is felt to be crucial to lowering the risks of exploitation. If this is the case then it might be worth developing and evaluating multi-agency approaches rather than single agency ones.

Beyond impact studies

There are a number of significant barriers to subjecting intervention models to an impact study, when children and young people are not in a position to share personal information about themselves or engage in an ordered and sequential set of intervention activities. This begs the question of whether there are other meaningful ways of evaluating the delivery of child sexual exploitation services that the NSPCC might usefully seek to develop. In practice the Protect & Respect programme provided an opportunity to explore and reflect on what happens and what can be learned when professionals are given the opportunity to creatively address child sexual exploitation with children and young people. So, one way forward, which could be particularly useful for learning about how to work effectively with
children and young people who cannot engage with an intervention model, is to build a programme of action research that links data collection, analysis, theory development and service design (see e.g. Scott et al, 2017; Shuker and Harris, 2016). Here, qualitative data, including participant observation and interviews, aligned to quantitative outcomes data could lead to a nuanced understanding of what is delivered to whom and what works for whom. As Beckett and Pearce (2018, p2) and Firmin (2014) have indicated such work could help us to understand how sexual exploitation and sexual harm are connected to other types of abuse and how exploitation and abuse emerge from particular contexts, structural inequalities and societal norms. Were such an action research approach to be applied to one-to-one work, it could usefully study the ways in which improving the care received by children and young people, disrupting perpetrators’ access to them and reducing trauma could lessen the risk of exploitation. Applied to group work and in line with Firmin’s recommendation, it could be used to build up a picture of the social dynamics within peer groups in the school and in environments beyond the school, and investigate the impact that school group work has on those environments (see Firmin, 2014).

Follow-up work

Following up with children and young people after they have accessed an intervention is necessary to understand the impact of the intervention. The Protect & Respect programme evaluation sought to achieve this through requiring NSPCC practitioners to administer follow-up measures. However there was a very large attrition rate for follow-up work. Practitioners made it clear that they did not want to re-open the relationship they had closed down once the intervention work had come to a stop. Managers were concerned that the amount of time required to administer the measures and deal with safeguarding concerns would reduce the total number of children and young people they could see. Although attempts were made at the beginning of the programme to address these concerns they were not sufficient to result in follow-up measures being completed. This experience should not dampen the motivation to collect follow-up data, but rather serve as a cautionary tale for those looking to implement follow-up data collection going forward. Given the tensions experienced it is worth considering who should collect follow-up data, i.e. practitioners or evaluators, and the method for collecting up follow-up data, i.e. interview or the administration of outcome measures.
Attrition

Service and evaluation attrition form an important impediment to impact studies that seek to generalise their findings to the wider population of children who have needs appropriate to the service. A key question is whether attrition occurs disproportionately in particular groups and whether the service is inaccessible to particular groups of children and young people (Martin et al, 2018). For these reasons, raising the level of understanding of attrition could potentially be used to improve engagement and service effectiveness. It could also raise the feasibility of conducting an impact study. However, reports and studies of attrition in child sexual exploitation services are rarely provided and where attrition is reported no reasons are given for it or whether attrition is higher in particular groups (Walker et al, 2019). Given the relative lack of information provided and insight developed into service and evaluation attrition, the data collected as part of the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme provides the potential for opening up an evidence-based discussion around attrition, which future studies could use for comparison. This report presents a substantial amount of feedback from professionals and children and young people on the reasons for evaluation and service attrition. Furthermore, a very large data quantitative data set on service and evaluation attrition has been collected, together with demographic information about service users, which will allow for a sophisticated quantitative analysis of attrition, who attrition affects most and the reasons for it. The results of this analysis, when completed, will be published in the future.

Key Discussion Points

Work done to prevent and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation should focus on ensuring the child or young person: has an adult in their life that cares for them; has access to long-term therapeutic support if needed; and that would-be perpetrators cannot access them.

Teaching children and young people about exploitation is likely to have a limited impact on reducing the risk of exploitation, but could have some benefits in prevention work. In the absence of any real evidence the question of whether child education can prevent child sexual exploitation remains open.

Vulnerability and risk should be used in a way that treats them as properties of the situations and circumstances that children and young people encounter, rather than as part of their identity, behaviour or personality.
Government guidance currently focuses on what to do where exploitation is known to be taking place but should pay more attention to working with situations of uncertainty.

Guidance on assessment should require professionals to make a conscious attempt to consider what needs to be done to ensure the safety of the child or young person in the medium to long-term. Currently professional input can finish on the basis that the child or young person faces no risk of exploitation in the immediate future, although it is acknowledged they remain at risk of exploitation in the medium to long-term.

Child sexual exploitation services may be more acceptable to some children and young people if they are designed and labelled as generic support services rather than ‘sexual exploitation’ services. Within schools, addressing peer group dynamics may be a more effective means of addressing sexual exploitation, than a service with a specific focus on sexual exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation can in part be a function of families and professional agencies failing to prevent abuse or lower the risk where it becomes apparent. All assessment work should take into account children and young people’s unmet needs and involve strategies for considering what can be done to overcome the barriers to familial and professional engagement.

The Protect & Respect programme will be delivered more flexibly which has implications for evaluating impact. One option for evaluating the effectiveness of child sexual exploitation services, which could be particularly useful for children and young people who cannot engage with a defined intervention model, is to build a programme of action research that links data collection, analysis, theory development and service design.
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5 A copy of this report can be requested by email to researchadvice@nspcc.org.uk
Appendix A

In 2018, the NSPCC commissioned a review of the existing literature to find out about other sexual exploitation services that were in existence and which may also have been evaluated or researched (Walker et al, 2019). The review sought to cover services that had been written about in the English language, from around the world, between 2006 and early 2018. The review found 13 relevant publications references in academic databases and 13 reports from the ‘grey literature’. In addition, the authors of the review conducted nine interviews with service providers. The reports and interviews identified 28 different interventions, the earliest of which had been established in 1999, which were intended to address sexual exploitation.

One-to-one initiatives

Several interventions offered one-to-one support to children and young people (see Walker et al, 2019 for full list and Appendix A for some examples). These included:

- **The Children Abused Through Exploitation (CATE) project**: A therapeutic and educational one-to-one intervention, tailored to the needs of children and young people, with sessions usually one hour in length, provided by Telford and Wrekin Council (Telford and Wrekin Council, 2016).

- **Link to Change project**: One-to-one intensive therapeutic outreach with children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, working through six or seven ‘modules’ depending on the whether the child or young person is a boy or a girl (Harris et al, 2017).

- **Safe and Sound**: One-to-one case work support offered in weekly sessions, with sessions lasting one and a half hours, typically delivered over the period of a year. Crisis support offered, with sessions sometimes being provided on a daily basis.

- **Street Teams**: One-to-one case work, with sessions being one and a half hours in length, and cases lasting up to two years.

- **Manchester Active Voices**: People who had been victims of sexual exploitation in the past provided mentoring to young women who had been or were at risk of exploitation (Buck et al, 2017).

- **Standing Against Global Exploitation Everywhere**: Provides life skills programmes, advocacy, case management and counselling (Gibbs et al, 2015).
• **The South Yorkshire Empower and Protect programme:** Provides therapeutic work with young people affected by child sexual exploitation (Scott et al., 2017b).

• **Families and Communities Against Sexual Exploitation:** Provides support to young people and families, including home visits (Thomas & D’Arcy, 2017).

• **Safe Steps:** Provides assessment and trauma-focused therapy (Williams et al, 2017).

• **The Wise Project:** Provides one-to-one support to boys and young men affected by exploitation (Amor, 2017).

• **The Coventry Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, the Rape and Sexual Violence Project** provides weekly counselling sessions.

Several one-to-one interventions were provided in a residential care home setting context (Nicolaescu, 2014) or were focused on keeping children and young people in secure foster care placement (Shuker, 2013). The review reported that, in some cases, direct work with children and young people also included direct work with parents and carers, such as Families and Communities Against Sexual Exploitation (Thomas & D’Arcy, 2017).

**Preventative group work initiatives**

The review commissioned by the NSPCC identified a range of child education services that had been developed to prevent exploitation:

• Showing groups of children and young people a child sexual exploitation awareness-raising film called *Chelsea’s Choice.*[^6]

• Showing groups of children and young people a ‘theatre in education’ programme called *Working for Marcus.*[^7]

• The use of a preventative sexual exploitation pack called *Bwise 2 Sexual Exploitation* as part of an educative programme delivered to schools in London (Barnardo’s, 2007; Skidmore & Robinson, 2007).

• School-based prevention workshops.

[^6]: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAo8Yly8rFk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAo8Yly8rFk)
[^7]: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBCV2pKIMis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBCV2pKIMis)
The NSPCC’s Protect & Respect group work and one-to-one preventative services can be added to this list because they have involved the use of child education to prevent exploitation (NSPCC, 2014, p18). The development of these services can be considered as part of a wider movement, which began in the 1970s in the US, of using child education to prevent child sexual abuse (Williams, 2018, pp11–12). Programmes have sought to:

- Teach children and young people that child sexual abuse is wrong, being sexually abused is not the victim’s fault and that they have a right to say who can touch them and where.
- Strengthen children and young people’s sense of control in a sexual conflict.
- Raise children and young people’s preference for harmless refusal strategies.
- Raise awareness that disclosing abuse can lead to the victim receiving help.
- Teach and encourage children and young people to take actions that lower the risk or likelihood of sexual abuse.

Appendix B

The Outcome Measurement Tool consisted of 17 areas relating to the life of the child or young person. The child or young person was expected to rate the risks posed to them in each of the 17 areas. Risk was rated from 1 to 5. Once the child or young person had rated themselves, the professional was then expected to rate them, using the same rating scale.

The 17 areas covered by the Outcome Measurement Tool were:

1. Education.
2. Parent Carer Relationship.
3. Accommodation.
4. Wellbeing.
6. Alcohol use.
7. Drug use.
8. Sexual health.
10. Rights, risk awareness and assertion.
11. Risk to others.
12. Engagement.
13. Ability to identify abusive/exploitative behaviour.
15. Sexual exploitation.
16. Immigration status.
17. Trafficking.
Appendix C

The evaluation of the group work service

Aims

The aim of the evaluation was to study the establishment, implementation and experience of receiving the Protect & Respect group work service. In particular, the evaluation sought to identify how engaging with the group work service affected children and young people’s lives. The evaluation also sought to assess the readiness of the NSPCC for conducting an impact study and scaling-up a group work intervention model, given that impact studies and scaling-up an intervention model were both long-term aspirations.

Data collection methods

Data collected during the evaluation was qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative data collection

Qualitative data were gained from a combination of interviews and a study of case file notes. Two types of interview were conducted: overview interviews and case study interviews. Overview interviews sought to gain a general overview of the themes and issues that staff, children and young people and family members had experienced. They included discussions about group work but often covered other elements of the Protect & Respect programme. Case-focused interviews were interviews focused on the work done between an NSPCC practitioner and a particular child or young person. The need to draw a distinction between overview and case study interviews came about as a result of a discussion with the NSPCC’s Research Ethics Committee. Originally, the evaluation plan had focused on using interviews to focus on individual cases. However, the Research Ethics Committee instructed the evaluation to only discuss individual cases where the people involved in the case consented. Where NSPCC practitioners had worked on cases in which a child or young person had not consented, the evaluation was permitted to collect feedback on the general issues that had come up over the cases that an NSPCC practitioner had worked on, but without specific reference made to individual cases.

Overview interviews were conducted with NSPCC staff and members of staff from partner agencies (see Table 4). Partner agency interviewees included local authority child sexual exploitation coordinators, police officers, school staff and a care home manager. Overview interviews could be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting. Groups could be composed of NSPCC practitioners
from one service centre or from across several centres. Towards the end of the evaluation data collection period, a group of NSPCC practitioners, experienced in delivering group work, drawn from two different service centres, were gathered to discuss the interim evaluation findings, and to provide further feedback.

Table 4: Number of overview interviews conducted as part of the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-to-one interviews</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC development manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC service centre manager</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC team manager</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC administrator</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff working for partner agency</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group interviews</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service centre group</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff from different service centres</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case-focused interviews were conducted with NSPCC staff, staff from partner agencies and children and young people (see Table 5). Where the child or young person had consented to a ‘case-focused’ interview, they also had the choice of consenting to the evaluator reviewing the case file notes that the NSPCC practitioner had written on the work with them.

Table 5: Number of case-focused interviews and analysis of case notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case-focused work</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of case file notes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the child or young person</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with a worker from a referring agency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant recruitment for the interviews

A successful attempt was made to interview people from across the 15 service centres that had been involved in delivering the Protect & Respect programme (see Table 6). However, in practice, participant recruitment for interviews relied on the initiative of service centre staff: in participating in interviews; in identifying and gaining the consent of children and young people into the case-focused work; and in identifying and gaining the consent of staff from external partner agencies. As Table 6 details, while data were obtained from
participants in every service centre area, in practice, the data obtained tended to come from particular service centres. For example, three service centres provided almost half of all participants in the overview interviews. A further three service centres provided all the participants and data in the case-focused interviews and case note studies.

Table 6: Qualitative data collection by service centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-to-one interviews</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
<th>Service centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC service centre manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC team manager</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC administrator</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff working for partner agency</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group interviews</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
<th>Service centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service centre group</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case-focused work</th>
<th>Number of occasions this type of work was done</th>
<th>Service centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of case file notes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the child or young person</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with a worker from a referring agency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All types of interview and work</th>
<th>Number of occasions this type of work was done</th>
<th>Service centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative data collection

Measuring outcomes

Quantitative data were collected on children and young people’s wellbeing at the beginning and at the end of the group work. A standardised outcomes measure called the Outcome Rating Scale was used to collect the data (Better Outcomes Now, 2018). The decision to collect data on wellbeing for a service whose ultimate purpose was to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation was a pragmatic one, and one which was taken in a consideration of how to evaluate the Protect & Respect programme more widely. During the planning of the evaluation, it was decided that the priority would be to evaluate the four one-to-one services. This was in part because the one-to-one work required more resource to deliver and so was felt to warrant more evaluation resource. But it was also a reflection that the group work was considered a light touch service, which was about giving children and young people information rather than doing an in-depth assessment of their needs.

Given the expectation that the evaluation should reflect the light touch nature of the service and given that the substantial requirement being made of NSPCC service centres to collect data for the one-to-one work, it was decided that a light touch standardised measure could be useful for the evaluation of the group work. It was felt that the existing assessment measure tool that the NSPCC used to measure risk, which for one-to-one work took six weeks to administer, would be too time consuming and too intense in relation to the service. The Outcome Rating Scale fitted the bill, because it was easy to administer, it took a minute to complete, and previous experience of using the measure in other NSPCC service evaluations had suggested it would be acceptable to children and young people and NSPCC practitioners. While it was recognised that the measure did not directly measure risk, the NSPCC development manager posited that improved wellbeing could be considered an indicator of lowered risk to sexual exploitation. The argument put forward was based on the idea that NSPCC practitioners would need to help children and young people improve self-esteem and their relationships and lessen their involvement in situations where there was heightened risk, on the road to reduced risk. It was suggested that achieving these intermediate outcomes and experiencing less risk of exploitation would together improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

In group work, data on wellbeing was at the beginning (data collected at this point is referred to as Time 1 in Table 7) and end of the service (data collected at this point is referred to as Time 2 in Table 7). Over the course of the evaluation period, just over half of all the
children and young people who had attended at least one session of group work was recorded as having completed a Time 1 measure, and one third had completed both a Time 1 and a Time 2 measure (see Table 7).

Table 7: Completion of Outcome Rating Scale measure for users of the Protect & Respect group work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Number of Users Completing the Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 and Time 2</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collecting administrative data on children and young people

Data were also collected on:

- The characteristics of the children and young people doing group work.
- The types of group that were provided (such as the size of the group, number of sessions, length of time).
- Service attrition (such as how many children and young people completed all the sessions in the group).
- Evaluation attrition (such as how many children and young people consented to evaluation and completed the wellbeing measures).

Strengths and limitations of the study methods

The qualitative data collected from NSPCC practitioners, foster carers, children and young people and external partner organisations provided this study with insight into how the service was experienced by those who delivered, received and managed it. Furthermore, this study was able to collect a significant amount of service and evaluation attrition data (see Diagram 1). Attrition is a big feature of services delivered to children and families generally but is especially pertinent to child sexual exploitation services. A recent review of the literature on child sexual exploitation services revealed that there is very little data collected and reported on attrition (Walker et al, 2019). This puts the NSPCC in a strong place to start an evidence-based discussion about the scale of attrition, reasons for attrition and whether certain groups of children and young people are more likely to not complete the service or participate in the evaluation. A detailed analysis on the attrition data has yet to be completed and will form the basis of a forthcoming report.
However, there are several limitations to the study design relating to:

- The representativeness of the data.
- The validity and accuracy of the qualitative data.
- The validity of the quantitative wellbeing data collected.
- The assumptions underpinning the use of wellbeing as an indicator of risk.
- The extent to which the study was able to address the question of whether group work could prevent child sexual exploitation.

The data collected in this report is likely to be more representative of:

- **Girls rather than boys.** Four fifths of all children and young people who participated in the group work were female.

- **Children without learning disabilities or behavioural problems.** Staff in one service centre felt that, in their experience, children with learning disabilities were less likely to complete measures and children with behavioural problems were more likely to have been excluded at some point from the school and therefore the group work.

- **The experiences of particular service centres.** While data were obtained from participants in every service centre area, some centres contributed more data.

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8 420 girls and 85 boys.
• **Adult perspectives rather than that of children and young people.** Four children and young people were interviewed. As a consequence, the sections on the experiences of children and young people draw heavily on insights and views given by adults who participated in the service and evaluation.

• **Participants who felt positive towards the service.** The children and young people and adults who participated in the service generally felt positive about it and volunteered their time to feedback about the service.

A second limitation of the study relates to the limitation of qualitative interview data. While interview data can provide rich insight into how and why things happen, such accounts may not be accurate (Powney & Watts, 1987). Inaccurate perceptions can result from a limited ability to recognise and understand one’s own behaviour and the behaviour of others (Wegner & Vallacher, 1977; Caudle, 1994). Inaccurate perceptions can also result from a preference for seeing the world and oneself in a particular light (ten Have, 1999). This report explicitly refers to the sources of the evidence by type of participant.

A third limitation relates to the utility of the quantitative data that was collected. The utility of the data, in being able to demonstrate the impact of a group work intervention model, was nullified by the large variation in the delivery of group work across the evaluation period. Even if a group work model had been delivered consistently, the fact that only a third of all children and young people had completed a Time 1 and Time 2 measure meant that the results would be unlikely to be representative of the wider experience of those who attended the group work. There may have been important differences in the experiences and outcomes for the children and young people who filled in the evaluation measures. Furthermore, in the event of the data suggesting a positive change for users, the change could not have been attributed to the group work intervention model, because without a control group the possibility that other factors may have been responsible for the positive outcomes could not be ruled out. Maturation within the children and young people over the six weeks, concern shown for the child or young person by school staff, being selected for the group work and being able to skip certain lessons in school, may have in and of itself helped improve the child or young person’s wellbeing, or may have led to further interventions that produced the positive change.

A fourth limitation relates to the validity of the wellbeing data collected via the Outcome Rating Scale. There were various ways in which the measure was administered or completed that raised questions about the validity of some of the data:
• Measures were administered at the wrong time point, for example at the end of the first session rather than at the beginning of it.

• Children and young people deliberately scoring their wellbeing as high at Time 1 because they:
  - Did not want to disclose poor wellbeing.
  - Did not want their peers to see that they had poor wellbeing, with the forms being completed in view of their peers.
  - Did not want further professional intervention after having been subject to warnings or discipline for disruptive behaviour.

• Children and young people, unwittingly scoring their wellbeing as high at Time 1 because they did not have good insight into their wellbeing.

• Children and young people making their Outcome Rating Scale scores look like their Session Rating Scale score, where the Session Rating Scale was also being used in group work.

• Children and young people not having taken the scoring of the Time 2 measure seriously because they had wanted to leave the session as quickly as possible to get on to the school break.

• Children and young people scoring their Time 2 measure to indicate their sadness at the group work coming to an end, rather than considering how they had been feeling across the course of the last week.

A fifth limitation relates to the assumptions underpinning the idea that wellbeing data collected via the Outcome Rating Scale could be considered a reliable indicator of the risk of being sexually exploited. The idea that wellbeing correlated with risk was challenged by some NSPCC staff, who said that, during the stages of being groomed, children and young people could experience an increase in their wellbeing. It was also felt that a range of factors, unrelated to the risk of exploitation, could impact on the child or young person’s wellbeing. Some NSPCC practitioners felt that even if the risk of exploitation had been reduced for children and young people, this would not have impacted on the areas of wellbeing measured by the Outcome Rating Scale.

A sixth limitation relates to the extent to which this evaluation is able to address the key question of whether the group work was able to prevent sexual exploitation. Given the challenges in delivering the group work model and in collecting data, this study needed to rely on the perspectives of NSPCC practitioners, children and young people and external professionals. However, in practice, interviews were conducted quite soon after the group work had finished, which meant not enough time had passed for participants to understand whether children and young people’s risk had increased or decreased as a result.
of the group work. Furthermore, NSPCC practitioners, who provided most of the data, did not know the children and young people they worked with well enough to be able to reach a judgement on the risks posed to them. Even if the group work model had been delivered and an impact study carried out, some NSPCC practitioners felt that group work would have a latent effect. In other words, they felt that a study that collected follow-up data in the last session would not pick up the positive impact of group work.

Analysis

A thematic analysis was carried out on the data collected in this project. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were developed around the establishment, implementation and experience of different stages of the delivery of the Protect & Respect group work service and the impact that it had on the lives of the children and young people and foster carers who accessed the service.

Ethics approval

The evaluation plan was approved by the NSPCC’s Research Ethics Committee. The Committee’s members are largely external to the NSPCC. The NSPCC research ethics policy was based on the Economic Social Research Council Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC, 2012) and the Government Social Research Unit Professional Guidance (GSRU, 2006). Where interviews were conducted on individual cases, consent for the participation of children and young people, foster carers and NSPCC practitioners needed to be sought from each participant. Each participant had to agree to the other participants doing an evaluation interview and to the information fed back during the interview remaining confidential to the evaluation.
Appendix D

The evaluation of the one-to-one service

Aims

The aim of the evaluation was to study the establishment, implementation and experience of receiving the Protect & Respect one-to-one service. In particular, the evaluation sought to identify how engaging with the one-to-one work affected children and young people’s lives.

Data collection methods

Data collected during the evaluation was qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative data collection

Qualitative data were gained from a combination of interviews and a study of case file notes. Two types of interview were conducted: overview interviews and case study interviews. Overview interviews sought to gain a general overview of the themes and issues that staff, children and young people and family members had experienced. Case-focused interviews were interviews focused on the work done between an NSPCC practitioner and a particular child or young person. The need to draw a distinction between overview and case study interviews came about as a result of a discussion with the NSPCC’s Research Ethics Committee, which instructed the evaluator to only discuss individual cases with practitioners where the people involved in the case consented. Where NSPCC practitioners had worked on cases in which a child or young person had not consented, the evaluation was permitted to collect feedback on the general issues that had come up over the cases but without specific reference being made to individual cases.

Overview interviews were conducted with NSPCC staff and members of staff from partner agencies (see Table 8). Partner agency interviewees included local authority child sexual exploitation coordinators, police officers, school staff and a care home manager. Overview interviews with NSPCC practitioners could be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting. Groups could be composed of NSPCC practitioners from one service centre or from across several centres.
Table 8: Number of overview interviews conducted as part of the evaluation of the Protect & Respect programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC development manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC service centre manager</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC team manager</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC administrator</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff working for partner agency</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Group</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service centre group</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff from different service centres</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case-focused interviews were conducted with NSPCC staff, staff from partner agencies and children and young people (see Table 9). Where the child or young person had consented to a ‘case-focused’ interview, they also had the choice of consenting to the evaluator reviewing the case file notes that the NSPCC practitioner had written on the work with them. Data were collected from 12 cases.

Table 9: Number of case-focused interviews and analyses of case notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case-focused work</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of case file notes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the child or young person</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with a worker from a referring agency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant recruitment for the interviews

Staff were interviewed from across the 15 service centres involved in delivering the Protect & Respect programme (see Table 10). However, participants were not equally spread across the 15 centres. Three service centres provided almost half of all participants in the overview interviews. Case-focused data were provided by six, and interviews were conducted with children and young people from three of the 15 participating centres. Unequal participation was because the evaluation relied on the willingness and availability of service centre staff for participating in interviews and for arranging the participating of children and young people and external staff. In practice, the engagement of staff in the evaluation varied across centres. Furthermore, some centres had been running for less time during the period of the evaluation, and so had less time to participate.
Table 10: Qualitative data collection by service centre

### One-to-one interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Service centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC service centre manager</td>
<td>5  1  1  1  1  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC team manager</td>
<td>10 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>13 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPCC administrator</td>
<td>5  1  1  1  1  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff working for partner agency</td>
<td>9  1  4  3  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42  4  3  0  7  2  3  1  2  7  5  2  0  4  0  2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Group interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Group</th>
<th>Service centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service centre group</td>
<td>14  1  2  1  1  0  2  0  0  1  1  0  1  3  1  0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Case-focused work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>Service centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of case file notes</td>
<td>9  3  1  1  2  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the child or young person</td>
<td>6  1  1  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the NSPCC practitioner</td>
<td>7  2  1  1  2  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with a worker from a referring agency</td>
<td>1  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23  6  1  1  0  0  3  0  5  7  0  0  0  0  0  0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### All types of interview and work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of occasions this type of work was done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79  11  6  2  8  2  5  4  7  15  6  2  1  7  1  2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative data collection

Measuring outcomes
Quantitative evaluation data were collected on wellbeing, trauma and risk of being sexually exploited, at the beginning and at the end of the service intervention. Detailed information about the tools used to collect this data were provided in the section on the ‘practice model’, but to recap:

- Wellbeing was measured through the administration of the Outcome Rating Scale.
- Traumatic symptomology was measured through the administration of the Child Report of Post-Traumatic Symptoms.
- Risk of sexual exploitation was measured through the administration of the Outcome Measurement Tool (see Appendix B for more information).

When the evaluation started in June 2014, NSPCC practitioners and children and young people were asked to provide data at eight different time points. This report, to simplify matters for the reader, is focused on data collected at four different time points:

- Time 1, at the beginning of the assessment.
- Time 2, at the end of the assessment.
- Time 3, at the beginning of the intervention.
- Time 4, at the end of the intervention.

Data on wellbeing and traumatic symptomology was collected at all time points; data on risk was collected at Time 2 and 4 only.

Table 11 details the completion rates of the outcome measures used in the one-to-one work. It compares the number of measures that could have been completed with the number of measures that were completed. The table also looks at the number of cases where enough data were collected to allow for a measure of change. It should be noted that across all cases, a measure of change was possible in less than 50 per cent of cases:

- In 42 per cent of cases it was possible to measure change in wellbeing.
- In 23 per cent of cases it was possible to measure change in traumatic symptomology.
- In 21 per cent of cases it was possible to measure change in professionals’ rating of the risk of sexual exploitation.
- In 5 per cent of cases it was possible to measure change in children and young people’s rating of the risk of sexual exploitation.

An exploration of the reasons for this attrition in the evaluation data will be the subject of a future report on evaluation attrition data.
Table 11: Completion of Outcome Rating Scale, Child Report of Traumatic Symptoms and the Outcome Measurement Tool for the Protect & Respect one-to-one work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ORS M</th>
<th>ORS YP</th>
<th>ORS P</th>
<th>CROPS M</th>
<th>CROPS YP</th>
<th>CROPS P</th>
<th>OMT YP M</th>
<th>OMT YP P</th>
<th>OMT PROF M</th>
<th>OMT PROF P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1&amp;2/3</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1&amp;4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2/3&amp;4</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KE:** ORS = Outcome Rating Scale; CROPS = Child Report of Traumatic Symptoms; OMT = Young person’s rating for the Outcome Measurement Tool, Professional Rating for the Outcome Measurement Tool; M = Number of measures that were completed; YP = Number of measures that could have been completed that were completed; P = Proportion of measures that could have been completed that were completed; T1 = Beginning of assessment; T2 = End of assessment; T3 = Beginning of intervention; T4 = End of intervention; T1&2 = Beginning of assessment and end of assessment or beginning of intervention; T1&4 = Beginning of assessment and end of intervention.

Collecting administrative data on children and young people

Data were also collected on:

- The characteristics of the children and young people doing one-to-one work.
- The length of assessment and intervention, and the number of sessions held.
- Service attrition (such as how many children and young people completed the assessment and intervention work plan agreed with the NSPCC practitioner at the beginning of the work).
- Evaluation attrition (such as how many children and young people consented to evaluation and completed the measures).

Strengths and limitations of the study methods

The qualitative data collected from NSPCC practitioners, foster carers, children and young people and external partner organisations provided this study with insight into how the service was experienced by those who delivered, received and managed it. Furthermore, this study was able to collect a significant amount of service and evaluation attrition data (see Diagram 2). Attrition is a big feature of services delivered to children and families generally but is especially pertinent to child sexual exploitation services. A recent review of the literature on child sexual exploitation services revealed that there is very little data collected and reported on attrition (Walker et al, 2019). This puts the NSPCC in a strong place to start an evidence-based discussion about the scale of attrition, reasons for attrition and whether certain groups of children and young people are more likely to not complete
the service or participate in the evaluation. A detailed analysis on the attrition data has yet to be completed and will form the basis of a forthcoming report.

Diagram 2: Evaluation attrition in Protect & Respect one-to-one work

842
Eligible to participate in the evaluation

539
Were asked if they wanted to participate in the evaluation

303
Were not asked if they wanted to participate in the evaluation

262
Said yes to participating in the evaluation

277
Said no to participating in the evaluation

223
Cases for whom a Time 2 and Time 4 Outcome Measurement Tool could have been completed

39
Cases for whom a Time 2 and Time 4 Outcome Measurement Tool could not have been completed

176
Cases for whom a Time 2 and Time 4 Outcome Measurement Tool were not completed

47
NSPCC practitioners completing a Time 2 and Time 4 Outcome Measurement Tool

However in reading through this r

There are several limitations to the study design, relating to:

- The representativeness of the data.
- The validity and accuracy of the qualitative data.
- The validity of the quantitative wellbeing data collected.
- The assumptions underpinning the use of wellbeing as an indicator of risk.
- The accuracy of the quantitative data being reported on.
- The extent to which the study was able to address the question of whether one-to-one work could prevent child sexual exploitation.
The data collected in this report is likely to be more representative of:

- **Girls rather than boys.** Nine tenths of all children and young people who were allocated to participate in one-to-one work were female. Of the 821 cases where the gender of the young person who was allocated for one-to-one work was known, 766 were female, 55 were male.

- **The experiences of particular service centres.** While data were obtained from participants in every service centre area, some centres contributed more participants than others.

- **Adult perspectives rather than that of children and young people.** Six children and young people were interviewed. As a consequence, reference made to children and young people’s experiences draw heavily on insights and views given by adults who participated in the service and evaluation.

- **Participants who felt positive towards the service.** The children and young people who participated in the evaluation tended to be those who had participated longer in the service and generally felt positive about it.

A second limitation of the study relates to the limitation of qualitative interview data. While interview data can provide rich insight into how and why things happen, such accounts may not be accurate (Powney & Watts, 1987). Inaccurate perceptions can result from a limited ability to recognise and understand one’s own behaviour and the behaviour of others (Wegner & Vallacher, 1977; Caudle, 1994). Inaccurate perceptions can also result from a preference for seeing the world and oneself in a particular light (ten Have, 1999) or from feeling a pressure to paint a picture of the world in a particular way to gain the approval of others. For example, it was suggested by one NSPCC practitioner that the young person she was working with could give the impression that she had benefited from the work, but that this might be due to the fact that she felt the need to tell a story of self-improvement to satisfy the professionals around her:

“I mean she does say stuff like that: ‘I’ve been on a journey.’ She sometimes sort of sounds like a self-help book when she talks, and I don’t want to criticise her, but she will come out with stuff that sounds very rehearsed and almost – I don’t know. Do you know what I mean by that? I've gone between thinking, is she just really skilled at being able to say things that she thinks people want to hear, or does she really feel that? So I don’t know. I think she would tell you that she’s been on a journey and it’s been
great, and she’s really learnt loads and she’s so grateful, but I don’t know, I don’t know if you’d really be able to unpick the reality of how it was for her.”

NSPCC practitioner

This means that what might appear to be a child or young person indicating gains in knowledge and a change in attitude may actually be them submitting to an expectation to reproduce and agree with what a professional thinks is important for them to know, understand and appreciate.

A third limitation relates to the utility of the quantitative data that was collected. The utility of the data, in being able to demonstrate the impact of the one-to-one work, was nullified by the large variation in the delivery of one-to-one work across the evaluation period. However, even if the one-to-one work model had been delivered consistently, the evaluation attrition would have made conducting an impact study very difficult. Only one fifth of the children and young people who completed an intervention completed a before and after service measure. The results from the fifth of service users would have been unlikely to be representative of the service users more widely. There is a fair chance that there would have been important differences in the experiences and outcomes for the children and young people who filled in the evaluation measures. Furthermore, in the event of the data suggesting a positive change for users, the change could not have been attributed to the one-to-one work, because without a control group the possibility that other factors may have been responsible for the positive outcomes could not be ruled out. Maturation within the children and young people over the length of the intervention, concern and support shown for the child or young person by professionals who had referred them to the service may have improved their outcomes.

A fourth limitation relates to the validity of the data being collected. There were various ways in which measures were administered or completed that raised questions about the validity of some of the data:

- Measures were administered at the wrong time point.
- When completing self-report measures, children and young people were reported to have:
  - Sometimes deliberately scored their wellbeing and traumatic symptomology as high at the beginning because they:
    - Did not want to disclose poor wellbeing.
    - Did not want professional intervention and did not want to provide a score indicating that they had need because to do so would have evidenced the need for professional intervention.
- Sometimes unwittingly scored their wellbeing or traumatic symptomology as high in the early stages of the work because they did not have good insight into their emotional state or wellbeing.

- A question was raised about whether the Outcome Rating Scale could be considered a reliable indicator of the risk of being sexually exploited. The idea that wellbeing correlated with risk was challenged by some NSPCC staff who said that during the stages of being groomed, children and young people could experience an increase in their wellbeing. It was also felt that a range of factors, unrelated to the risk of exploitation, could impact on the child or young person’s wellbeing.

- When completing the Outcome Measurement tool, it was felt that the tool under-estimated the risks posed to children and young people because NSPCC practitioners did not have access to relevant information in the first assessment. It was felt that this meant that when end of service measures were compared with before service measures, what could sometimes look like a worsening of the risk was an increase in the awareness of the practitioner of the actual risk.

- It was felt that the Outcome Measurement Tool did not cover areas that were of relevance to determining the risk of exploitation posed to the child or young person. Such areas that were not covered were support, threats and ability to safeguard within the family and wider community.

- Some of the Outcome Measurement Tool measures were completed retrospectively by NSPCC practitioners who had not had direct involvement in the case.

- Some of the scores provided in the Outcome Measurement Tool, which were determined early on in the assessment, could be out of date by the time the Outcome Measurement Tool was completed. It could sometimes take three months to complete the Outcome Measurement Tool, from beginning to end.

A further caveat, which is independent of the validity of the data collected, is the accuracy of the data actually reported on and analysed. The data set was cleaned and summarised by the National Centre of Social Research. Data cleaning and summarising was made difficult by the fact that data were sometimes missing, did not make sense or was contradictory (e.g. in some cases the date given for the end of the assessment came before the data given for the end of the assessment). The cleaning and ordering of the data could not resolve all the inconsistencies within it.
A sixth limitation relates to the extent to which this evaluation is able to address the key question of whether the one-to-one work was able to prevent sexual exploitation. Given the challenges in delivering the one-to-one work model and in collecting data, this study needed to rely on the perspectives of NSPCC practitioners, children and young people and external professionals. However, in practice, interviews were conducted quite soon after the one-to-one work had finished, which meant not enough time had passed for participants to understand whether children and young people’s risk had increased or decreased as a result of the work. Some NSPCC practitioners felt one-to-one work would have a latent effect, i.e. a positive effect on the child or young person’s life that could only be detected several years on from the intervention. They pointed out that the data collected in this study, immediately at the end of the work, could not capture such an effect.

Analysis

A thematic analysis was carried out on the data collected in this project. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were developed around the establishment, implementation and experience of different stages of the delivery of the Protect & Respect one-to-one work service and the impact that it had on the lives of the children and young people and foster carers who accessed the service.

Ethics approval

The evaluation plan was approved by the NSPCC’s Research Ethics Committee. The Committee’s members were largely drawn external to the NSPCC. The NSPCC research ethics policy was based on the Economic Social Research Council Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC, 2012) and the Government Social Research Unit Professional Guidance (GSRU, 2006).
### Appendix E

#### Session plans included in the Protect & Respect guidance

**Socio-educative Session Plans**

Socio educative sessions are designed to provide information about how abusers use techniques to manipulate and groom young people in order to sexually exploit them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>This can be used as both an activity with a young person as well as an assessment tool for the professional. You could use it at the start of your work with a young person and then again, later on, to assess levels of understanding / any knowledge increase.</td>
<td>Quiz sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s talk about sex</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk about sex in a non-threatening way, where they can acknowledge any embarrassment and apprehension they may have about engaging in this work.</td>
<td>‘Let’s talk about sex’ worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do young people have sex?</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk and think about sex in an open and safe environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Truth about Sexual Exploitation</td>
<td>This activity aims to give young people information regarding sexual exploitation whilst being able to define the issues using their own terms.</td>
<td>Sexual Exploitation Grooming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grooming</td>
<td>To explore the concept of grooming and its stages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types and tricks of abusers (Suitable 13+)</td>
<td>To help a young person to understand different types of abusers – people who sexually exploit young people – and the tricks they use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Socio Educative Resources

External resources that may be useful in socio educative work:

- The Protect and Respect DVD and session plans can be used alongside this manual and are available in hard copy or on You Tube via the links below:
  - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XasNkQ5AVM&feature=player_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XasNkQ5AVM&feature=player_embedded)
  - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=rnqcc3WQ114](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=rnqcc3WQ114)
  - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zuzi2fqfj4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zuzi2fqfj4)
- My Dangerous Lover Boy - DVD and resource pack
- BeWise2 Sexual Exploitation Resource Pack
- It’s Someone Taking a Part of You
- Out of the Box - stories by young people
- In a New Light - stories by young people
- Pieces of Me - stories by young people
- Be(longing) a DVD by young people
- Beyond Barbie
### Building Resilience Session Plans
Resilience sessions are designed to identify and build upon the factors that can positively influence a young person’s coping strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How am I coping?</td>
<td>This is an activity that can be used when you want to gauge progress or assess how the young person attributes blame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Image</td>
<td>This activity aims to explore the young person’s sense of self and identity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My self-portrait</td>
<td>For the young person to start exploring themselves in a creative way, taking into consideration how they think and look and expressing their personal likes and dislikes. This may be their favourite colour, clothes, music, interests/hobbies etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most confident person</td>
<td>The aim is for the young person to identify the different elements that enhance an individual’s sense of confidence and to explore whether they have any of these in their lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The best things about me (Suitable for any age group)</td>
<td>The aim is for the young person to identify positive aspects about themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creative Therapy Approaches
These sessions are designed to use the arts, play, movement and action of the body in addition to, or instead of, speech to help young people explore how they are feeling and what they have experienced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative approaches, letter writing and poetry</td>
<td>Gives young people the option to explore things from a distance, or using other voices/perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing lyrics and performing</td>
<td>Helps young people to express their feelings and talk about their experiences but also raises confidence and self-esteem with their performance and the finished product.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>For those young people who are not confident in making music, creating a playlist to express feelings can be helpful. Encourage them to choose their 'top ten' playlist choices and then explore what they represent for them. can be very effective and often young people will refer to a song to express their thoughts and feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps, journeys, a timeline or a river</td>
<td>Explore the young person’s life story – either looking backwards or forwards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art work – drawings, Graffiti art, collages, paintings to</td>
<td>Explore identity issues that young people want to explore but don’t feel able to put into words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood Boards</td>
<td>Using collages using various media such as magazines, craft materials etc. to convey how they feel generally or about a particular subject or person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>– sometimes creating a play about a subject to inform others can give them a chance to express their own feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating masks</td>
<td>Ask young people to create their ‘everyday’ mask that they show the world and their ‘inner’ mask that represents them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>– young people can take photographs of places / objects that represent how they feel and you can discuss these. There is also an organisation called Photo Voice which helps young people tell their stories through photography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cognitive Behavioural Session Plans

CBT sessions are designed to explore how the way we think about things affects us emotionally and in turn how this affects how we behave. These sessions ask young people to begin to reflect on their own views, beliefs and feelings, and examine how these link to their own experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do young people become sexually</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk and think about why young people become sexually exploited.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exploited?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making informed choices</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to think about how they make decisions and to explore whether they have considered some key issues they may face.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do some young people go missing?</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk and think about some of the reasons why young people go missing or run away from home, school or care and explore why they do (if this is relevant to them).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do you have relationships with?</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk and think about relationships and their role in them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down the Line</td>
<td>This activity aims to support young people in considering the different ways that domestic abuse can occur in relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships - what’s good for me?</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk and think about intimate relationships and begin to look at the advantages of being single and being in a relationship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things that my boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk and think about intimate relationships and begin to look at the ways they may have been hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feels to hurt me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things that my boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>This activity aims to help young people begin to talk and think about intimate relationships and begin to look at positive relationships. It builds on the previous session – ‘The things that my boyfriend/girlfriend does to hurt me’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cycle of self-esteem and sexual</td>
<td>Purpose: The aim is for the young person to understand that low self-esteem is a ‘push’ factor in sexual exploitation.</td>
<td>‘The cycle of self-esteem and sexual exploitation’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things I would like to change about my</td>
<td>For the young person to reflect on what they would like to change about themselves and the circumstances in their life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myself and my sexual exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The size you feel (Suitable for ages 13+)</td>
<td>The exercise is designed to increase awareness of how the young person feels in relation to other people (the young person may choose to focus on the perpetrator of the exploitation or other significant people to them).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different sides of the coin</td>
<td>The aim is for the young person to be able to understand that we all have good and bad sides, there will be things that we love and hate and that it is natural and okay to be like this. We don’t have to be perfect all the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trauma sessions are designed to explore gradual exposure in order to desensitise the young person to the trauma content and to enable them to gain mastery over their experience. These sessions should be planned to address:

- Safety and stabilisation
- Education
- Overcoming ‘phobias’
- Deepening the therapeutic relationship
- Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gradual exposure to the trauma and gaining mastery</td>
<td>To help the young person gradually expose themselves to the trauma content and gain mastery. A word of caution: the timing of this intervention is crucial – to use this intervention too early in the work or before the young person is ready could be re-traumatising.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Creep and Creepy Crawly Activity</td>
<td>This intervention is for a young person who is avoiding the trauma and this is resulting in a continuation of their symptoms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Life Story</td>
<td>The aim is for the young person to explore their life and different experiences and events, linking these to their vulnerability to sexual exploitation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a no-post letter to the abuser</td>
<td>To help the young person formulate their own thoughts and feelings about sexual exploitation and direct responsibility for it towards the perpetrator.</td>
<td>Activity Sheet – ‘No-post letter’ to the abuser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal ‘demo’ (Suitable 13+)</td>
<td>To help the young person reclaim a sense of power and control over their lives by designing a poster for a pretend demonstration by young people who have been sexually exploited.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Island Game</td>
<td>To help those who may have experienced trafficking + sexual exploitation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>