

# **Findings of Scoping Exercise into Practitioners knowledge of Child Sexual Exploitation of LGBT Young People in the North East**

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Commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation

## **1. Introduction**

Northern Rock Foundation's Safety and Justice programme focuses on the sexual exploitation of adults and children and funds both service development and research, to better understand this issue. We were concerned that the specific experiences and support needs of LGBT young people are not reflected in the current discussions around child sexual exploitation. We know from funding local LGBT youth work that specialist youth workers are in touch with young people at risk of exploitation. We asked Trinity Youth Association to have a series of discussions with staff working both in sexual exploitation services and in LGBT youth and community settings to find out what they know, where they think the gaps in provision are and what might be some useful next steps. The result is this excellent report which gives a very helpful overview of the current situation and clearly identifies some practical ways forward. *Cullagh Warnock - Programme Manager Northern Rock Foundation*

## **2. Background**

Child Sexual Exploitation has been afforded much research and even more tabloid columns of late yet despite anecdotal evidence of individual LGB or T young people being groomed and exploited LGBT young people have not featured majorly in the discourse, Davis *et al* (2005), Cavener (2010), Haworth (2012). In addition it appeared that sexually exploited LGBT young people did not access mainstream CSE services (unless specifically targeted, eg SECOS) choosing instead to seek support from LGBT youth services & other general support services for the LGBT community. This anecdotal evidence has been supported by Howarth (2008) who concluded that youth work-style approaches were effective in engaging young people who were being sexually exploited, offering a unique opportunity to challenge the attitudes and behaviour which puts young people at risk.

Drawing on anecdotal evidence and the above studies, in July 2012 Northern Rock Foundation invited CSE specialist and LGBT youth and community workers to come together to discuss the support available to LGBT victims of CSE. It became quickly apparent that LGBT youth work provision was patchy at best and that sessional youth workers did not have the capacity to deal appropriately with cases of CSE. Trinity Youth Association was therefore asked to do a scoping exercise as a first step to mapping current capacity and identifying gaps in resources.

### 3. Definition of Children's Sexual Exploitation

The UK government's definition of child sexual exploitation is wide ranging and encompasses those situations which are well known. The definition is starting to be contested as more professionals wrestle with the issue and find that they may still be unsure whether something can be categorised 'officially' as child sexual exploitation. Recently its usefulness has come into question with regard to 'older' young people who by their protected characteristics, including being LGB or T, continue to be considered vulnerable long after they reach 18.

**Current definition** "Sexual exploitation of children and young people **under 18** involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) **receives something** (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities....In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have **power over them** by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources." (Barnado's, 2012)

### 4. Methodology

Informal interviews were conducted with 4 LGBT youth workers, 4 LGBT community workers, 3 CSE specialists, 2 LGBT housing workers and 2 generic youth workers. Trinity Youth Association would like to thank everyone who participated for their openness and the generosity of spirit in which they shared their experiences, reflections and ideas.

### 5. Main findings - What practitioners had to say.

#### 5.1. Prevalence: CSE considered not uncommon

Youth workers, community workers and housing workers working with LGBT young people were all aware that some of the young people with whom they work, are or have been victims of CSE. Without wishing to stigmatise the young people they are painfully aware that LGBT young people are very vulnerable to CSE and that behaviour which contributes to this is considered acceptable, the norm and inevitable within the community.

Barnardo's RISE study of prostitution in Newcastle in 2005 found that, "*Young lesbian and gay people, young people who were White (Non-British) presented with more relevant risk factors than any other group of young people.*"

Everyone spoken to could give examples of young people who were in relationships with a large age/power imbalance - 'Sugar Daddies/ Mommies' - or in which there were other factors which made them concerned that the relationship was exploitative. This included isolating the younger person from friends/family, the older person acting as 'teacher', explaining 'what was expected of being gay, what was a 'gay' relationship, etc', violence, manipulation etc.

Everyone interviewed could give examples of young people who as a matter of course exchanged sexual favours for drinks, a bed for the night, clothes or gadgets.

*"I worked with a 23 year old who had a series of boyfriends... He was very verbal about 'the daddies' buying him the latest gadgets, clothes, cocktails so he could live 'my fabulous gay life' .. He would say, "I'm hot enough to get anything I want.."* (Interviewee 1)

Sometimes this exchange would be explicit but practitioners thought that more young people were involved in transactions where there was an implicit expectation of gain. All practitioners felt that CSE in the LGBT community went largely undetected and was not uncommon.

## **5.2. Attitudes to Sex - CSE is 'no biggie'**

Practitioners reported that the exchange of sex for gain, particularly for young gay men was considered to be 'no biggie', 'just a bit of fun' 'a way of getting something over older people/ using them' or as an achievement, a symbol that they were attractive enough to be able to get older people to part with money or be good to them. That is not to say that the majority of young gay men held this view or that those who did continued to view relationships in the same way in later life. (Practitioners who had worked with the same young men throughout their teens spoke about the grief and shame felt by young people who retrospectively identified a relationship as exploitative.) Anecdotal evidence however does suggest that there is a significant sub-group within the LGBT community who do hold these views.

Interviewees recalled how young people would describe persuading older people to buy drinks for them. Being able to do so was more than about economic gain. *"It's like an achievement,"* (Interviewee 1) or a measurement of their sexual attractiveness. *"Putting out is considered a harmless exchange."*

*"There was this young lad who I used to work with...he was offering blow jobs in the loos for a couple of pints. He thought it was a laugh ...I tried to make him see that he couldn't take that back... there will always be men around he'll see, that he did for.. what.. a couple of quid?"* (Interviewee 2)

West's (1992) study of male prostitution in London found that although 80% of the sample said they had resorted to prostitution when they were very desperately short

of money, sometimes with no food or shelter, *some were clearly having a ball, enjoying the plenitude of sex and drugs and night life.*" (p130)

### 5.3. Risk Factors – Part of gay culture

Interviewees were keen to suggest factors which when combined might offer reasons for the development of this sub cultural norm:

- The belief that young men are predisposed to be driven by sex and will seek sex out wherever it is accessible with less regard to the context in which it is supplied.
- Where a culture is highly sexualised but sex is separate from intimacy, for some it becomes a meaningless activity. In some respects perhaps sex where a price has been negotiated within a space reserved for 'sex' (cruising area/cottage) actually has more meaning because it has a meaning i.e. a stated outcome, or a contract or an expectancy of role.
- LGBT young people often suffer from low self esteem due to both internalised homophobia and homophobia/transphobia and heterosexism in society. Practitioners cited numerous cases of young people agreeing to a sexual encounter because they craved affirmation, love or physical closeness. *"Sometimes all they get out of it is a hug.....sometimes... not even that"* (Interviewee 2)
- When parents of LGBT young people are homo/transphobic or simply signal a discomfort or disapproval, even young people still living in the family home can develop a double life to cope with the impossibility of conforming. Subterfuge increases the risks young people ordinarily take when they become more independent and begin to socialise with wider networks of people.
- Young LGBT people who are isolated (through rurality, religion, additional needs etc) are at greater risk of being exploited because *"there is a desperation around early relationships."* (Interviewee 3) This desperation can build up as age appropriate intimacies are missed out on or delayed until late teens or even early twenties.
- Body Fascism - You don't have to look far for evidence of body fascism in gay male culture – magazines drip with pictures of the scantily clad, teenage bar staff pulling pints in their Calvin Kleins. Beauty and youth are highly prized and competition is fierce. For those young men who haven't developed a strong sense of self, being treated like a prize commodity can be a heady tonic. Rather than increase self-esteem, for some, being positively objectified & admired lowers defences against approaches from unsuitable suitors. As C,

aged in his 20's, described his first experience on the Sunderland gay scene shows, *"It was like I was in this place where I was accepted. Everyone was having a good time, smiling, I felt like I could talk to anyone. Men stopped me to say how good looking I was... It felt like a loving place... Like a place I could talk to anyone. This older guy got talking to me at the bar. He was really listening... He seemed really interested in what I was saying... I told him all about myself. He was very reassuring. Later, he tried to kiss me... I wasn't expecting that... I was very upset... I mean he was about 60.."* (Young Person 1)

- White picket fence - Young people who have a history of abuse or neglect, and have not acquired the skills to live independently seem often to share a fantasy of an older lover creating an idyll of a perfect home with a white picket fence and movie screen perfect 'happily ever' after relationship. The desire to live out the fantasy seems to be resistant to evidence that the relationship is imperfect, or even exploitative.

*"Brought up in a homophobic environment, without the skills to live independently, he had developed a picture of a perfect 'happy ever after' with a white picket fence.. was continually being picked off by older men, including being raped.. An older partner moved him away... systematically cut him off from everyone."* (Interviewee 3)

#### **5.4. An easy target?**

As homophobia and transphobia is endemic in schools and other youth environments, LGBT young people usually have no other opportunities to make LGBT friendships and relationships than to do so by seeking access to the adult social scene which as discussed is highly sexualised and almost exclusively based in bars and clubs with all the associated risks.

There is a spectrum of problematic behaviours which contribute to the risk of experiencing CSE, from the clumsy, unaware attentions of otherwise benign individuals to the conscious, deliberate and systematic pursuance of young people. For the latter there was much evidence of use of a combination of tried and tested grooming methods and a parasitic and cunning utilisation of the latest communication technologies. There was a depressing sense of inevitability and powerlessness amongst workers. *"How do 'we' keep up? They're really motivated to stay ahead."* (Interviewee 4)

**Gr'ndr (& the other 95 Gay Dating Apps)** Practitioners bemoaned the use of internet, Apps, BiM and other social media which allowed young people to hook up easily with strangers. *"He told me, 'the internet has liberated me'. He couldn't see the irony... he'd just been telling me that he'd caught syphilis, crabs, chlamydia, gonorrhoea.."*(Interviewee 5)

Case 1 – An 18 year old gay man regularly met other young men of his own age who he had befriended on Facebook. He was quite street smart and had enjoyed making new friends this way. On one occasion he went to meet a man who had described himself as in his early 20's. The person who turned up was clearly in his late 60's.

Case 2 - A 17 year old attended a clinic with an STI he had contracted whilst selling sex from his rural, supportive, middle class home. Having viewed sex work adverts which masquerade as lonely hearts ads on the gay dating sites he decided that it presented a useful economic opportunity. *“Men would drive up to his home... in the middle of nowhere...and pick him up for sex. It's kind of hard to believe.”* (Interviewee 6)

Case 3 - A 15 year old gay man met another 15 year old on Grindr and met him at his home. They played video games together then suddenly, with what appeared to be no precursor, the other young man jumped on him and attempted to rape him.

**Street Hook Ups** A number of practitioners described young people who spent a lot of time hanging out on town centre streets being approached by older people. Taxi drivers, shop workers, market vendors and doormen were commonly mentioned as having made approaches to young gay men or Transwomen for sex.

*“He was adamant that ‘he’ was using the taxi drivers... for money, alcohol, cigarettes, lifts... He had utter contempt for them... he thought they weren't even gay... just easy sex for them.”* (Interviewee 7)

## 5.5 Attitudes to sex & sex work

There was some evidence of more formalised sex work taking place. Locally MAP<sup>1</sup> and GAP report that most of the young sex workers known to them are heterosexual. The number of male workers (selling sex to other males) known to services are low, just breaking into double figures and only 2 of these identify as gay or bi. While a small number of female sex workers are reportedly lesbian or bisexual they sell sex to heterosexual males. Even though the numbers of sex workers known to services are low it is unwise to assume that this is a representative sample of the actual population of sex workers servicing the LGBT community. Wider studies (West, 1992, Minchiello, 2002, Belz, 2001) do not support, *“the belief that rent boys are mostly heterosexual.”* (West, p65)

Obviously there are many reasons why sex workers would avoid the attention of services. In addition it is well known that people supplying sex to the LGBT community whether formally or informally are more likely to use services specifically targeted at the LGBT community, *regardless* of whether that service is most

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<sup>1</sup> MAP works with sexually exploited adult men and GAP works with sexually exploited adult women, across Tyneside – both are projects of Changing Lives [www.changing-lives.org.uk](http://www.changing-lives.org.uk)

appropriate for their particular need. MESMAC and to a lesser extent Tyneside Women and Girls Centre, Gay Advice Durham and Darlington, Lesbian Line etc have taken a holistic view of support, perhaps more from necessity rather than design.

Furthermore, the internet and social media has created a portal whereby it is easier and safer for people to advertise, sell and procure sex. *“There is something for everyone’s taste...”* (Interviewee 6) Some of the adverts are more subtle and appear on regular dating sites, others much less so, *“Clean cut young student type...Ring for prices.”* (Interviewee 6). Despite efforts made by MAP to make contact with these independent ‘entrepreneurial’ sex workers little is known about them beyond what can be inferred from their social media presence.

A practitioner recalled a 17 year old gay young man who sold sex via the internet being referred to him after he sought treatment for an STI with a local GUM. This young man’s background was contrary to the stereotype of the sex worker as victim of circumstance. *“He came from a nice, middle class, supportive family...just thought it would be a good way to make money while he was in High School.”* (Interviewee 6)

## **5.6 Young Women – a different pattern?**

I enquired about cases of sexual exploitation which involved lesbian or bisexual young women. The pattern of exploitation was more oblique than with young men. Practitioners described patterns of predatory behaviour of a number of older lesbians which involved grooming much younger women (twenty years or more) who were clearly vulnerable and systematically isolating them from other sources of support. Violence and economic exploitation of the younger woman was sometimes evident. Sexual exploitation seemed to be part of a wider abusive relationship. Only one practitioner (who provides support to sex workers) was aware of younger lesbians or bisexual women *selling* sex and this was to heterosexual men. There was also no indication of younger women being traded by partners. One practitioner suggested that there were subcultures within the lesbian community which were closed to even the wider LGBT community and perhaps due to shame, guilt, powerlessness and poverty were even more secretive than those operating in the gay men’s community. It may also be that the lack of local intelligence may reflect the fact that support for adult lesbians has been poorly funded and therefore has never become embedded. In other words we have not heard from lesbians because there has been no one to hear them.

A number of cases of workers having intimate relationships with younger female clients were mentioned by interviewees. These relationships were defended by those involved and often others who knew about the relationship because they were affectionate and positive experiences which shows how difficult identification of CSE can be and is perhaps suggestive of a qualitative difference between the way young men and young women are exploited.

One practitioner described how a client had spoken about a relationship with a previous support worker as showing her what a good relationship could be like. She said that, " *The worker had helped improve her self esteem... It was the first time she had had a relationship that didn't involve violence.*" (Interviewee 8) The young woman went on to say that she hadn't had a decent relationship since.

## **6. The case for more LGBT Youth Work to prevent CSE**

Haworth (2008), made a strong case for using a youth work approach to tackle CSE. The approach enables youth workers to tackle the attitudes and behaviours which put young people at risk of CSE in a way that is empowering and enabling. "*Youth work emphasises the young person's agency as a key feature of professional practice*" (Spence & Devanney, 2007) This is achieved by the experienced youth worker developing and maintaining 'equal' relationships and in their skill to facilitate a dialogue whereby young people can safely explore, construct and deconstruct their experiences, values, ideas and aspirations. This way of working prepares the foundation for vulnerable young people to move past the expectation some of these young people have that others will make decisions for them. Pearce (2009) suggested that the most vulnerable can become trapped in a cycle of being alternately 'used' then 'saved' and are at risk of being re-victimised by ineffective interventions.

The case for separate youth work with LGBT young people is a strong one, particularly when it is provided by practitioners who significantly share the young people's cultural knowledge and experiences. Clearly there are benefits from LGBT practitioners providing positive relationship role models and but in addition they are able to offer affirmation of the young person's burgeoning marginalised identity. This role modelling and mentoring is particularly useful to transitioning LGBT young people as unlike with other minority groups LGBT young people have limited access to other young people from the same community. Making friends, dating etc remains problematic and covert. Those with no age appropriate social space and guidance are thrust into an adult club scene with all of its heightened risks, including of CSE. That isn't to say that young LGBT people will not eventually gravitate to this environment but having access to the right support they do so conscious of the risks and with some of the skills to manage them. In addition the importance of LGBT youth work to rebuild young people's self-esteem and repair mental health battered by schoolyard bullying should not be underestimated, nor indeed should the complex work of chipping away at firmly held, unhealthy attitudes about relationships and intimacy, including, for example, the belief that men are predisposed to be driven by sex.

The case for identity youth work is however often contested particularly when resources are stretched. It is however at these times when there is the greatest need



for separate LGBT work as generic youth services find themselves increasingly pushed towards offering 'one size fits all' universal services. Practitioners reported a steady increase in referrals over the last 5 years from other youth support services to support LGBT young people on all kinds of issues (not just those directly associated with sexual or gender identity).

It is also clear that some organisations still consider that issues linked to gender or sexual orientation are too complex to handle. From conversations with staff referring in some practitioners felt that some of the under reporting of CSE issues occurs from concern that unclear situations and relationships might be a LGBT cultural norm and to address the issue might be seen to be discriminatory.

Practitioners were asked about how they worked with young people who were being, or were at risk of being, sexually exploited. It was clear that practitioners who worked specifically with LGBT young people, regardless of job role or profession felt that sharing the same backgrounds and /or having significant knowledge of the LGBT community from being immersed in the culture at work, that they were confident tackling the subject. That isn't to say that they did so without trepidation or without awareness of their limitations. Interviewees mostly took a pragmatic approach to cases as they occurred, committing themselves to achieving the best outcome for the young person within the constraints of legal, policy and organisational structure which they sometimes felt didn't provide effective protection for young people.

## **7. Barriers to effective working**

Interviewees were comfortable with the issues and committed to working in a preventative and interventionist way although open to increasing their skills in this area. Most interviewees were not experts in CSE but took the view summed up by one practitioner, *"Well you just have to get on with it... Who else would do it?"* (Interviewee 5) Although interviewees were unclear about what training they would like they had very strong views on other ways in which they could be supported to do this work. It should also be noted here that those who responded to the request for an interview were a very select group - already having experience working with CSE of LGBT young people.

Practitioners described common barriers to effective intervention which are suggestive of some changes that are required:

**7.1 'Child Protection savvy'** Practitioners complained that young people had become increasingly 'disclosure savvy'. Young people who have any relationship with services are well aware that disclosures lead to interventions and if they are not at the point where they want help to escape/stop then this knowledge prevents them having exploratory conversations. Workers described how young

people were increasingly 'child protection savvy' and would 'discuss' or 'hint' at situations which suggested they were being sexually exploited and then as the worker began to explore this with the young person, the young person would recognise that their relationship or behaviour had been labelled 'risky'/ negatively sanctioned. The young person would often not come back to the group following their disclosure. *"It's difficult to engage these young people in a youth group... to keep hold of them... They have all this chaos in their lives... turning up to group regularly is difficult"*. (Interviewee 9) One organisation gave an example of a CP issue being poorly dealt with. A young person had disclosed at school. Their confidentiality was breached quite publicly with police and social workers being seen to have been called. The pupils had taken away the message that this was the result of speaking confidentially to school staff. Moreover these situations often become the subject of social media chatter. Again the wrong message was being communicated. *"And we (sic) adults/professionals don't have that presence on Facebook so we can't counter that message."* (Interviewee 10) Some workers suggested it would be useful to have a service where LGBT young people could access support anonymously. Although it was recognised that due to the community being comparatively small and interconnected that it was unlikely that this anonymity would be maintained for very long.

**7.2 Talking about CSE** Practitioners admitted that it was sometimes hard to discuss suspicions of sexual exploitation with a young person in *'just the right way'* Was there ways to begin the conversation which was more fruitful and keep the young person engaged with the worker? One worker said that a referring worker had brought in a young person and had been quite blunt, *"You have to watch him mind... He likes the older men..."* The young man agreed that this was the case. *"It felt wrong but it let me have that conversation without it becoming an issue."* (Interviewee 8) Workers were keen to *'get it right'*. They all said that it was easier to have a conversation about CSE if they already had a good relationship with the young person. Youth workers worried that their concern for the young person might be seen as patronising as attitude that supports the idea that sex can be exchanged for 'benefits' was so deeply ingrained with some of the young men. Sometimes people were aware that they were not getting to the point because they feared embarrassing the young person or themselves. *"Perhaps we are too precious about it... It's not how the young people talk about it. They're just matter of fact."* Sometimes it did upset a young person. *"He cried. I was saying to him I'm not trying to upset you or tell you off I'm just telling you the law..I felt rotten about it."* (Interviewee 11)

**7.3 'Holding' the concern** Practitioners working with LGBT young people are from varied backgrounds and sit in organisations with varied policies on child protection. Those trained as youth workers or based in primarily youth work organisations felt that it sometimes felt as though the policies and procedures

didn't take account of the differences between CP and CSE or make allowances for the age of the victim and their ability to make decisions for themselves. Some practitioners felt that in their organisation when there is even hint of a Child Protection issue a bit of panic sets in and procedures are followed with not enough consideration for what that individual young person wanted to happen. Staff working in organisations which dealt regularly with cases of CSE however felt supported *'to hold the concern'* and were able to take time to work with the young person around the issue and stated they were largely happy with the outcome they had secured for the young person.

**7.4 Support for Practitioners** Most workers said they'd like to be clearer about which organisations in their area they could turn to for more information or support. Those with social work backgrounds or with managers who were social workers appeared more confident about dealing delicately with 'holding' and working with issues. More training around this and connecting organisations up locally would hugely increase LGBT youth workers confidence to work with CSE issues. At least half of interviewees said they felt isolated 'most of the time' as a practitioner working with the LGBT community; others that they rarely had the opportunity to network with people doing similar work. All interviewees said that although they were time poor that they would benefit from an opportunity to get peer support around CSE & share good practice. Some interviewees felt marginalised or not well-supported within their organisation. One worker said, *"I should promote the group a bit more but if I spend any time on that, management will realise I have a group (laughs) and stop me doing it."* (Anon) *"The need to act as role model can place an enormous burden on informal educators who are expected to draw on their own complex identities in the cause of the work. Patterns of idealisation and disappointment are complex and a need to be understood by staff. Informal education projects which employ staff who share the identities of young people they work with in order to facilitate identity-based work must be fully aware of the supervision and support needs of this group of staff. (Batsleer, 2008, pg 88)"*

**7.5 Brain Drain** I asked organisations about recruitment and selection of staff. There was a general feeling that it wasn't easy to recruit experienced & knowledgeable staff to sessional posts. *"Most people.. who can... already have a full time job and are doing extra."* (Interviewee 12) *"That whole generation of LGBT activists have moved on.."* (Interviewee 9) Organisations recruiting to LGBT posts generally didn't specify qualifications. Experience had shown that it was difficult to attract people with both youth work (or similar) experience and significant LGBT knowledge. In addition fewer accrediting bodies are delivering entry level youth work qualifications, closing routes for volunteers and non qualified staff to advance their skills or develop a theoretical framework.

## 8. Training & Other Resources

**8.1 'LGBT specific' CSE training** Some practitioners reported that they had attended or been involved in delivering CSE training with SCARPA or the Cyrenians. Although highly rated, interviewees lamented that it didn't translate particularly well to working with LGBT young people. It was suggested that LGBT elements could be included in existing programmes for the benefit of those predominantly working with heterosexual/cisgendered young people however most people felt that they would have benefitted more from a LGBT focussed programme with the opportunity to discuss cases with other practitioners working within the LGBT community.

**8.2 Therapeutic Tools** I asked practitioners about the kinds of conversations they had had with young people about CSE which resulted in the best outcomes. A number of therapeutic exercises were suggested which had enabled young people to develop greater personal insight and helped staff to keep the young people engaged in the process. This was an area where it was felt practitioners could benefit from further training or from sharing tools proven to work.

**8.3 Young people's support services trained on LGBT issues** Practitioners working in support services which didn't have a LGBT specific remit were aware that even when it was relevant some staff avoided asking young people about their sexual or gender identities. Baseline training of all youth support staff on LGBT issues, including about the risk of CSE was considered important to ensure that cases of CSE were identified by whom ever a young person had contact . However even staff who had a good working knowledge of LGBT issues might not see many gay or Trans young people and so 'a script' and 'role play' practice in training could be useful.

**8.4 'LGBT specific' CSE materials** The Blast Project, Leeds has produced, *Not My Son*, the only LGBT specific tool available for use with young people. Other material requires development, particularly around young Transpeople and young lesbians. Preventative and interventionist material is required women. Existing generic CSE material is focussed on specific themes of commercial and heterosexual sexual exploitation to the extent that it might give young people the impression that LGBT young people are immune. Practitioners also asked for further self-esteem building material. Some organisation already run programmes (MESMAC, West End Women and Girls Centre) which would be easily adaptable and engaging for a wider LGBT youth audience.

**8.5 LGBT Community Intelligence** Funding cuts have reduced the 'on scene' presence of MESMAC's Community Workers which point to a reduced community intelligence. In the past the community has relied on the long term relationships MESMAC has with bar staff and regulars. As sexual exploitation situations move

rapidly the capacity for practitioners and the police to identify risky situations as they develop and identifying young people at risk may be compromised.

*“We used to get a lot of information from this particular drag queen who would watch out for the younger lads... and the day drinking crowd had time to talk...you get these good conversations going on and relationships built up.... They could tell you what was going on.”* (Interviewee 13)

## 9. Recommendations

1. **Assertive Scene Outreach** or a detached youth project should be developed to target young LGBT who are regulars on the gay scene and whose networks and behaviour show that they are or at risk of being sexually exploited.
2. **Sustain existing LGBT Youth Support** & creation of satellite projects by developing partnerships between organisation with LGBT expertise and local youth work / community providers.
3. **CSE Training for those working with LGBT communities** Current training focuses on prevention of exploitation of mainly heterosexual girls as does the existing group work tools. Separate training and specific LGBT resources should be developed building on existing resources but which takes account of different patterns of CSE and the vast amount of local LGBT practitioner knowledge. Thinly veiled attempts at adaption are demotivating and perpetuate heterosexism. Training should focus on simple therapeutic exercises which can be used to help unpick unhelpful attitudes, clarification of Child Protection and CSE legislation and the options available when supporting young people and the clarification of support and resources available regionally to practitioners.
4. **LGBT Youth Work Training** Organisations described finding it difficult to fill sessional youth work posts with experienced and qualified staff. Partners were keen to support a plan to bring new people from the LGBT community into youth work via a system of an ‘Introduction to Youth Work’ course, leading on to an accredited course and supervised placements across the region.
5. **Network of LGBT Youth and Community Workers** Many practitioners working with LGBT young people do so in relative isolation, sometimes without professional supervision, often working in organisations which can’t provide a context for their work. Most feel over-stretched and poorly resourced. However despite these frustrations, the passion to do their best for LGBT young people was unwavering and consistent across the region. Practitioners asked for more ‘resourced’ opportunities to network: specifically

to share knowledge and skills around CSE and develop peer support mechanisms around difficult cases.

- 6. Support around CSE cases** Clusters or pyramids should be formed to give staff a wider structure of advice and support for working with LGBT CSE cases.
- 7. Seeking Advice Anonymously** Young people have become increasingly aware and wary of the limits of confidentiality when accessing support services which can prevent some of the most vulnerable seeking help. To meet this challenge and indeed to enable young people who are isolated from LGBT organisations (by virtue of rurality, finances or domestic abuse) to discuss their concerns an anonymised, internet based advice service could be introduced across the region. This service would be a safe first step for young people who fear intervention by protective services but would employ the same youth work techniques to empower exploited young people to manage their own exit from an unhealthy relationship.

## **Appendix 1**

### **LGBT Youth Worker 'Wish List'**

- Virtual CSE prevention resources
- Quarterly Youth Workers meeting
- CSE Prevention' LGBT specific training
- Safeguarding training – in depth
- A clear referral path
- Named professional who could advise LGBT workers on their cases.
- Regular fools guide' update to social media development.
- Training – Beginners Guide to using therapeutic exercises with vulnerable young people
- Regional guide to legislation and support available for 16-18s and over 18s

## Appendix 2

### Training Packages for Practitioners

#### **The Cyrenians**

CSE awareness

#### **SCARPA/ Barnado's**

CSE awareness.

#### **BLAST Project, (MESMAC, Leeds.) Training for Professionals**

1 day course highlighting sexual exploitation of boys and young men

### **Training Packages for Young People**

**West End Women and Girls Centre** – have developed a self esteem raising course for young women. Has been used successfully with the Tyneside Young Lesbian Rangers .

**MESMAC** have a FFHA course which the young men's group have used successfully in their sessions. This is around developing healthy and positive relationships.

### **Resources**

**Think Again** DVD & resource pack produced by BLAST  
<http://mesmac.co.uk/blast-resources>



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