



# **Child Sexual Exploitation on Teesside and Barnardo's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service for Children**

Carried out by:



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## **Acknowledgements**

There are a number of people to thank for their contributions to this research, not least those people who gave up their time and spoke freely. We would like to thank a number of Barnardo's staff including Wendy Shepherd, Clare Sullivan, Tracy Weedall, Sue Everton and Cerys Overington for their time and energy. Specific thanks goes to Rob Cope, Management Information Officer (Barnardo's - East Region) for providing the statistics in a timely and cooperative manner. Thanks also go to Sue Smith from the Sexual Assault Referral Centre for also providing more statistics and generally being really helpful. Thanks also to Abbie who talked and wrote openly and energetically about her experiences. Finally, the commissioners of the research, Northern Rock Foundation, their trustees and Cullagh Warnock, must be thanked as without them we would not know what we now do.

## **About the authors**

Barefoot Research and Evaluation is a social research organisation specialising in work with vulnerable and at-risk groups. Dr. Christopher Hartworth, who set up Barefoot Research with Joanne Hartworth in 2003, has 20 years' experience of research and evaluation, beginning in developing countries in poverty alleviation programmes and continuing in the North East of England in work with disadvantaged communities. Joanne has a first class honours degree in Sociology, is a qualified teacher and an accomplished project manager, having managed projects in East and West Newcastle.

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## About Northern Rock Foundation

This report is the last in a series of studies funded by the Northern Rock Foundation through its Safety and Justice Programme. The Foundation was keen to understand how issues of sexual exploitation affected both adults and children across the North East and Cumbria and invested over £190,000 in these studies in the period 2007-14. Feedback from stakeholders across the region suggest both statutory and voluntary sector agencies have found the report findings helpful in identifying both areas of unmet need and examples of local expertise and good practice. The Foundation's Trustees were prescient in identifying these issues as of pressing concern. Findings from the reports also helped direct the Foundation's grant-making and a number of services and interventions also received funding directly, thus providing targeted support to some of the most vulnerable adults and children in the region. Other studies in the series, and related research, can be found at [www.nr-foundation.org.uk/sexual-exploitation.php](http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/sexual-exploitation.php)

More information: [www.nr-foundation.org.uk](http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk)



## **i. Executive summary**

This is the last in a series of studies into Child Sexual Exploitation in the North East and Cumbria that were commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation's Safety and Justice for Victims of Abuse Programme. The series which began in 2008 and included studies in the Cumbria, County Durham and Northumbria Police Force Areas was intended to identify the characteristics and examine the extent of exploitation and also included research into adult exploitation.

### **Section one: Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Teesside**

The research that we carried out across Teesside indicated that, similar to all areas across the North East, there were children and young people who were experiencing CSE. The major difference between this area and others was the presence of a significant and substantial CSE service in the form of Barnardo's SECOS that provides services to victims. The organisation has created a widespread knowledge and awareness of CSE in the region and provides a destination point for concerns about risk or as referrals for those affected.

There has been a total of 211 cases of CSE referred into Barnardo's between 2012 and 2015, most of these were between 13 and 16 years old and included both males and females. Most came from Middlesbrough, followed by Stockton. These are the two areas where Barnardo's has been present the longest: in Middlesbrough, SECOS<sup>1</sup> started in 2000; and in Stockton, the ACE project has been in existence since 2005. Barnardo's does have a presence in Hartlepool and Redcar but these have been in existence for much shorter time periods.

We found that patterns and perpetrators of CSE did not fit a particular profile, perpetrators were not all from specific ethnicities and the victims came from all walks of life. There is a wide variety of situations and circumstances which

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual Exploitation On The Streets

lead to exploitation and all models of grooming and exploitation exist on Teesside, including:

- Online grooming and exploitation
- Boyfriend model
- Peer to peer
- Older males
- Street-based exploitation

## **Response**

Work to address CSE on Teesside started in 2000 and has grown and developed into a national model of best practice. Barnardo's SECOS plays a major role in local, sub regional and national CSE policy. SECOS uses a 'hub and spoke' model to deliver its services on Teesside, with the hub being in Middlesbrough and the spokes existing in Hartlepool, Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland (with others in Darlington and Durham) where there is one young persons CSE specialist worker located in each local authority area. Each worker carries a caseload of between 10 and 20 children and young people. The hub also has one worker specialising in housing and another who works with adults involved in prostitution.

Since 2012, each local authority area has had a VEMT (Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked) group, which is itself separated into a strategic and an operational group. The function of that group is to identify young people who are at risk of or victims of sexual exploitation. The groups are made up of statutory and voluntary sector agencies including police, children's social care, youth services, educational welfare, housing, sexual health, Troubled Families, and drug and alcohol services. Referrals come into the VEMT group and they are risk assessed as high, medium or low. The perpetrator is also identified and risk assessed.

The police response to Child Sexual Exploitation on Teesside has developed over a number of years and from a series of discrete operations in individual

local authority areas into a strategic and coordinated approach with a full-time dedicated CSE team. Operations have included Destiny, Fibre, Grenadier, Javelin, Puffin and Shield and have been carried out in all local authority areas on Teesside. These operations have focused on a range of CSE types and incidents including organised crime, gangs and drugs, perpetrators from a range of ethnicities including African, Asian, Eastern European and White British, historic and current abuse and individual and group investigations. Operation Pike is the current strategic response to CSE which feeds into the strategic VEMT group.

The well developed local police response has been driven by a number of factors including the presence of Barnardo's SECOS, prevalence of exploitation, prostitution and media attention. Middlesbrough in particular has a tradition of multi-agency working to tackle CSE on both an operational and strategic level, which has seen agencies such as Barnardo's, health, local authority departments and the police working together, providing a local response. The amalgamation of the four area commands into one planning area in November 2013 has also made it easier to address the issue through improved intelligence and analysis.

## **Section two: Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) service**

Barnardo's children and young persons ISVA service started in 2011 with funding from the Home Office and Public Health, and for the first two years it operated with one worker. In 2013, the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) funded another part time ISVA as a result of high demand. In 2014, the PCC funded a therapeutic worker and increased the hours of the other ISVA to full time.

The aim of the ISVA service is to reduce attrition in the Criminal Justice System from children and young people who have reported incidents of sexual exploitation and violence. The service is intended for anybody under the age of 18 years who is a victim of a sexual offence. All referrals into

Barnardo's ISVA service come through the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Middlesbrough.

## **Project outputs**

- The service has supported an average of 45 children and young people each year between 2012 and 2015. Since 2014, when there has been two full time workers, this equates to a caseload per ISVA of around 22.
- The ages of the ISVA supported children and young people are slightly younger than those supported as part of Barnardo's CSE service. This is because the ISVA service support children and young people who have been the victims of any form of sexual violence including familial abuse, rape or CSE. Barnardo's CSE service however, only provides services for children and young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation. However, the majority of the ISVA clients are children and young people who have been sexually exploited.
- Over the last three years there have been significantly more referrals from Middlesbrough in comparison to the other local authority areas in the sub region (66 percent of all referrals have come from Middlesbrough, 13 percent respectively from Hartlepool and Stockton and seven percent from Redcar). This may mean that there are more victims in Middlesbrough or that people report less in those other areas. If we look at the SARC statistics, we see that the number of victims (aged between three and 17 years old) presenting at the SARC in 2014/15 has a reasonably even spread across the Tees Valley. This would indicate other reasons behind a smaller number of ISVA clients from Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton, i.e. there is more CSE in Middlesbrough.
- In relation to criminal justice outcomes, between 10 and 30 percent of cases between 2012 and 2015 have seen a guilty verdict; and between 30 and 38 percent of cases have been either acquitted or have had their cases dismissed. The remaining cases lasted longer than 12 months and were waiting to be heard.
- A total of 22 children or young people have received therapy: 20 after the trial has finished and two have received pre-trial therapy.

## Findings and impact

During the research, we were able to make a series of findings concerning project operation and impact on clients, including:

- **Placing control in the hands of the young person:** being involved in an investigation and court case is a very disempowering process for the victim. The children and young people have overriding feelings of (powerful) adults doing things to or for the young person and them having no control in the process. The ISVA provides a level of influence and autonomy for young person that was rated highly by the young people as it enabled them to feel in control.
- **Making sense of an overwhelming process:** it was reported that the ISVA helped the young person come to terms with the court case and manage their place in that. This was achieved through the provision of information and understanding about a complex process in a patient and friendly way. However, being unable to talk about the incident was frustrating.
- **Created happiness in a difficult time:** service users said that the support from the ISVAs made them feel happier. This was because of the relationship that develops between the ISVA and the young person, the interest that was shown and being able to talk to someone. The ISVA was also reported to be an important and positive role model for the young person.
- **Influencing national policy:** young people from the project attended and contributed to the cross party parliamentary enquiry into the effects of the Sexual Offences Act, 10 years on and that they provided recommendations on practice as the legislation related to grooming and were successful in getting the law changed.
- **Strong relationship with the police:** the ISVAs and the police have a good relationship and there is regular communication between the two agencies. An integration of services is important as the ISVA is able to

provide support at critical junctures, such as when a decision has been taken by the CPS of No Further Action.

- **The provision of post court therapy is an important exit strategy and important to the process of recovery:** almost half of the young people take up the offer of post court therapy. Without the option of post court therapy, there would be a significant gap in the service which would ultimately affect the prospects for recovery for many young people who use the service.
- **A supportive local policy environment:** the Cleveland PCC has a comprehensive and high profile Violence Against Women and Girls strategy which is located under the 'Ensuring a better deal for victims and witnesses' section and one of their top five priorities in the Police and Crime Plan 2015/17. They have invested significantly in victims services and have recently agreed funding until March 2017 for the SARC ISVAs and the project's play therapist.

### **Relationship between Barnardo's ISVA and CSE service**

It is expected that there would be a relationship between the ISVA and CSE service, for example: after the completion of a court case, the young person may go on to receive specialist CSE support and education; or there may be movement from the CSE to the ISVA service as a result of disclosures from the young person after they have realised what they have been involved in. However, between 2012 and 2015, there have only been four young people who have transferred between ISVA and CSE services.

A possible explanation for this is a Catch-22 type situation which prevents a young person receiving targeted support focusing on the exploitation they have experienced if they are involved in a court case/investigation: a CSE specialist worker is not able to work thematically with a young person if there is an investigation/ongoing court case. This is to prevent claims by defending lawyers that the young person is somehow being coached, which has happened in the recent past (2014) in Middlesbrough. If a young person is not

involved in any investigation or court case, then they can receive the full suite of Barnardo's interventions.

If a young person is involved with an investigation or court case, they cannot: receive any awareness raising or education about CSE; engage in any discussions about the sexual exploitation incident(s) that occurred. Instead they are offered non-directed support and befriending. It has been described as a 'holding role' by the CSE specialists until the investigation or court case has ended.

Approximately 60 percent of ISVA clients disengage with Barnardo's after the culmination of their court case (40 percent go on to receive post-trial therapy). Bearing in mind there will be children and young people who have been victims of other types of sexual violence, it would indicate that these children and young people do not need any continuing support, either because the non-directed support during the case has been sufficient for their needs or they simply are in an acceptable stage in their recovery. This situation would appear to indicate that the children and young people who disengage do not receive any directed work, such as awareness, education, safety planning, about the CSE that they have been a victim of. On the other hand, the CSE clients who are worked with thematically rarely chose to report an incident which leads to a court case. This may be an area of the project which needs more consideration as it would seem that there should be a relationship between the CSE and ISVA service.

## **Conclusion**

Barnardo's children's ISVA service has become an incredibly important and valuable service for victims across Teesside. In fact, it is difficult to comprehend that situations exist in other areas across the North East where ISVAs do not exist. The service also rounds off Barnardo's existing CSE service which can now offer support to victims before, during and after a legal process. However, it would seem that both services should complement each

other in a more integrated and coordinated fashion, with those young people able to pass between them easily.

This research also highlights an inherent problem with the criminal justice process as it relates to child victims of sexual exploitation and serving justice to perpetrators. The difficulty is thus: upon reporting/disclosing an incident of exploitation, the child or young person cannot receive any professional instruction or support to enable them to understand the incident or prevent it happening in the future, until the court case or investigation is ended. This may take a long time, over 12 months in many cases. During that time, the young person is involved with a disempowering legal process which stands a good chance (between 30 and 40 percent according to the figures) of the case being dismissed or the defendant being found not guilty. The ISVA manager summarised the current problems:

*“Obviously it is an essential child’s right to have decisions made in their best interest and safeguarding should override any other policy or procedure and yet we are told not to educate young people on how to keep safe while they sit in the Criminal Justice System - sometimes for up to nearly three years. If we could deliver direct CSE work to ISVA clients we could present the evidence of need. It is apparent that having to segregate ISVA and CSE [clients] in an area that naturally overlaps does not present clear conclusions and generates fear in workers as they do not want to say or do the wrong thing in case they jeopardise the outcome of a trial, by being accused of coaching etc.”*

It appears that there is a decision between a) enabling the victim to understand what has happened to them, and attempting to build their resilience and knowledge to prevent this situation arising in the future or b) attempting to bring the perpetrator to justice. It seems that in order to safeguard a child’s mental wellbeing after an incident of CSE, the Criminal Justice System needs to look again at its policy and process with regards to what support a child can receive.

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## **Section one: Child Sexual Exploitation in Teesside**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This is the last in a series of studies into Child Sexual Exploitation in the North East and Cumbria that were commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation's Safety and Justice for Victims of Abuse Programme. The series which began in 2008 and included studies in the Cumbria, County Durham and Northumbria Police Force Areas was intended to identify the characteristics and examine the extent of exploitation and also included research into adult exploitation<sup>2</sup>. The findings from the studies served a number of purposes including supporting the Foundation's Safety and Justice grants programme, informing local statutory policy and services and ultimately attempting to improve provision for exploited children and adults.

Much has changed nationally since the first study was carried out in 2008 in terms of public awareness and now there is a recognition that CSE takes place in all areas. The situation on Teesside has been different to the other North Eastern areas because of the presence of the Barnardo's SECOS<sup>3</sup> project. They have been ahead of the game as their project started in 2000 and have been well prepared to meet the challenges which have been raised over the last five years. They lead the way both in the region and nationally in terms of expertise and preparedness.

This study is a little different to the others as together with CSE information, we have provided a focus on Barnardo's children's Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) service. This project provides support to children who are involved in court cases to do with exploitation and is a trailblazer in the North East. Including it with the CSE study, is intended to highlight the needs children and young people who are involved with the Criminal Justice System as a result of suffering exploitation.

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<sup>2</sup> These reports can be read on the Foundation's or Barefoot Research's websites: [www.nr-foundation.org.uk/sexual-exploitation.php](http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/sexual-exploitation.php); [www.barefootresearch.org.uk/publications/library](http://www.barefootresearch.org.uk/publications/library)

<sup>3</sup> Or Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets.

## 1.1 Methodology

In the previous studies we have used a knowledge mapping approach to data collection, which entailed identifying and interviewing a number of organisations and collating their knowledge. After this proved successful in those other areas, we ran into some problems on Teesside. Indeed, this has been the most difficult of all the studies we have carried out. We believe this is due to the level of national attention which has been focused on CSE as a result of the uncovering of exploitation in British cities, such as Oxford, Rochdale and Bradford and in the light of the Jimmy Saville child abuse enquiry. Instead of making the issue easier to talk about, as one would expect, it has made it more difficult and more hidden as areas are scared of being branded 'the next Rochdale'. As a result of this, there has been a resounding silence from some of the statutory authorities in the region who are responsible for ensuring the safety of children when we approached them about the research.

In all of the previous studies, we have approached the Directors of Children's Services and the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards to seek their permission and to clarify issues of confidentiality and ownership. In Teesside we contacted the VEMT (Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked) groups in the sub region and the individual local authority areas (there is a strategic group and local operational groups) as well as other senior representatives in children's services in the region. We devoted a great deal of time for these communications (over 12 months) but we received nothing back. This meant we were unable to talk to statutory services, such as the leaving care teams or services for looked after children. We also contacted a number of organisations directly, but again we encountered silence, despite repeated attempts. This made the collection of data difficult as our methodology was based on interviewing a number of individual organisations. In contrast to other areas, where organisations were very open and many welcomed the opportunity to talk about an issue which affected their client group, the response from some of the local authorities on Teesside has been very guarded (with the exception of Middlesbrough).

However, we managed to talk to police and a total of 15 other organisations that deliver services to young people across Teesside in order to map their knowledge of CSE. We were also able to use the datasets of Barnardo's (special thanks go to Rob Cope for supplying the statistics). This is a very valuable data source as Barnardo's receive referrals from a number of organisations across the area, both from the statutory and voluntary sector. This coupled with their knowledge provides a good representation of the extent and themes associated with CSE on Teesside.

In our previous studies we also collected information on both adult and child exploitation and included them in the same report. The former included adults who were involved in prostitution. In Teesside, because of requests from Barnardo's and the Police, we separated the study into two distinct components: adult and child. The reason for this is a socio-political one: both the police and Barnardo's successfully fought to separate the issue of adult prostitution and CSE, understanding the latter to be a form of abuse rather than media portrayed incidence of 'child prostitution'. Although in many cases we found adults also to be the subjects of abuse, we agreed to do this to prevent muddying the waters.

Of those organisations that responded and agreed to be interviewed, we asked them a series of questions about their knowledge of CSE in their client group. They were asked how many children and young people in their client group who they knew had been exploited in the last 12 months, their characteristics and any themes, such as homelessness, associated with them.

## **Permission**

This research received ratification and approval from both Barnardo's and the National Health Service's (NHS) Research Ethics Committee.

## 1.2 Background

Work to address CSE on Teesside started in 2000 and has grown and developed into a national model of best practice. Barnardo's SECOS plays a major role in local, sub regional and national CSE policy. SECOS uses a 'hub and spoke' model to deliver its services on Teesside, with the hub being in Middlesbrough and the spokes existing in Hartlepool, Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland (with others in Darlington and Durham) where there is one young person's CSE specialist worker located in each local authority area. Each worker carries a caseload of between 10 and 20 children and young people. The hub also has one worker specialising in housing and another who works with adults involved in prostitution. There are two children and young persons ISVAs and one ISVA therapist (see section two for a comprehensive description of the service).

Since 2012, each local authority area has had a VEMT group, which is itself separated into a strategic and an operational group. The function of that group is to identify young people who are at risk of, or victims of, sexual exploitation. The groups are made up of statutory and voluntary sector agencies including police, children's social care, youth services, educational welfare, housing, sexual health, Troubled Families, and drug and alcohol services. Referrals come into the VEMT group and they are risk assessed as high, medium or low. The perpetrator is also identified and risk assessed.

The police response to Child Sexual Exploitation on Teesside has developed over a number of years and from a series of discrete operations in individual local authority areas into a strategic and coordinated approach with a full-time dedicated CSE team. Operations have included Destiny, Fibre, Grenadier, Javelin, Puffin and Shield and have been carried out in all local authority areas on Teesside. These operations have focused on a range of CSE types and incidents including organised crime, gangs and drugs, perpetrators from a range of ethnicities including African, Asian, Eastern European and White British, historic and current abuse and individual and group investigations.

Operation Pike is the current strategic response to CSE which feeds into the strategic VEMT group.

The well developed local police response has been driven by a number of factors including the presence of Barnardo's SECOS, prevalence of exploitation, prostitution and media attention. Middlesbrough in particular has tradition of multi-agency working to tackle CSE on both an operational and strategic level, which has seen agencies such as Barnardo's, health, local authority departments (such as vulnerable adults and educational welfare) and the police working together providing a local response. The amalgamation of the four area commands into one planning area in November 2013 has also made it easier to address the issue through improved intelligence and analysis.

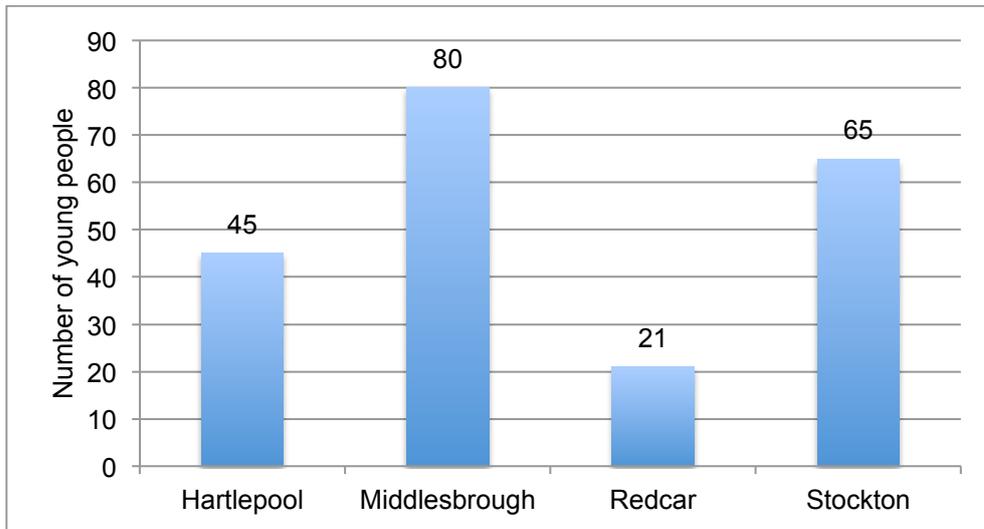
## 2.0 Prevalence

The research that we carried out across Teesside indicated that, similar to all areas across the North East, there were children and young people who were experiencing CSE. The major difference between this area and others was the presence of a significant and substantial CSE service in the form of Barnardo's SECOS that provides services to victims. The organisation has created a widespread knowledge and awareness of CSE in the region and provides a destination point for concerns about risk or as referrals for those affected.

There were other children and young people mostly between 16 and 18 years old who were thought to be or have been involved in CSE but who tended not to be referred as a result of insufficient knowledge about the exploitation or because they were on the cusp of/receiving adult services, such as housing or social welfare services. However, we found that these to be in the minority as most children and young people involved with exploitation were referred into Barnardo's. Once referred in, the children and young people are contacted and offered a service. By presenting the numbers of referrals and those engaged with, we are therefore able to gain a good indication of prevalence.

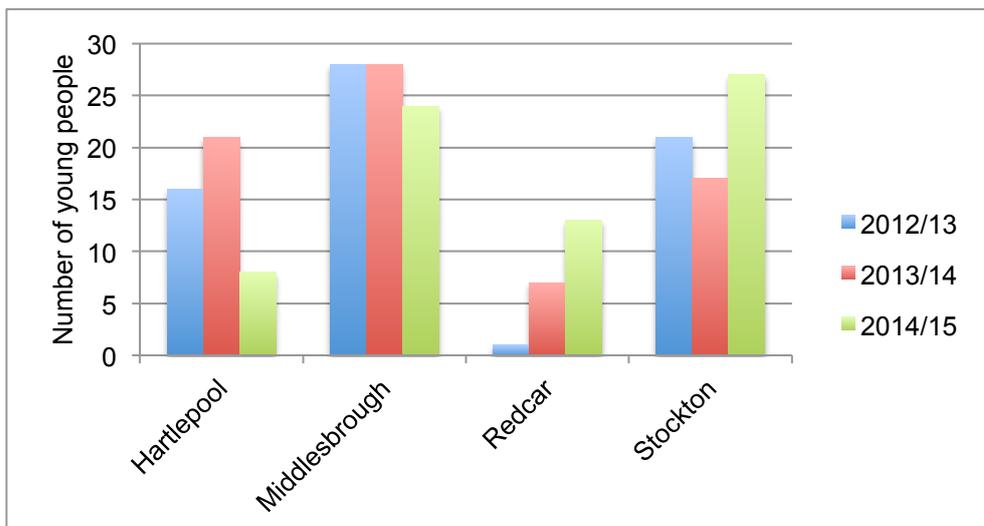
Figure 2.0 shows that there has been a total of 211 cases of CSE referred into Barnardo's between 2012 and 2015. As can be seen most referrals come from Middlesbrough, followed by Stockton. These are the two areas where Barnardo's has been present the longest: in Middlesbrough, SECOS started in 2000; and in Stockton, the ACE project has been in existence for 10 years. Barnardo's does have a presence in Hartlepool and Redcar through their spoke workers but these have been in existence for much shorter time periods.

**Figure 2.0 Referrals into Barnardo’s SECOS CSE service by local authority area between 2012 and 2015**



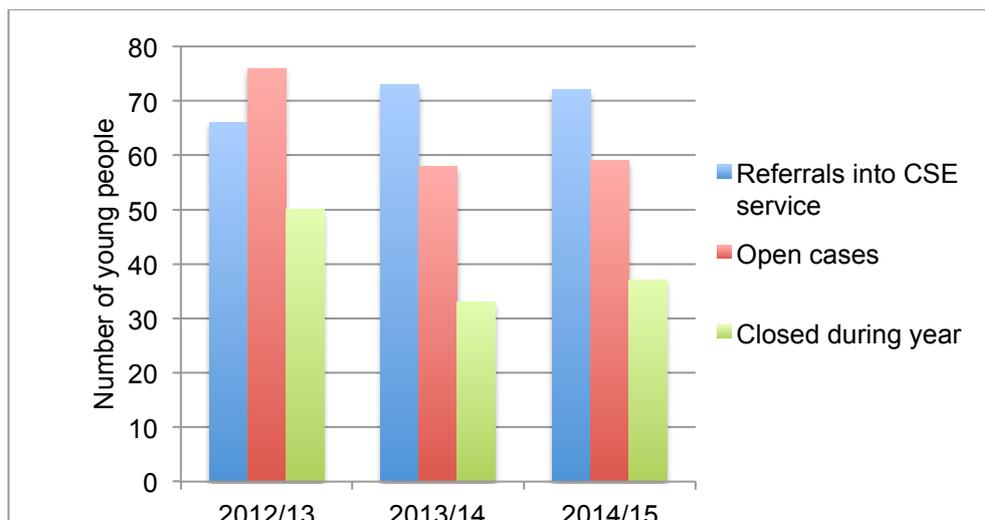
In terms of trends, figure 2.1 shows the annual number of referrals between 2012/13 and 2014/15 in all of the Teesside local authority areas. The number of referrals in Middlesbrough has remained relatively static in those three years with a general increase in Redcar and Stockton. There was a drop in Hartlepool in 2014/15 because there was an absence of a Barnardo’s CSE specialist worker (they have since started work in that area again).

**Figure 2.1 Annual number of referrals into Barnardo’s SECOS CSE service by local authority area, 2012 to 2015**



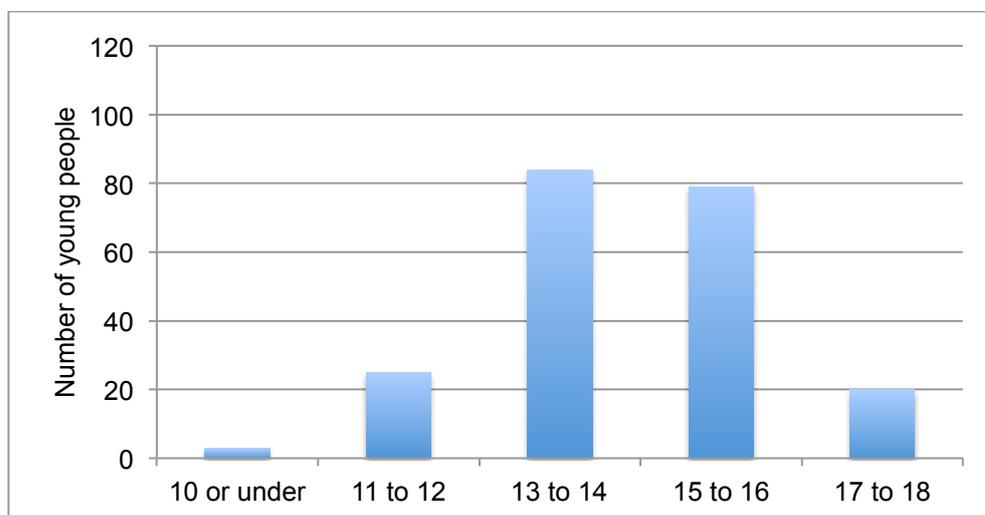
As can be seen from figure 2.2 the majority of young people who are referred into the service, choose to engage and receive support. Indeed, the service works with more clients than it receives formal referrals, which is explained by the higher number of open cases and those closed during the year. This is important as it demonstrates an effective engagement process and a need which is being fulfilled.

**Figure 2.2 Total CSE referrals and open cases, 2012 to 2015**



The following figure presents the ages of children and young people with whom the service works. As can be seen, most of the referrals are between 13 and 16 years old.

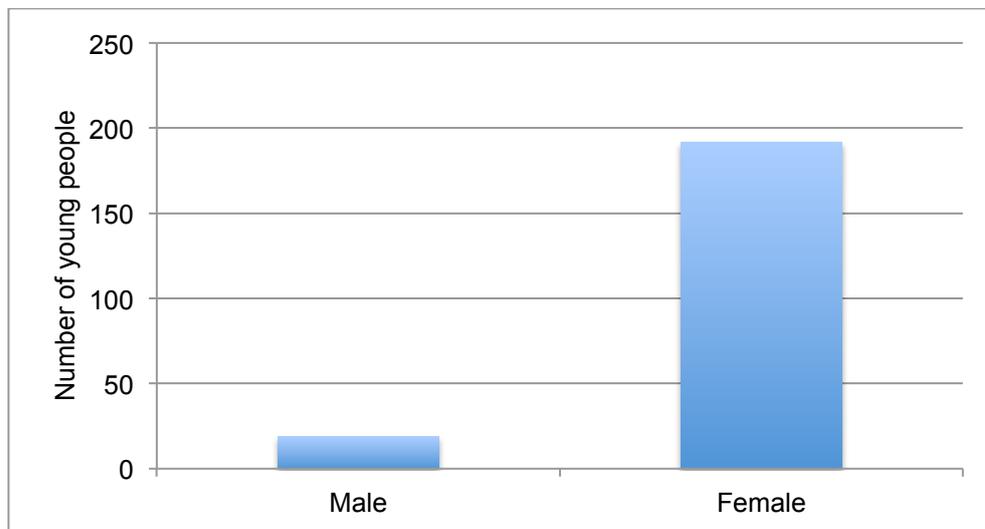
**Figure 2.3 Ages of CSE clients, 2012 to 2015**



Exploitation was found to take place with both males and females, although the former was in the minority (see figure 2.4). As an example of male exploitation, one agency we interviewed reported:

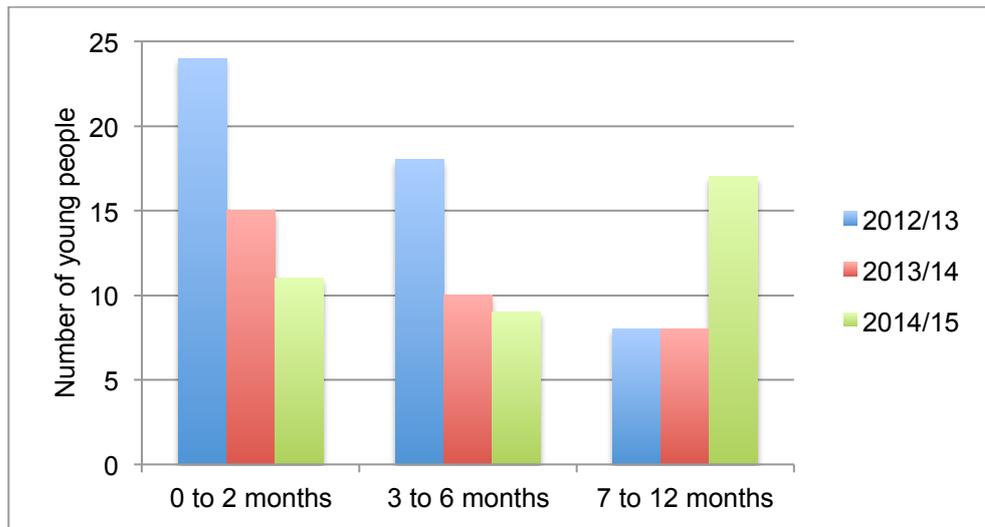
*“We were working with a 16 year old, with psychosis, he was a care leaver and we knew he was selling sex in pubs along [...] Road.”*

**Figure 2.4 Gender of CSE clients, 2012 to 2015**



The following figure shows the duration of support received by CSE clients. As can be seen, there is a fairly even spread between the duration periods of support, although in 2014/15 there are more clients who have required longer term support.

**Figure 2.5 Duration of CSE support, 2012 to 2015**



## **2.1 Themes associated with CSE**

In this section we present the themes associated with the CSE on Teesside, such as nature of the exploitation and who the victims and perpetrators are. It was not possible to extract the numbers associated with these themes from the Barnardo's database and so we are unable to comment on the weighting of the themes, i.e. whether there are higher numbers of the victims of online grooming compared to victims of peer to peer grooming. The information for this section came from a number of organisations, including the police, who worked with victims of CSE on Teesside.

What is clear from this section is the wide variety of situations and circumstances which lead to exploitation.

### **2.1.1 Types of exploitation: perpetrators and grooming**

From the research it was reported that all models of grooming and exploitation exist on Teesside. These included the following:

## **Online grooming and exploitation**

Barnardo's CSE specialists and the police reported increases over the last two years in the number of cases of online grooming. This form of CSE cuts across social class, with the victims coming from deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods, and with no dominant ethnicity of perpetrator. There was considerable discussion amongst those interviewed about the prevalence and reach of social media and risk of exploitation. For example:

*"The smartphone apps encourage exploitation and make it so much easier."*

*"They all do sexting ... it's scary."*

*"We don't know the scale of this ... we know it is growing and it will dominate things to come."*

The CSE specialist workers reported that cases of online grooming now dominate new referrals. Other findings and observations about social media are presented in box 2.0.

## **Boyfriend model**

There were a number of reports from separate organisations about the connections between exploitation and Asian males, including those from South Asia and Iraq/Kurdistan. There were reports concerning a range of different circumstances from Pakistani people that work in and owned take-aways, taxi drivers and Kurdish men working in car washes. One agency reported:

*"There were some Kurdish man who were hanging around and were always seen with care leavers ... we knew that some of the girls were being exploited."*

Exploitation by Asian males often takes the form of the boyfriend model of grooming. This relates to a common method of grooming where generally a young female is deceived into believing that she is in a mutual relationship of love with an older male, who then goes on to exploit the female, in conjunction with other abusers. There were also reports of suspected organised grooming, with the same males being associated with different young White British females who were then passed on to other groups in other areas.

### **Peer to peer**

There were several reports of this route into exploitation in the Teesside area. It is one of the most well known and widespread routes into CSE, through young people encouraging other young people into exploitative situations. This model was often used in residential local authority care homes to encourage young people into situations of exploitation. This model includes taking young people to parties where exploitation takes place, taking others to meet specific individuals or otherwise enticing other young people into CSE.

### **Older males**

There were reports by organisations about exploitative relationships between significantly older males, often from 40 years old and above, and the exploitation of children. For example, in one local authority area it was reported that a White British, 74 year old man who was known to give young people alcohol and cigarettes in exchange for sex. In such cases, the associations between exploitation and substances including alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs were common. One worker reported:

*“He used to hang around outside the youth club, we knew he was giving the young people drink and cigarettes.”*

Another agency said:

*“We had a male resident who was 16 who was being exploited by a man in his 40s ... we referred him to SECOS.”*

### **Street-based exploitation**

We found instances of young people under 18 years old who were being exploited in street-based environments, such as outside pubs and clubs and other venues. In the 1990s this was an issue of significant concern to agencies across Teesside and indeed which led to the formation of SECOS. Although the situation has dramatically changed to the extent that members of the public will no longer see children on the streets in situations of exploitation, we did receive reports of a small number of individuals including males and females between the ages of 16 and 18 years old. For example, there was one report:

*“I saw [name] on [name] street ... she was looking for business.”*

Other agencies made reports of a small number of males under the age of 18 who were working as ‘rent boys’ in and around certain pubs and clubs. One agency said:

*“They are selling sex in the bars, for money, drinks and drugs.”*

### **2.1.2 Venues associated with CSE**

#### **Parties**

There were a number of reports of children and young people attending houses at night where there were a number of older Asian males. The children are given alcohol and other substances, commonly MCAT, and sexually abused. Peer to peer, ‘boyfriend’ grooming or trafficking (i.e. the practice of taking children and young people from one location to another) commonly takes place prior to these parties. One agency said:

*“Once a girl arrives at a party it can be almost impossible to leave, she can get trapped by her “friends” and the men.”*

## **Takeaways**

There are perennial connections between the night time economy and, in particular take aways and the sexual exploitation of young people. There were reports of children in all local authority areas who were known to be exploited by people who both owned and worked in take aways. There were further reports of exploitation being carried out by pizza delivery drivers. One organisation reported:

*“Girls were being exploited by people working at [name of] takeaway.”*

## **Car washes**

There were also connections between people that work in car washes and the sexual exploitation of children on Teesside, similar to patterns that we have found across the North East region. It appeared that girls were moving between areas via the car washes. For example, it was reported that girls were taken from the car wash in Hartlepool to Middlesbrough and Stockton to go to parties. Similarly, girls were known to travel from Stockton to the Hartlepool car wash. One worker reported:

*“I have seen the same girl from Stockton in two different car washes.”*

## **Travel, transport and trafficking**

There was evidence of young people being moved between areas for the purposes of exploitation. In addition to the examples of the car washes, housing agencies reported young females being taken between Middlesbrough and Saltburn and Middlesbrough and Redcar. For example, one agency reported:

*“They get taken in taxis to Saltburn and Redcar.”*

There were reports from other agencies about the movement of children and young people between local authority areas, being transported by Asian males.

### **Street-based environments**

As mentioned in the previous section and in addition to the take aways and car washes, we found evidence of exploitation taking place in and around pubs, clubs and other public locations in certain areas of Middlesbrough. We found evidence of young males associated with exploitation in and around bars and young females in street locations. For example, one agency reported:

*“She was on [name of location] and I said to her, I thought you didn’t do this anymore, and she said she had to cos she was rattling.”*

## Box 2.0 New media and exploitation

Concerns about new social media were raised many times in relation to the sexual exploitation of young people, particularly in the use of smart phone apps such as Snap Chat, Grindr and Instagram. There were concerns expressed about young people arranging meetings of a sexual nature via these methods with what they thought to be single individuals and then turning up to a house where there were a number of men. Similarly, there were identified risks to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people also arranging liaisons online and being exposed to exploitation by older people. It was reported by several agency that sexual relations have changed considerably in the last 10 years with the advent of social media and pornography, with one agency reporting that this was.

*“The pornography generation.”*

It was felt that there had been increases in inappropriate damaging sexual relationships because of the availability of often violent pornography. It was felt by one young persons’ organisation that many of the young people had low levels of self respect about their bodies, which compounded the likelihood of exploitation. For example, one agency said:

*“Young people are going to house parties where it is expected that sex happens or is exchanged for alcohol, cannabis and other substances ... and that the young people don’t seem to think it is a problem.”*

These issues were compounded by absence of relationship education in schools. It was also felt that many young people in such situations who needed support were often not picked up by services and as such pass undetected. There appeared to be a complex interplay between the availability of pornography, expectations of sex, absence of education, social media and coming of age issues, all of which put additional risks of exploitation on young people.

### 2.1.3 Characteristics of children and young people

Children and young people who were the victims of CSE came from a range of different backgrounds, including the local authority care system, leaving care, foster homes, from families living in deprived neighbourhoods in the community and from wealthier areas. For example, one agency reported:

*“Victims are not all from poorer areas or disadvantaged backgrounds. There was a girl who we worked with, she was 16 and was known to have been [sexually] exploited by an Asian man ... she was from a good background.”*

This mix is also apparent in the VEMT groups which takes referrals from both deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods. However, children and young people from the former are disproportionately represented although the increase in online grooming will see an equalisation of these groups affected over time. A group however over which there was particular concern were people with learning difficulties. There is established and recent research<sup>4</sup> and experience which highlights a heightened vulnerability to sexual exploitation in this group.

There has been much research on vulnerabilities associated with CSE, including dysfunctional family backgrounds, missing from home and mental health issues. In our research, we found particularly strong links between substance misuse, homelessness (or insecure accommodation) and CSE. As an illustration, we present some of our research notes below:

- 16 year old female from Grangetown, who was thought to be involved with working in a brothel, known to have substance dependency.

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<sup>4</sup> Franklin, A., Raws, P. and Smeaton, E. (2015), Unprotected, overprotected: meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation, University of Coventry.

- Female, aged 16 years exchanging sex for accommodation and drugs with men. She was drinking, misusing substances including zopiclone and diazepam ... she was homeless and very vulnerable.
- North Ormesby, 16 year old female, being pimped out by mother and father, Social Care was involved but because she was 16 she was old enough to move out of the house ... she was still very vulnerable and needed support.
- In deprived neighbourhoods in Middlesbrough and Stockton, organisations are working with young people with a long history of alcohol and substance misuse. One agency said "*we are working with third generation drug users.*"
- Females from 15, 16 and 17 years old, their fathers had often thrown them out other family home. They were widely thought to be "*little nightmares and pretend they're really street and hard*" reported one agency. They have no money, they hang around in Middlesbrough Town Centre, Gresham and Union Street, they do not engage with any services, they sleep until 12pm, turn up at the service at 4.45pm and they end up being evicted from private rented houses, they often have Asian boyfriends and they are thought to be perfect ingredients for grooming. "*The girls are vulnerable, the boyfriends are dangerous, there are 30 year old Asian men and the girls are 16.*"

## Box 2.1 How Barnardo's works with young people at risk of exploitation

Barnardo's uses a model of practice known as the 4As, which was developed from a major piece of research in 2006<sup>5</sup>. The first of these is **access**; making sure that the service is accessible and one that young people want to use. This is done by involving them in the development of the service. Young people give their ideas and opinions on new service material and are asked their views about what they like about the service, how it can be improved and how the service has helped them. The second A is **attention**: often young people have never had the opportunity to develop a trusting relationship with an adult who can protect them and enable them to make informed choices. Barnardo's gives them the attention and encouragement to empower and enable them to fulfil their potential. The third A is **assertive outreach** because the work is centred around the young person who is met in places they want to meet and engaged with in appropriate ways. The steady persistence of workers is understood as being a genuine demonstration of concern and an indication of reliability. The fourth A is **advocacy**, where Barnardo's speaks out and represents the young person. For example, taking them to appointments, such as housing, or education, and representing them at meetings such as Child Protection Case Conferences.

After a period of introduction and engagement, Barnardo's carries out six sessions with the young person, which cover:

### **Relationships:**

To explore the different types of relationships we have in our lives

To consider the key features of positive and less positive relationships

### **Risk:**

To explore risk, in both positive and negative terms

To understand the need to manage risk in a variety of situations

To reflect on how pressure can be used positively or negatively to impact on how we react in situations

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<sup>5</sup> Scott, S. and Skidmore, P. (2006) Reducing the risk: Barnardo's support for sexually exploited young people, Barnardo's.

**Abusive relationships:**

To continue exploring the characteristics of positive relationships

To develop awareness of abuse in relationships

**Grooming in relationships:**

To continue exploring the characteristics of positive relationships

To develop awareness of abuse in relationships

**Consent, the law and e-safety:**

To understand the need for mutual consent in intimate relationships and that sex without consent is rape

To know how the law can protect us in our relationships

To explore various key messages in relation to e-safety

#### 2.1.4 Trajectories

Children and young people who are victims of CSE often have poor future trajectories. In the research that we recently carried out in Teesside concerning adults involved in prostitution, a large number were exploited when they were children, from the ages of 12 to 18 years old. Many of these developed significant substance misuse problems, were homeless, repeat offenders and had otherwise very poor qualities of life. For example, different agencies made the following reports:

*“We have a 23 year old resident who has a real Subutex problem, we know she has been selling sex for at least five years.”*

*“People have been involved for a long time, but they’re still young, there’s one girl who’s now 22 years old, but she started when she was 14 or 15.”*

*“Female, aged 25, known to have had a poor upbringing, with drugs and prostitution involved from 14 years old. She has really low self esteem and is attracted and attractive to controlling men. Her latest boyfriend is described as very controlling, keeps her mobile phone.”*

People who become involved in prostitution as adults often go on to have children. In our previous study of the women who were involved in survival sex, whose situations regarding children were known about in all four local authority areas, over half (n=61) were known to have children. In almost all of these cases (n=60), the children were not in the care of the women involved. One agency reported:

*“The women who we know are working girls ... all of them have had their children removed”.*

A recent local study in Stockton into prostitution<sup>6</sup> found that, of the 12 women involved in prostitution who were prolific offenders, two thirds had children. Of these, 37 percent of the children live with grandparents, 25 percent of the children have been adopted, 25 percent are currently involved in social care proceedings and 13 percent are in foster care with no parental contact. The authors stated that the 'likelihood of [the women] maintaining care for any additional children, if lifestyle issues weren't addressed would be questionable' (page 15). The report also noted that during a 12 month project period, 25 percent of the women were pregnant and a number of women thought at some point that they might be.

Breaking the cycle of abuse is well known to be very difficult for those involved and people need a particular level of targeted support. Barnardo's SECOS has also provided support for adults involved in prostitution, although in the context of high need and limited resources.

### **3.0 Conclusion to section one**

There has been a strong and significant agency response in Teesside, led by Barnardo's and the police and almost all young people we identified as being or at risk of sexual exploitation were found to be referred to SECOS. There were observations made about the length of time that CSE services had been in Teesside and the extent of knowledge about the prevalence and patterns. Barnardo's service in Middlesbrough and ACE project in Stockton have been in operation for 20 and 10 years respectively. Their depth of knowledge of CSE is significant as is their ability to identify types of exploitation and assist others in identifying different types, for example, online grooming. There is no doubt that this length of service contributes to the ease of identification of exploitation.

It was felt that recognition should be given to the local authorities in the area and the work they have carried out in response to Child Sexual Exploitation.

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<sup>6</sup> Massam, L. and Evans, J. (2012) Sex worker report: Stockton on Tees, Safer Stockton Partnership.

However, it was recognised that more needs to be done, including more multi agency work, education, one to one and therapeutic work. It was also considered that those children who are known to services, represented the '*tip of iceberg*' as reported by one agency.

There were also issues raised about thresholds and what constituted a high or medium risk. In Redcar for example, cases of CSE reported to the VEMT reduced from 52 in 2013/14 to 22 in 2014/15 and it was reported that this was due to risk levels being changed rather than an absolute reduction in extent of exploitation. One specialist worker noted that some cases rejected by VEMT still constituted CSE in their opinion. As one worker said:

*"The priority levels is a murky area."*

There were subsequent concerns that the VEMT groups were acting as a gatekeeper and potentially preventing certain young people from receiving necessary services. It was suggested that perhaps agencies should be able to refer directly in to Barnardo's as they did previously.

The majority of services interviewed were confident about being able to identify the signs and risk factors associated with the sexual exploitation. Many of these had received training from Barnardo's in the past. However, there was a feeling that there had been developments with the area because of the high profile cases in Rotherham and Rochdale. There was therefore expressions for a need of further training in that area, particularly how to engage with young people who may be familiar with sexual exploitation/grooming terminology and who know how to circumvent/avoid engagement. As one interviewee stated:

*"It would be good to get refresher training, the last training we had was six years ago and things have moved on since, it is always good to skill our workforce up to deal with this area."*

There were areas on Teesside where it was felt that there was a lack of awareness about the risk of sexual exploitation to children and young people. For example, one agency representative said:

*“It is not on the radar enough... people still think that it doesn’t happen here.”*

In relation to the police, whilst they engage in a number of strategies to address CSE including disruption, intelligence-led operations, training, public campaigns and multi agency working, they also experience a number of problems. These include non-disclosure by victims, under investment in preventative work, such as education in schools and the hidden and increasing extent of online grooming.

## **Section two: Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advocate service**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Barnardo's had wanted to develop a children and young persons ISVA position for some time, to complement their Child Sexual Exploitation services on Teesside. The organisation began their ISVA service in 2011 and for the first two years it operated with one worker with funding from the Home Office and Public Health.

In 2013, the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) funded another part time ISVA as a result of high demand. In 2014, the PCC funded a therapeutic worker and increased the hours of the other ISVA to full time.

### **1.1 Aim and objectives**

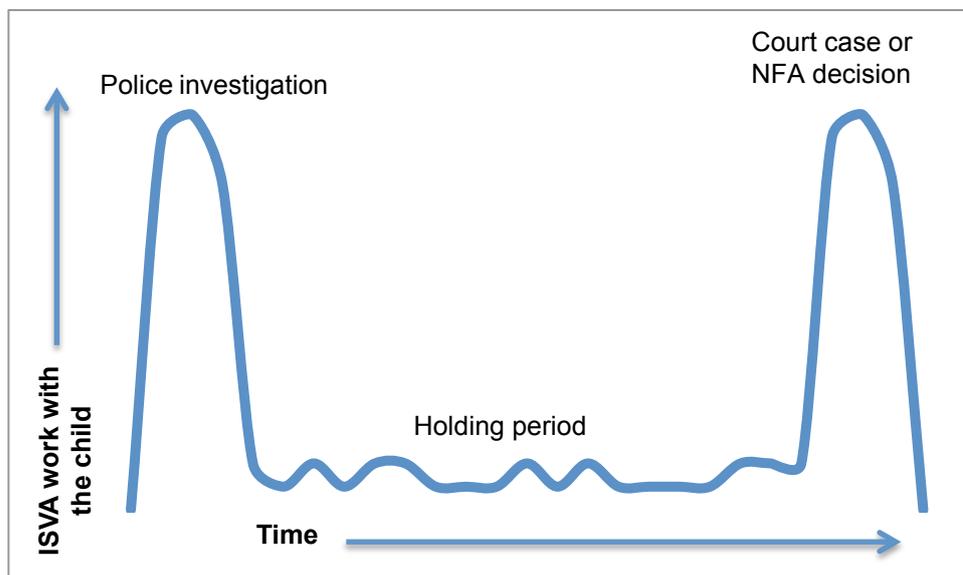
The aim of the ISVA service is to reduce attrition in the Criminal Justice System from children and young people who have reported incidents of sexual exploitation and violence. The service is intended for anybody under the age of 18 years who is a victim of a sexual offence. The service has a number of objectives, which include to:

- Represent the needs and wishes of children and young people: the ISVAs will ensure that all specific and necessary measures are adhered to, for example, that the child or young person has seen the evidence, takes breaks, has toys with them, has a video link.
- Provide emotional and social support: the project attempts to help children and young people to cope with their thoughts and feelings. If the ISVA is unable to do this or the child or young person requires more fundamental therapeutic support, Barnardo's can provide pre-court therapy.

- Increase the understanding of the young people in the criminal justice process

Often the ISVA is described as having a holding role for the child or young person, ensuring their mental health, wellbeing and fortitude during the often protracted period (it can take a year before a case goes to court) before trial or court outcome. The figure below represents how an ISVA supports a child or young person; intensive and frequent contact at the beginning during the investigation, followed by less frequent but regular contact during the time when the police are preparing the evidence and communicating with the CPS and courts, followed by intensive and frequent support when a court date is received and the case is being heard. After the case is completed then the support ends although the children and young people can then take advantage of Barnardo's other services.

**Figure 1.0 Diagrammatic representation of ISVA work and holding period**



The Barnardo's ISVAs have all undergone training delivered by Limeculture, who are a leader in the field of sexual violence support training.

## **1.2 Partnership working arrangements**

The project works in partnership with other ISVA services on Teesside who meet regularly to discuss service provision and working arrangements. For example, there is an agreement with Arch, a therapeutic voluntary sector sexual violence and ISVA service in Middlesbrough, that Barnardo's will take cases of Child Sexual Exploitation and children under the age of 14 years old (Arch works with people from 14 years old upwards).

The referral system was created by Teesside Sexual Violence Strategy Group, a multi agency group, which carried out a needs assessment in 2012. All cases of sexual violence are first reported to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Middlesbrough. These then either deal with the cases themselves or they refer cases on to others, such as Barnardo's.

## **1.3 The project approach**

After the project has received the referral from SARC they contact the parent(s) by telephone, briefly introduce themselves and arrange a time for a face to face visit. At that visit, where the young person is present, it is explained that the purpose of the ISVA is to provide support to the child during the investigation and court case. The ISVA will also ask if the adult requires support and if so will make a referral to another ISVA service, such as Arch; it is made clear that the support is targeted at the young person. It is also explained that the focus is not on the outcome of the court process, moreover, it is to help the young person with anything they need help with. It is reinforced to the young person, that they are believed, emphasising Barnardo's strapline, that they *Believe in Children*. It is also emphasised that the prosecuting lawyers believe them and that if a child has been brave enough to come forward to report the incident, then something has happened to them. The ISVAs explain that the Crown Prosecution Service must be confident that the evidence is sufficient to enable a trial to take place.

### **Box 1.0 Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and ISVAs in Teesside**

The first Independent Sexual Violence Advisor on Teesside was based at the Teesside SARC in Middlesbrough. They were the result of a 2010 inspection by the National Support Team (a SARC inspectorate) which identified a need and recommended the introduction of SARC-based ISVA provision, in line with best practice in other parts of the country. In 2011, SARC received funding from the Home Office and appointed a half time ISVA to work across Teesside. The SARC ISVA was soon working at capacity although they would refer people under 16 years old to Barnardo's who had also employed a child ISVA in 2011. However, both ISVAs could not cater for all need amongst children and young people and waiting lists developed.

In 2014 additional ISVA provision at SARC was funded by the Cleveland PCC's Office and now SARC has 1.6 full time ISVA posts (for both adult and children) providing a service across Teesside. The PCC also funded additional child ISVA and therapy for ISVA clients at Barnardo's in the same year.

Currently there are seven full time adult and two child ISVAs covering Teesside, which in addition to the SARC ISVAs include: Redcar and Cleveland with a half time ISVA employed by Eva; Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool are covered by Arch who employ two ISVAs, a manager and an ISVA support worker (Arch has recently recruited a specialist ISVA to work with women engaged in prostitution).

The support provided by a child ISVA is not therapeutic and their role requires them not to know the nature of the incident. This is because the ISVA must not be seen to influence the child in any way which would have any bearing on the investigation or the court case as it may endanger the case for the prosecution. However, their role is supportive and is intended to help with the young person come to terms with an ongoing situation, build their confidence and otherwise recover from trauma. The role and function of the ISVA is also not dependent on the outcome of the court case and indeed, the support

attempts to focus on other aspects of the young person's life and steer away from the court (whilst recognising that this can be difficult). If the young person does require a therapeutic intervention, they are referred to Barnardo's pre-court therapy (see box 1.4).

The ISVA provides the support to the young person during visits and trips, such as taking them out for walks, to a coffee shop or McDonald's or sometimes seeing them at Barnardo's Bridgewater centre, and on the phone and texts. The visits vary in frequency, with weekly visits for the first four weeks, followed by fortnightly visits for the next month, tapering down to monthly visits thereafter (see previous figure). When a date for the court case becomes near, the frequency of the visits will once again increase. This arrangement is flexible however, and if the young person is in need of more frequent visits then it will be arranged.

At these visits, the ISVA will update the young person with any relevant information about the investigation or court case. They will also talk with the young person about how the case is affecting their day to day life and if they need anything, such as techniques to help them manage stress, improve sleep, advocating with school or anything else. Near the time of the court case, the ISVA will take the young person for a pre-trial visit and explain in detail about what may happen. Before each visit, the ISVA will call the Police Officer who is in charge of the case to ask if there are any updates. Depending on the Officer in charge, they may call the ISVA if any information comes to light or if there have been any developments in the case that may require specific support or visits. However, sometimes this does not happen and it has happened where the family has told the ISVA what has been happening. One ISVA described their role as being '*half information, half support.*' In relation to the support, another ISVA explained:

*"We always look beyond the court case ... it's about building self esteem, developing coping strategies and plans."*

### **Box 1.1 intervention techniques: visualisation techniques**

A common technique used by the ISVA to help the young person deal with harmful and repetitive thoughts are different visualisation techniques. One of these is for the young person to imagine shrinking the perpetrator to just a couple of inches high. Then to imagine picking them up by the ears, giving them a shake and then placing them in an imaginary small box. Then placing that box in a corner or somewhere away from them. If a person is causing negative thoughts or whenever the young person feels like it, they can pick up the imaginary box with the perpetrator inside and give it a firm shake and then replace it in the same corner. In this way, it is intended that the young person can shrink the cause of problems to a very small size and by placing it in a box and shaking it whenever required, a sense of control is emphasised.

### **Box 1.2 What happens when a young person reports an incident**

A child or young person can report an incident of sexual exploitation either by reporting directly to the police or by telling a professional, such as a social worker or support worker who will then report to the police on their behalf. Once the initial report has been made, the young person will attend the Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Middlesbrough where they will complete an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview, which is digitally recorded on video. The young person will be assigned a Sexual Offences Liaison Officer, a specially trained police officer. After the reporting, the police will firstly ensure the safety of the young person and the family from any threat from the accused, their family or associates. Thereafter, an investigation will take place, conducted by a small team and overseen by a Detective Sergeant. The concerns of the child and their vulnerability is central to the investigation and the police follow a victim's code of practice which governs the contact between a young person and the police force. Once the investigation is complete, the case will be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for review by a specialised lawyer. The CPS will then make a decision about if there is sufficient evidence to hear the case in court. If there is, it will go to court and a date will be set for the case to be heard in court (see box 1.3); if not, the case will be No Further Actioned (NFA-ed).

### **Box 1.3 What happens in court**

If the Crown Prosecution Service decides that there is sufficient evidence, the case will first be heard at a magistrates court. It will be then referred to Crown Court and a date will be made for a preliminary hearing. Here the defendant will enter a plea, which if 'not guilty' will lead to a trial date. The young person will not have to appear at any of these initial occasions. When the case is referred to the Crown Court, Witness Care will be contacted and an arrangement will be made for a pre-court visit. The ISVA will accompany the young person and show them around the court and where they will sit in the private room with a video link. The young person will also have the option of staying at home during the trial. When the young person first reported the incident, they were taken to the SARC and interviewed, providing the Achieving Best Evidence interview which is digitally recorded. This recording is used for evidence and played back in court, removing the need for that young person to testify and go through the incident again. At the trial, there is the option of having the ISVA in the room with the young person. There is divided opinion on the value and position of this: with those in favour saying that it makes the young person feel at ease; and those against reporting it may be used by the defence to discredit the trial and if there is an adjournment, then the ISVA cannot support the young person in the interim period as they would have been exposed to the evidence which may be seen to influence the plaintiff.

### Box 1.4 What is pre and post-court therapy?

**Pre-court therapy** is counselling provided to the child or young person which is separate and distinct from ISVA support. This counselling must not involve any discussion about the offence or incident, so as not to affect the court outcome (i.e. the therapist cannot be seen to be coaching the victim). There are national and sub regional<sup>7</sup> guidelines which govern the type of therapeutic support which is permitted. The therapist keeps detailed notes of the therapy sessions which may be requested by the defense's legal team.

**Post court therapy** is described as person centred, non-directed counselling which attempts to increase the emotional resilience, stability and coping mechanisms in the young people. It is offered when the legal process has finished, if it has been to trial or not. After the process has finished then the ISVA disengages from the young person as their work has in effect finished. However, the child may continue to have therapeutic needs and they may include counselling to help with recovery. Although therapy is not time-limited, 12 sessions will be offered in the first instance. These will take approximately one hour and will take place in an appropriate venue, such as the school or at the Barnardo's Centre. The counselling is delivered by a specialist young persons' counselor who has qualifications in therapeutic play as well as counselling. The progress after sessions is monitored using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires, where possible. Talking therapy is offered to older children and play therapy for younger ones; the latter is non-directed play which allows space for generating scenarios or looking at problems during the play. If more counselling is required then an additional four sessions will be offered. When it has been judged that the therapy will be of no further benefit to the young person, counselling finishes. The end of the therapy sessions represent the end of the service for the young person.

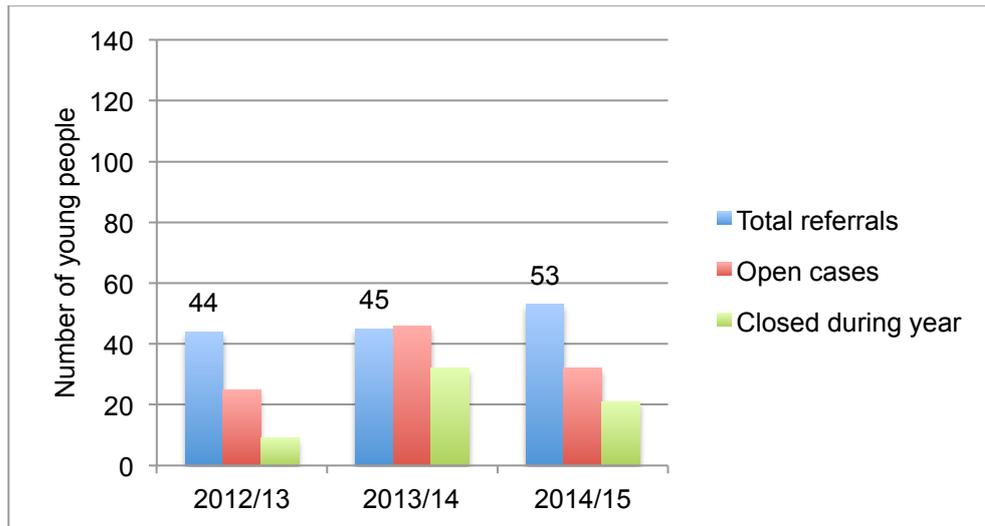
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<sup>7</sup> The Teesside Pre-Court Therapy Protocol

## 1.4 Outputs

The following figure shows that the service received between 44 and 53 referrals a year between 2012 and 2015.

**Figure 1.0 Total ISVA referrals, open and closed cases on Teesside, 2012 to 2015**



The project receives referrals from across Teesside with by far the most referrals coming from Middlesbrough.

**Figure 1.1 Referrals into ISVA service by local authority area, 2012 to 2015**

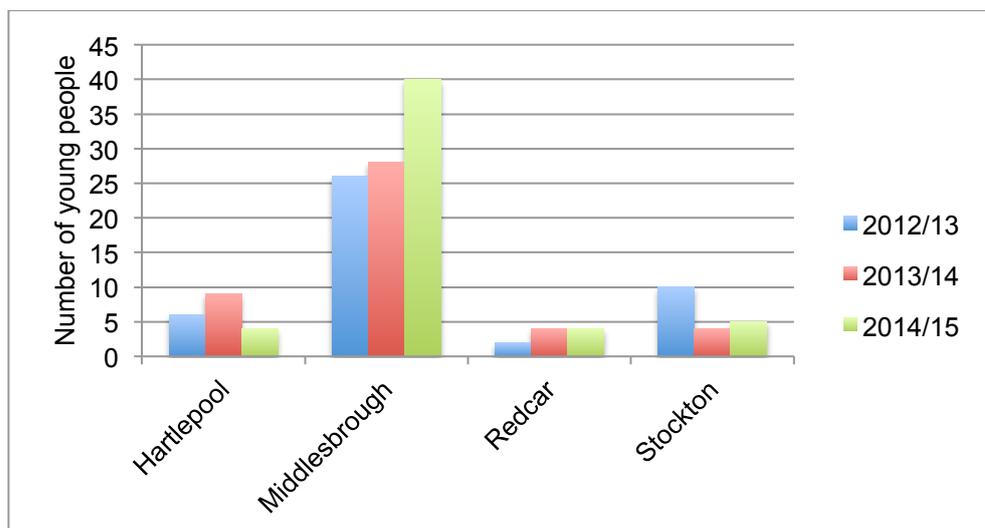


Figure 1.2 shows the ages of the ISVA clients. As can be seen, most are under 14 years old. These show a slightly different pattern to the CSE service clients who have an older age profile (an explanation for this is offered in section 1.4.1).

**Figure 1.2 Ages of ISVA clients, 2012 to 2015**

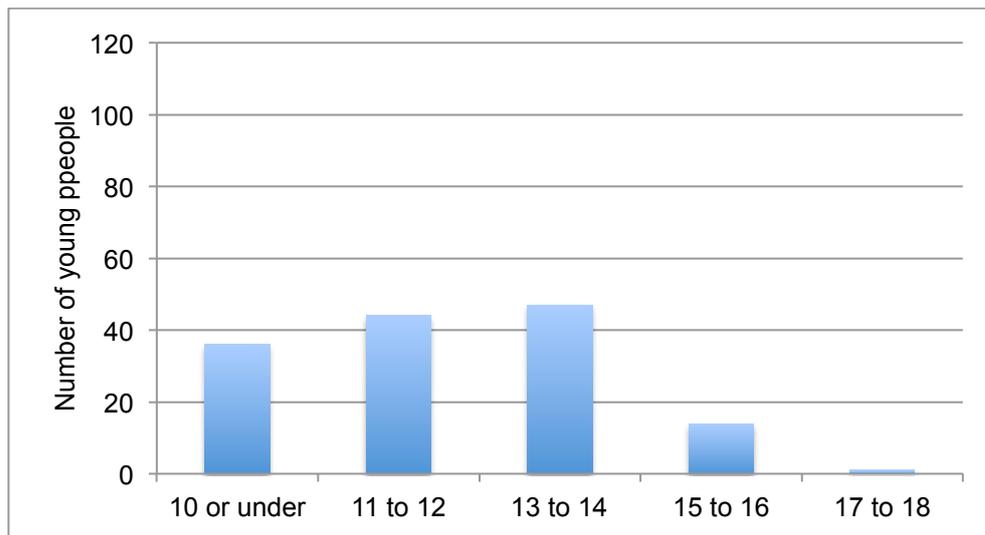
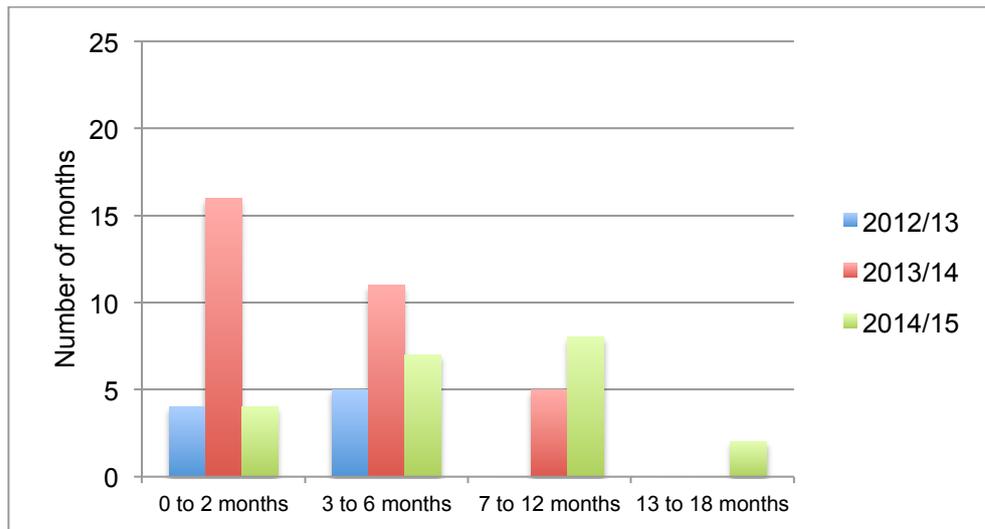


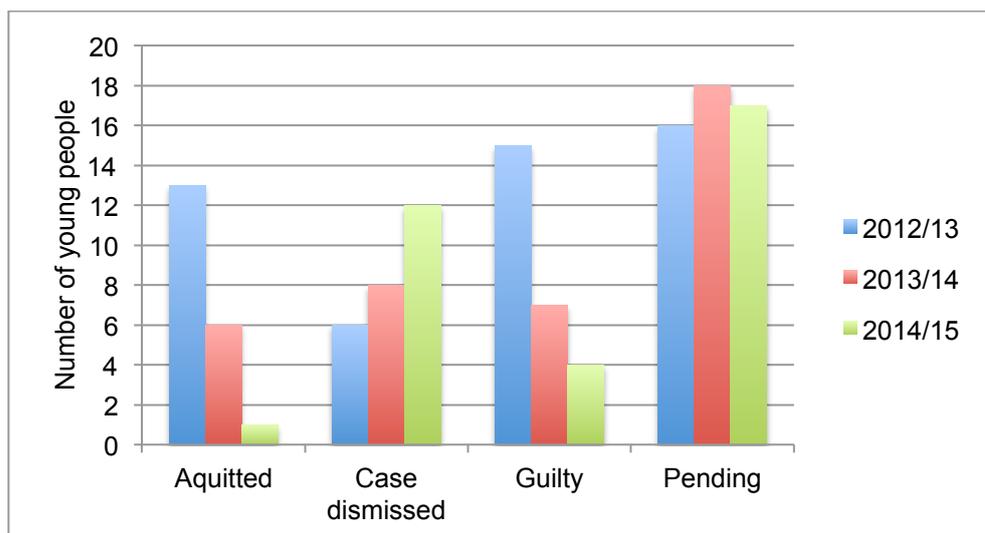
Figure 1.3 shows the duration of the support provided to clients. As can be seen, although much of the support is provided over a three to six month period, there has been a trend of longer support, i.e. since 2012 there has been an increase in clients who have required longer term support. This would appear to indicate that cases are taking longer to reach a conclusion.

**Figure 1.3 Duration of ISVA support, 2012 to 2015**



The following figure shows the court outcomes of the supported clients. The figures show that between 10 and 30 percent of cases between 2012 and 2015 have seen a guilty verdict; and between 30 and 38 percent of cases have been either acquitted or have had their cases dismissed. Pending cases are those that are on-going across time frames; they will eventually result in acquitted, guilty or case dismissed figures.

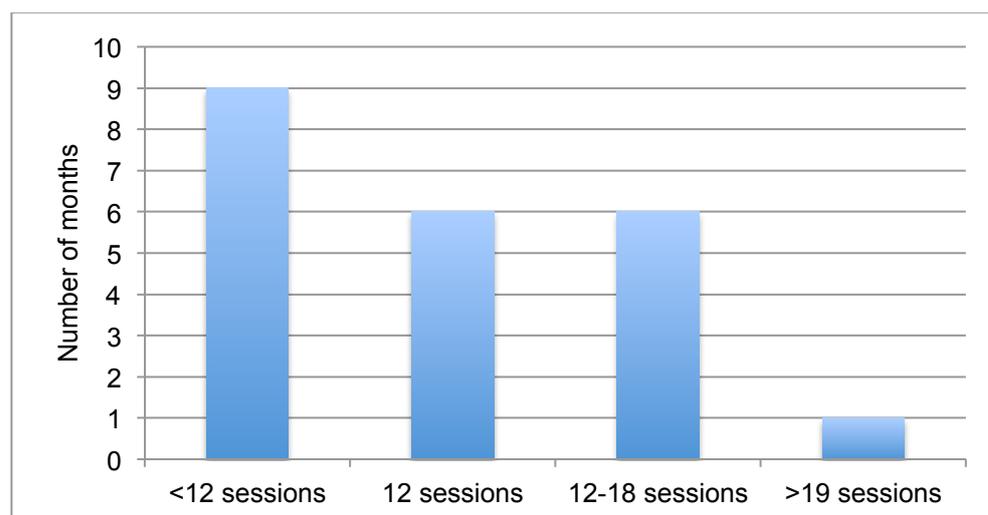
**Figure 1.4 Court outcomes of the ISVA supported cases, 2012 to 2015**



The ISVA therapeutic service (both pre-and post trial therapy) began in July 2014. Since then, they have seen a total of 22 children and young people who

have received therapy; only two of these have received pre-trial therapy. The number in post trial therapy is a demonstration of need: the figure represents 42 percent of total clients for 2014/15. The following figure shows the duration of that therapy.

**Figure 1.5 Duration of ISVA therapeutic support, June 2014 to August 2015**



### 1.4.1 Key messages

The project output figures presented in the section tell us a number of things, including:

- The service has supported an average of 45 children and young people each year between 2012 and 2015. Since 2014, when there has been two full time workers, this equates to a caseload per ISVA of around 22.
- The ages of the ISVA supported children and young people are slightly younger than those supported as part of Barnardo's CSE service. This is because the ISVA service support children and young people who have been the victims of any form of sexual violence including familial abuse, rape or CSE. The CSE service however, only provides services for children and young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation.

However, the majority of the ISVA clients are children and young people who have been sexually exploited.

- Over the last three years there have been significantly more referrals from Middlesbrough in comparison to the other local authority areas in the sub region. This may mean that there are more victims in Middlesbrough or that people report less in those other areas. If we look at the SARC statistics (table 1.0 below) we see that the number of victims (aged between three and 17 years old) presenting at the SARC in 2014/15 has a reasonably even spread across Teesside. This would indicate other reasons behind a smaller number of ISVA clients from Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton.

**Table 1.0 SARC clients by local authority area, 2014/15**

| <b>Local authority area</b> | <b>Number of clients</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Hartlepool</b>           | 51                       |
| <b>Middlesbrough</b>        | 62                       |
| <b>Redcar and Cleveland</b> | 61                       |
| <b>Stockton</b>             | 62                       |

- In relation to criminal justice outcomes, between 10 and 30 percent of cases between 2012 and 2015 have seen a guilty verdict; and between 30 and 38 percent of cases have been either acquitted or have had their cases dismissed. The remaining cases lasted longer than 12 months and were waiting to be heard.
- A total of 22 children or young people have received therapy: 20 after the trial has finished and two have received pre-trial therapy.

## **1.5 Relationship between the ISVA and CSE service**

It is perhaps expected that there would be a relationship between the ISVA and CSE service, for example: after the completion of a court case, the young person may go on to receive specialist CSE support and education; or there may be movement from the CSE to the ISVA service as a result of disclosures from the young person after they have realised what they have been involved in. However, between 2012 and 2015, there have only been four young people who have transferred between ISVA and CSE services.

A possible explanation for this is a Catch-22 type situation which prevents a young person receiving targeted support focusing on the exploitation they have experienced if they are involved in a court case/investigation: a CSE specialist worker is not able to work thematically with a young person if there is an investigation/ongoing court case. This is to prevent claims by defending lawyers that the young person is somehow being coached, which has happened in the recent past (2014) in Middlesbrough. If a young person is not involved in any investigation or court case, then they can receive the full suite of Barnardo's interventions (see box 2.0 in section one).

If a young person is involved with an investigation or court case, they cannot: receive any awareness raising or education about CSE; engage in any discussions about the sexual exploitation incident(s) that occurred. Instead they are offered non-directed support and befriending. It has been described as a 'holding role' by the CSE specialists until the investigation or court case has ended. To summarise, CSE victims can receive four levels of service:

- No service: these are children who do not wish to engage, either because they have not been identified or they have been identified but did not wish to engage. The numbers of these is low: approximately 10 percent of referrals to the CSE service choose not to engage.

- ISVA service: this is for children and young people who have disclosed an incident to the police, who have carried out an ABE interview at SARC and who are part of an investigation or court case. These children and young people can receive pre- or post-trial therapy (box 1.4). A total of 40 percent of clients chose the latter, but only a small minority have taken advantage of the former (n=2).
- Partial CSE service: this is for those children and young people who have disclosed an incident of CSE and who have subsequently become the subject of an investigation. They may have disclosed the incident at any point but it often happens that it occurred when they have been receiving the full CSE service, at which point the service can no longer broach the subject of CSE or the incident the young person. The CSE service can continue to work with the young person but not in the same way as previous or they can pass them to the ISVA service, which according to the statistics does not appear to happen.
- Full CSE service: this is for those children and young people who have been referred either by themselves or by an external agency and are not the focus of a current investigation or court case.

Approximately 60 percent of ISVA clients disengage with Barnardo's after the culmination of their court case (40 percent go on to receive post-trial therapy). Bearing in mind there will be children and young people who have been victims of other types of sexual violence, it would indicate that these children and young people do not need any continuing support, either because the non-directed support during the case has been sufficient for their needs or they simply are in an acceptable stage in their recovery. This situation would appear to indicate that the children and young people who disengage do not receive any directed work, such as awareness, education, safety planning, about the CSE that they have been a victim of. On the other hand, the CSE clients who are worked with thematically rarely chose to report an incident which leads to a court case. This may be an area of the project which needs

more consideration as it would seem that there should be a relationship between the CSE and ISVA service.

## 2.0 Findings and impact

During the research which focused on the ISVA service, we were able to make a series of findings concerning project operation and impact on clients. These include the following:

- **Placing control in the hands of the young person:** being involved in an investigation and court case is a very disempowering process for the victim. The children and young people have overriding feelings of (powerful) adults doing things to or for the young person and them having no control in the process. The ISVA provides a level of influence and autonomy for young person, as ISVAs ask them the simple question, ‘what do you want to do?’ This was rated highly by the young people as it enabled them to be able to do something that they wanted and feeling in control. As one service user said:

*“Your choices were removed, everything, I felt really disempowered ... and with the ISVA was the first time I had to take some of the power back for myself.”*

They continued:

*“It is like being a CEO of a company but never making a decision.”*

This control was reported to have important impact on the young person’s emotional wellbeing.

- **Making sense of an overwhelming process:** it was reported that the ISVA helped the young person come to terms with the court case and manage their place in that. This was achieved through the provision of

information and understanding about a complex process in a patient and friendly way. For example, one service user said:

*“I was overwhelmed by it all, it was too much sometimes and the ISVA really helped me through it.”*

- **Created happiness in a difficult time:** service users said that the support from the ISVAs made them feel happier. This was because of the relationship that develops between the ISVA and the young person, the interest that was shown and being able to talk to someone. One service user reported:

*“It was good just to talk to someone that you were not emotionally attached to and being able to talk in confidence, someone who was there for you, on your side.”*

- **Providing a positive role model:** the ISVA was reported to be an important and positive example to the young person. For example, a service user said:

*“She was just so happy all the time and so positive that I wanted to be like her ... she was like a role model”*

It was felt by the service user that at a time of such negativity, it was extremely valuable to have such a positive influence.

- **Being unable to talk about the incident was frustrating:** the service users reported that whilst they could understand the reasons behind the ISVA not being able to discuss the case, it was frustrating. For example, one service user said:

*“Although you didn’t want to talk about it all the time, sometimes you did and not being able to, it was annoying.”*

- **A complex role:** the position of ISVA requires a unique skill set and they must carefully negotiate professional and personal boundaries in an often highly charged environment. The ISVA must quickly develop a relationship with the young person which will enable them to share feelings with one another. However, the ISVA must also be clear with the young person that their involvement with them will end once the court case process is ended. This emphasises the professional role and can run contrary to the development of relationships. The ISVA must also be aware of the issues experienced by the parent and must be clear that they are there to cater for the child.
- **A creative and developmental project:** since its inception in 2011, the service has been informed by its own development and the barriers and opportunities it has faced. This has included: the creation of a peer support group in 2012/13; and the successful application for funding for a therapist. The idea for the peer support group was identified by two service users who recognised a need for support from young people who had been through the process themselves. These young people had received unsatisfactory responses from Crown Prosecution Service (such as a not guilty or NFA) and wanted to contribute positively to other young people going through the same things that they went through. The need for a therapist was identified as a result of young people receiving the results of the court process, which were either successful or unsuccessful, and not being in a position or ready to lose the support of the ISVA project. In other words they continued to need support to bring closure to the trauma which was not brought by the court process. As a result of the end of the process, the ISVAs could no longer support them. To address this, the project applied for funding to employ a therapist who could work with the young people on a more profound level, raising issues related to the incident, should they wish (which the ISVA service could not do). This role also played an important role in an exit strategy, which did not exist previously.

- **Influencing national policy:** the same young people who started the peer support group also wanted to campaign and influence policy. Using their own experience of both support from Barnardo's and of the Criminal Justice System, they wanted to influence legislation and policy. The young people attended and contributed to the cross party parliamentary enquiry into the effects of the Sexual Offences Act, 10 years on and that they provided recommendations on practice as the legislation related to grooming and were successful in getting the law changed. They also fed into a major piece of research carried out by the University of Bedfordshire<sup>8</sup>. There have been significant results from this for other victims of sexual exploitation and violence.
- **Relationship with the police:** the ISVAs and the police have a good relationship and there is regular communication between the two agencies. An integration of services is important as the ISVA is able to provide support at critical junctures, such as when a decision has been taken by the CPS of No Further Action. There have been instances where this has not happened and there has been a case of a family telling the ISVA of a NFA decision. The Police must ensure that these situations are avoided and if there is important information to be communicated to the parent and young person, the ISVA should be notified to enable the provision of support.
- **The needs of the adult:** it is recognised by the project that the caregiver may have their own therapeutic and/or support needs. As a result of this project focusing on young people, Barnardo's is not in a position to offer such support. However, due attention is paid to the emotional state of the adult and if thought necessary, referrals to adult ISVA services can be made. It is noted that other services for victims of sexual violence find that support and therapy is most effective when therapy is given to both adult

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<sup>8</sup> Beckett, H. and Warrington, C. (2015) Making Justice Work: Experiences of criminal justice for children and young people affected by sexual exploitation as victims and witnesses, University of Bedfordshire.

and the child. Indeed, it is the experience of one such service in Cumbria, that recovery is more effective when the adult receives longer therapeutic intervention than the child as it is the adult who provides the long term ongoing support.

- **The importance of communication:** being in receipt of current and accurate information is of vital importance to the mental wellbeing of victims and their families; imaginings and half-truths can be very damaging. The project plays an important function in ensuring that the young person and family have all of the necessary information about the investigation and the court case. The ISVAs play an important role in explaining the information and the process which surrounds it. Without the project, this may not happen as the Officer in charge may not have the time to communicate effectively and in a timely fashion (and other than the investigating Officer, there is no other police resource which is provided to the victim). Information and understanding are important to the process of recovery from trauma.
- **The provision of post court therapy is an important exit strategy and important to the process of recovery:** almost half of the young people take up the offer of post court therapy. Other young people do not require any further assistance outside of the information and practical support of the ISVA. Others however need a more profound intervention to assist them in their recovery. Without the option of post court therapy, there would be a significant gap in the service which would ultimately affect the prospects for recovery for many young people who use the service.
- **A supportive local policy environment:** the Cleveland PCC has a comprehensive and high profile Violence Against Women and Girls strategy which is located under the 'Ensuring a better deal for victims and witnesses' section and one of their top five priorities in the Police and Crime Plan 2015/17. They have invested significantly in victims services and have recently agreed funding until March 2017 for the SARC ISVAs

and the project's play therapist. The reason for this investment is a commitment from the office of the PCC to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and a recognition of the scale of the problem. The PCC has also recently joined the strategic Tees wide VEMT group.

### **3.0 Conclusion to section two**

Barnardo's children's ISVA service has become an incredibly important and valuable service for victims across Teesside. In fact, it is difficult to comprehend that situations exist in other areas across the North East where ISVAs do not exist. The service also rounds off Barnardo's existing CSE service which can now offer support to victims before, during and after a legal process. As one young person said of the ISVA service:

*"Everyone should have one."*

However, it would seem that both services should complement each other in a more integrated and coordinated fashion, with those young people able to pass between them easily.

This research also highlights an inherent problem with the criminal justice process as it relates to child victims of sexual exploitation and serving justice to perpetrators. The difficulty is thus: upon reporting/disclosing an incident of exploitation, the child or young person cannot receive any professional instruction or support to enable them to understand the incident or prevent it happening in the future, until the court case or investigation is ended. This may take a long time, over 12 months in many cases. During that time, the young person is involved with a disempowering legal process which stands a good chance (between 30 and 40 percent according to our figures) of the case being dismissed or the defendant being found not guilty. The ISVA manager summarised the current problems:

*"Obviously it is an essential child's right to have decisions made in their best interest and safeguarding should override any other policy or*

*procedure and yet we are told not to educate young people on how to keep safe while they sit in the Criminal Justice System - sometimes for up to nearly three years. If we could deliver direct CSE work to ISVA clients we could present the evidence of need. It is apparent that having to segregate ISVA and CSE [clients] in an area that naturally overlaps does not present clear conclusions and generates fear in workers as they do not want to say or do the wrong thing in case they jeopardise the outcome of a trial, by being accused of coaching etc.”*

It appears that there is a decision between a) enabling the victim to understand what has happened to them, and attempting to build their resilience and knowledge to prevent this situation arising in the future or b) attempting to bring the perpetrator to justice.

It seems that in order to safeguard a child's mental wellbeing after an incident of CSE, the Criminal Justice System needs to look again at its policy and process with regards to what support a child can receive.

On a final note, it is unlikely that these issues would have been identified if there was no child ISVA service being delivered in conjunction with a CSE service. Thanks therefore must be given to Barnardo's and the commissioners.