



Young person-centred approaches in child sexual exploitation (CSE)

- promoting participation and
building self-efficacy

Checklist for developing young people's participation in child sexual exploitation services or policy development

The following is a set of questions that have been used when planning group-based participatory activities with young people affected by child sexual exploitation, involving them in collective decision-making processes. It is presented as a set of prompts for reflective discussion and is not exhaustive.

(Please note that involving young people in collective decision-making activities should be carried out alongside integrated participatory approaches to all aspects of service delivery, including one-to-one work.)



Rationale: *Why are you involving young people?*

Children's participation can often be tokenistic and is likely to involve an element of 'co-option' (young people being invited to participate in professionally determined agendas). Honest discussion from the outset about the purpose, agenda and ownership of any activities can help to reduce the likelihood of tokenism and provide transparency.

- Q. What are the young people's specific roles on the project or initiative?
- Q. What will be the benefits to the project? What will be the benefits to young people?



Feedback and recognition: *How will you feed back to participants?*

Young people affected by CSE will have diverse views about if and how to identify themselves with the issue and there are significant risks associated with public identification. However, it is also important that young people's contributions, skills and learning are acknowledged.

- Q. How will you acknowledge young people's contributions without compromising anonymity?
- Q. Where young people engage in public dialogue about CSE are they supported to make informed choices about how to be identified and whether this could compromise their safety or wellbeing?
- Q. How will you feed back the outcomes of young people's involvement to them and involve them in related future work? If this takes place beyond the project timeline how will you resource this?



Stakeholder commitment: *What is the level of commitment to young people's participation from different stakeholders?*

In CSE work young people's participation can often be framed as an 'add-on', or of less significance than crisis intervention and risk management. Recognising the relationship between children's participation and safeguarding can help ensure the work is properly resourced, valued and has influence.

- Q. To what extent do stakeholders share the same values and understanding of young people's participation?
- Q. How will you prepare different stakeholders for their direct engagement with young people?



Accessibility: *How will you ensure activities or tasks are understood and accessible?*

Young people affected by CSE are likely to have a diverse range of intersecting vulnerabilities and needs. These are factors which are often used by professionals to justify young people's exclusion from decision-making processes.

- Q. Do you have **relevant** information about participants' abilities and other personal needs to plan inclusive practice (and consent from participants to have this information)?
- Q. Are there a range of ways in which children and young people can contribute?
- Q. Is your use of language jargon-free and accessible, using supporting visual resources for example?
- Q. How will you prepare participants for taking up new roles or responsibilities for the first time? Is there enough time built in to do this?



Sharing power: *What type of decisions are you proposing involving young people in?*

Consultation with young people affected by CSE will necessarily involve dialogue between stakeholders with different ideas and different perspectives on risk. Prior to working collaboratively with young people, professionals need to consider how they manage alternative perspectives and how they will support young people to have meaningful influence.

- Q. Are there opportunities for children and young people to feed into the planning and agenda setting of the activity/initiative?
- Q. What are the boundaries of responsibility/decision-making you are able or willing to share with young people?
- Q. If children and young people are excluded from some stages of the process, how can you explain and justify this to them?



Engagement: *How will you identify and engage potential young participants?*

There may be a range of good reasons why certain opportunities are not appropriate or beneficial to young people at certain points in time. For example, when young people are involved in a 'live investigation' there will be restrictions on what is appropriate for professionals to discuss with young people. Working inclusively also means supporting professionals to think creatively to overcome barriers to involvement.

- Q. Have you provided clear inclusion/exclusion criteria for potential participants?
- Q. What (if any) barriers to inclusion do you foresee for potential participants? Which of these can you address with current resources?
- Q. What (if any) barriers may be presented by gatekeepers (such as other professionals involved in supporting young people, or parents and carers) and how can you support them to adopt an inclusive approach?



Safety and group dynamics: *How can you make this a safe and comfortable process for participants, and manage risk safely and proportionally?*

A common justification for excluding CSE-affected young people from decision-making processes involves fears about the risk young people may pose to each other in group contexts. These may be legitimate considerations although, equally, it should not be assumed to be the case or that risks can't be managed.

- Q. How can you design activities to create safe boundaries (for example group agreement exercises; discussions about roles; access to additional support)?
- Q. How can you help participants make informed decisions about disclosure within the group context or with sharing information (for example supporting understanding of limits of confidentiality within a group and potential impact on others)?
- Q. What are the procedures for dealing with disclosures; group conflict; distress? How can you manage this positively and proportionally?
- Q. What, if any, potential risks may participants pose to each other? How will you manage this?
- Q. What follow-up support do participants have access to?



Reflection, learning and evaluation: *How will you capture learning and reflect and review the process?*

Participatory work with young people affected by CSE is undertaken in diverse ways, but practice remains limited and rarely documented. Opportunities to capture and disseminate further learning in this area will support young people and professionals undertaking this work and further good practice. Reflection is also a key means of ensuring safe practice.

- Q. What steps can you build in to capture and disseminate learning about the process with other professionals?
- Q. How will you enable all participants and stakeholders to reflect and review the process and demonstrate how the organisation responds to this feedback?

Young person-centred approaches in child sexual exploitation (CSE) - promoting participation and building self-efficacy

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is an increasingly high profile issue in the UK. This Frontline Tool provides a checklist for developing young people's participation in CSE services and/or policy development.

The set of questions within the tool have been used when planning group-based participatory activities with young people affected by CSE and provide a useful set of prompts for reflective discussion.

The tool accompanies the full Frontline Briefing *Young person-centred approaches in child sexual exploitation (CSE) - promoting participation and building self-efficacy*. This focuses on how we can use participatory approaches to help build resilience and a sense of self-efficacy for children and young people in placements and in the community.

The main briefing, which includes full references, also explores ways practitioners can work with the risks and perceived 'choices' facing some young people - enabling young people to be more resilient, as well as a stronger sense of co-ownership between practitioners and young people experiencing CSE.

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