

Rapid evidence assessment – the sexual exploitation of boys and young men

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In partnership with



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In recent years, there has been an increased policy and media focus on the sexual exploitation of children in the UK. This interest follows several high-profile police investigations which led to groups of offenders being charged and convicted for sexual offences against multiple child victims. Practitioner groups such as the police and local safeguarding children boards have been criticised for failing to prevent this form of victimisation. Although there has been an upsurge in activity to address child sexual exploitation (CSE), the recent focus has been almost exclusively on female victims and male offenders. The majority of the literature on CSE has either ignored or only briefly acknowledged the experiences of boys and young men as victims rather than offenders. This rapid evidence assessment, part of a wider Nuffield Foundation-funded project, provides an overview of the current literature addressing the experiences of boys and young men who are CSE victims.

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This particular study was one strand in a wider collaborative research programme on the sexual exploitation of boys and young men in the UK. Information on the other consortium members from UCL, Barnardo's and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) who were involved in the programme is provided below:

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1. Introduction

This rapid evidence assessment was designed to consolidate the current knowledge on the sexual exploitation of boys and young men. To do so, the peer-reviewed and grey literature (policy documents, practitioner reports, etc) about victims, offenders and abuse processes were reviewed and synthesised.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is an umbrella term covering all forms of sexual mistreatment of children, irrespective of the context or control mechanisms used. Whether a child is considered sexually abused is, at least in part, a function of sociocultural and legal rules and conventions (Smallbone et al, 2008). For example, in the regions covered by this review (see Section 2.2), ages of consent varied considerably, from 13 years in Spain to 18 years in Turkey, Malta and some US states. In most other countries covered, including the UK, a child can legally consent to (most, if not all types of) sex at 16 years. Accepted definitions of childhood, also a social construct (e.g. Aries, 1962), do not necessarily correspond with legal ages of consent. A child is defined in this research in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) (to which the UK is a signatory) as anyone aged 17 years or younger.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE), meanwhile, is typically seen as a subset of CSA. According to convention, CSE involves an exchange of sexual activity for a 'reward' of some sort. The standard definition of CSE used in England¹ is that set out in Department for Children, Schools and Families² (DCSF) guidance:

'Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes,

affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities' (DCSF, 2009, p9)

This definition is clearly wide-ranging and encompasses diverse patterns of abuse, including those with and without a commercial dimension. In 2013, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) produced new guidance for prosecuting cases of CSA (CPS, 2013). In the guidance, CSE was also discussed, but it was emphasised that there is 'no specific offence of child sexual exploitation' (Annex B). The broad spectrum of behaviour encompassed by CSE was stressed: from seemingly consensual relationships to those involving physical violence, threats and/or coercion; and from clear-cut exchanges of sex for money to informal trades for accommodation or affection, for example. The fact that CSE could involve one-on-one relationships of abuse was acknowledged. Nonetheless, in this guidance, CSE was equated primarily with 'sexual abuse by coordinated networks' (paragraph 13).

In many ways, this narrower definition reflects the growing concern in the UK over CSE involving multiple perpetrators, be it in gangs or other more informal groupings (e.g. Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), 2011a; Office of the Children's Commissioner for England (OCCE), 2012). High-profile prosecutions of large networks such as those in Operations Retriever (Derby) and Span (Rochdale) sparked a rapid growth in media, political and practitioner attention to CSE (Cockbain, 2013a). Further confusion can arise from the proliferation of interrelated but distinct constructs (e.g. 'on-street grooming', 'localised grooming', 'internal trafficking', and 'group- and gang-associated CSE'), which are often used interchangeably with CSE (Cockbain, 2013b). The increased impetus to tackle to CSE is evident not only in

1 This definition was developed by the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People (now known as the NWG). The NWG is a consortium of practitioners working across voluntary and statutory child sexual exploitation services.

2 Now the Department for Education

the UK but internationally too (Chase and Statham, 2005), as seen in European directives³ and joint initiatives aimed at improving knowledge and responses (Skidmore, 2004).

The research literature on CSE has also expanded in recent years, although the focus has been predominantly on female victims (e.g. Feiring et al, 1999; Pearce et al, 2002; Cusick et al, 2003; Melrose and Barrett, 2003; Barnardo's, 2011; Brayley et al, 2011; Cockbain et al, 2011). Male victims of CSE – like those of CSA in general – are still considered a hidden population (Palmer, 2001; Chase and Statham, 2005; Harris and Robinson, 2007; OCCE, 2012). Chen et al (2007) found that many parents questioned about CSA were unaware that boys could be victims as well as girls. Studies addressing the sexual exploitation of boys typically involve fewer than 30 participants (e.g. Bauserman and Rind, 1997; Feiring et al, 1999). Although small-scale but carefully constructed qualitative studies may, however, offer inferential generalisability, quantitative studies of this size when referring to large populations would offer little insight. Moreover, many of these studies also include female victims and findings are rarely differentiated by gender (e.g. Bauserman and Rind, 1997).

The differences and commonalities between the sexual exploitation of male and female children and young people have only been addressed in a small number of reports, and rarely using empirical data. Consequently, gender-based distinctions remain a largely unexamined and under-developed area of CSE research (Pierce and Pierce, 1985; Coulborn Faller, 1989; Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006). The broader literature on sexuality and gender, however, gives reason to believe that victim gender may affect involvement in and responses to CSE. Oliver and Hyde (1993), for

example, conducted a meta-analysis of 21 different measures of sexual behaviour across 177 studies. Their results showed numerous differences between the genders in regard to sexual attitudes and behaviours.

Consequently, effective responses to CSE may require different prevention, awareness-raising and victim support mechanisms for male and female victims and those at risk – within a holistic overarching strategy. The call for male-victim specific services has previously been made (e.g. Kendall-Tackett et al, 1993; Trickett and McBride-Chang, 1995) but has yet to be justified or informed by robust empirical research. Yet, current services designed around evidence generated through studies exclusively or predominantly on female-victim CSE may not adequately serve male victims. Improved recognition of and responses to boys and young men who are sexually exploited requires, it is argued, targeted research attention to expand the limited and fragmented evidence base.

3 In 2010, the European Union proposed a directive on combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. This directive came into force in 2011. In 2009, the Council of Europe proposed a Council Framework Decision on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

2. Method

A rapid evidence assessment (REA) is a systematic method to review evidence and research on a specific topic in an efficient and directed manner within a limited timeframe. One reason for selecting an REA approach was that the knowledge base on the sexual exploitation of boys and young men was known to be limited.

2.1 Research questions and search terms

Clear research questions were established to inform the REA's focus, search parameters and inclusion criteria:

1. What are the characteristics of the sexual exploitation of boys and young men?
2. How, if at all, do these characteristics differ from those of the sexual exploitation of girls and young women?

The following search terms were used:

Child AND sex*⁴ AND (exploit* OR abus*) AND (boy or male)

The reason for including research on child sexual abuse (CSA) as well as child sexual exploitation (CSE) is that, as described in the introduction, CSE is not a clear-cut form of CSA, nor is the term necessarily and consistently used. To exclude other forms of abuse not categorised specifically as CSE would have risked artificially constricting the scope of this review.

2.2 Inclusion criteria and search results

Using the search terms identified above, searches were conducted on 31 October 2013. Literature was searched for using

online journals. This enabled a wider search (in comparison with a print search) to be conducted across a range of databases. Where a document was identified as having potential value but was not available electronically, efforts were made to obtain a print copy for inclusion.

Due to the complexities surrounding CSE and the multiple fields in which CSE research may be conducted, multiple databases were searched. The databases searched as part of this REA were:

- NCJRS
- PsycINFO
- Scopus
- Web of Knowledge
- Westlaw UK
- Lexis Nexis
- MEDLINE
- EMBASE
- CINAHL.

In addition, Google Scholar was searched to discover other documents of interest. Literature was searched for on key NGO and government websites and was identified through citation chasing.

The retrieved abstracts were sorted by relevance⁵ and the top 600 abstracts taken for further inspection. After removing duplicates, 522 papers remained. The literature retrieved was not limited to academic studies but included NGO and government reports and policy documents, known collectively as grey literature.

Table 1 below details the set of parameters and inclusion criteria used to screen abstracts and full texts, together with the number of documents excluded. Seventy-two papers remained after screening. Through citation chasing – the process of retrieving references cited in the text of

4 The wildcard function (denoted by '*') was used during the searches to include the term plus any letters that may come afterwards. For example, 'sex*' would bring up sex, sexual, sexting, etc.

5 Using the automated service offered through search databases.

an identified document – a further 22 papers were considered suitable. These additional documents were also screened for relevancy to the project before inclusion. The total number of documents included in this review was 184.

Table 1: Document inclusion criteria

Parameter	Criterion	Reason	Documents excluded
Language	Published in English	Language spoken by researchers	2
Country	Related to exploitation in Australasia, Europe and North America	Relevant and comparable to the UK situation	77
Date	Published post-1980, focus on those post-2000	Interest in current trends, patterns and seminal studies	40
Data	Contains primary or secondary data or CSE policy relevant to the research questions (i.e. including details of male victims)	Exclusion of unsubstantiated opinion pieces and research with little application to the current project (e.g. the offender treatment literature)	182 ⁶
Victim age	Related to victims aged 5 years to 18 years	Children defined as under 18s and the exchange of sexual acts for reward involves level of cognitive ability beyond many very young children ⁷	1
Retrieval	Document must be accessible to researchers either online or in print	Access is required to the full document to ensure that the details of the document are understood before inclusion	38

⁶ The majority of papers excluded on these grounds were about medical drug trials.

⁷ Younger children were included when it was not possible to exclude them from a dataset involving older children. In some cases, victims over the age of 18 were also included when there was evidence that the sexual abuse had begun in childhood.

3. Key findings

As well as being limited in volume, the literature was fragmented in nature. It posed various challenges for effective synthesis and a clear response to the research questions. First, cross-comparison of research was made difficult by the divergence of studies in terms of their research foci, terminology, definitions, methods and data – including variation in geographical, legal and temporal contexts. Second, studies came from jurisdictions with different ages of consent – probably one reason for the observed variation in the age categories into which results were aggregated. Again, this affected cross-comparability of results, as too did the fact that absolute numbers were not always reported alongside percentages. Third, efforts to distinguish between child sexual abuse (CSA) and child sexual exploitation (CSE) involving male and female victims were frustrated by the fact that results were often aggregated.

This section is divided into four sub-sections: general findings; thematic findings; victim reactions; and disclosure of abuse. The first section provides an overview of what is known about CSA of male victims in general terms.⁸ It focuses on the characteristics of victims and the abuse they suffered (age, duration of abuse, risk factors and prevalence) and offenders (age, types of offender and gender). The second section splits the majority of the documents reviewed into thematic categories according to the immediate situational context of the abuse, such as abuse in schools, prisons and gangs. The final two sections cover literature related to male victims' reactions to abuse and factors affecting disclosure.

3.1 General findings

No far-reaching, large-scale study focusing on CSE and all its component sub-types could be identified. As such, the findings draw on

studies of both sexual abuse in general and various sub-types, including distinct forms of CSE. This section addresses victims and offenders separately.

3.1.1 Victims

This section is divided into four sub-sections: victim age; duration of abuse; victim risk factors; and prevalence.

3.1.1.1 Victim age

There is no fixed age at which childhood sexual abuse is most likely to occur, and specific types of abuse appear to have different victim age profiles. For example, the mean age for the first commercial sexual exploitation of children (boys and girls) has been found to be mid- to late-teens (Fredlund et al, 2013). In contrast, prepubescent boys have been found to be much more likely than older boys to be victims of child pornography (Von Weiler et al, 2010; Quayle and Jones, 2011). Nelson and Oliver (1998) found that just over half ($n=182$) of male CSA victims in their sample were abused between the ages of 12 and 15 years. The rest were either five to 11 years (21%, $n=73$) or 16 to 18 years (27%, $n=94$). Many other studies only focused on a specific age range (e.g. the study of eight- to 15-year-old victims by Feiring et al, 1999), which makes it difficult to gain an accurate understanding of the age spread of victims. A study by OPTEM also found that many children were aware of risk factors connected with abuse, particularly online, but that older children often adopted contradictory behaviours that instead increased the risk they faced (Quayle et al, 2008).

3.1.1.2 Duration of abuse

As with age, there is no average duration common to all forms of CSA. Factors such as abuse type, pre-abuse relationship between offender and victim, and victim ability to disclose all appear to affect how long the

⁸ The term 'victim' in this review includes those who are known to have been victimised and those who are either at very high risk of being, or strongly believed to have been, victimised.

abuse can continue. Some studies have attempted to put an average duration on male CSA, but their findings differ markedly from a single event (Finkelhor et al, 1990; Sarwer et al, 1997) to prolific and chronic abuse (Lanktree et al, 1991). Some boys have described their abuse as starting with non-sexual touching before moving on to more intimate 'play' such as tickling and wrestling – a process that normalises being in physical contact with the offender (Dorais, 2002).

3.1.1.3 Victim risk factors

Very little is known about the ways in which the characteristics of male victims differ from those of female victims of CSA. It has been suggested that some more traditionally masculine characteristics, such as an unwillingness to express emotion and talk about problems, can result in low rates of disclosure and prolonged abuse among male victims. Family factors increasing the risk of boys becoming victims of CSA identified by Holmes and Slap (1998) included parental alcohol abuse, parental criminal behaviour and a history of sexual victimisation in the family.

Homelessness and a propensity for going missing from home have been cited as risk factors for CSA (CEOP, 2011a; APPG, 2012; Smeaton, 2013). Sometimes, however, going missing or becoming homeless may be a result of previous sexual exploitation or other abusive situations. In a USA study of street children in three major cities, 19% of boys ($n=96$) reported leaving home due to sexual abuse (Molnar et al, 1998). When there is no trusted adult available to report abuse to, children may become more vulnerable. A lack of trained residential care home staff, or a lack of interest by parents, may also result in signs of CSA/CSE being overlooked (CEOP, 2011a).

3.1.1.4 Incidence

Trying to understand the prevalence of sexual offences, including those committed against a child, is notoriously difficult. Attempts to quantify victim numbers or abuse instances are impacted by the method employed to recruit study participants and analysis techniques, as well as the definition of sexual abuse used (Goldman and Padayachi, 2000).

It is widely accepted that boys make up the minority of CSA victims. There is, however, no consensus regarding the ratio of male to female victims, nor the percentage of boys who suffer sexual abuse within the general population. In respect to the former, CEOP's (2011) scoping study of localised grooming found 12.6% ($n=182$) of victims of known gender were male. In contrast, Safe & Sound Derby, a leading NGO supporting victims of CSE in one English city, found 29% ($n=194$) of their service users were boys (CEOP, 2011a). In respect to the latter, a study of CSA rates across 19 countries (Finkelhor, 1994) and two North American studies (Dube et al, 2005; Pereda et al, 2009) have found less than 10% of the total male population sampled were sexually abused as a child. A more recent meta-analysis of CSA rates across 24 countries and 55 studies found victimisation was recorded as affecting between 3% and 17% of the total male population (Barth et al, 2012).

In 2007/8, ChildLine received 58,311 calls from boys – more than double the number received in 2002/3 (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), 2009). CSA accounted for 8% ($n=4,780$) of the calls – an increase of 121% over five years. Although the absolute number of girls calling ChildLine about sexual abuse was almost double that of boys⁹, the percentage of boys calling about CSA-related issues was slightly

9 10,397 and 5,679 respectively

higher than for girls (11% of boys and 10% of girls) (Wurtele, 2012). These figures may indicate that boys are increasingly at risk of CSA. Alternatively, they could be due to boys feeling more able than before to talk about their victimisation.

3.1.2 Offenders

This section is divided into three sub-sections: offender age; types of offender; and perpetrator gender.

3.1.2.1 Offender age

It is increasingly recognised that a large proportion of child sex offenders also commit other types of crime (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006). Nonetheless, the average age of those convicted for sexual offences – against adults or children – has consistently been found to be higher than the average age for those convicted of other offences (e.g. van Mastrigt and Farrington, 2009). In van Mastrigt and Farrington's (2009) study, the average age of robbers was 21.7 years, compared with 32.2 years for sex offenders. In a detailed study focusing on sex offenders in Australia ($n=182$), Smallbone and Wortley (2000) found an average age of 31.5 years for first sexual contact with a child and 38.4 years for last sexual contact. The age profile of CSE offenders, however, may be different from that of CSA offenders generally. CEOP's (2011) study of 'localised grooming' identified 639 offenders whose age at the time of committing the abuse was known, half ($n=321$) of whom were under 25 years old.

As with victims, there was no typical age of a child sex offender, but several studies showed that female offenders tended to be younger than their male counterparts and were more likely to interact with their victims in their professional capacity (e.g. as babysitters or teachers) (Holmes and Slap, 1998; Nelson and Oliver, 1998; Erooga, 2009).

3.1.2.2 Types of offender

It has been found that boys are more likely to be sexually abused by a non-familial offender than by a familial offender, and that those individuals sexually abusing boys were much more prolific offenders than those abusing girls (Feiring et al, 1999; Moody, 1999; Smallbone and Wortley, 2000). Lenderking et al (1997) found that 97% of abuse against boys aged over 13 years was committed by non-familial offenders. There have been various attempts to categorise types of offender – for example, by their motivation and level of opportunism (e.g. Wortley and Smallbone, 2006) or by their particular approach and demeanour (e.g. Doran and Brannan, 1996). CEOP (2011) found that approximately 80% of victims of offenders with a specific sexual interest in children were male.

3.1.2.3 Perpetrator gender

Many CSA studies have found that the majority of offenders are male. These findings, however, may be a consequence of the high percentage of female victims included in the studies. It may be the case that for male victims, the perpetrator gender split has a different profile. Finkelhor (1986) acknowledged that it was likely that females offended against other females in 5% of cases but this figure rose to 20% when considering male victims.

A UK study of 7,457 girls and 4,811 boys who were sexually exploited broke down the abuse by perpetrator gender as shown in Table 2 below (NSPCC, 2010).

In Nelson and Oliver's (1998) study, those said to have offended against girls were almost exclusively male, at 98% ($n=41$). This is a different pattern from the experiences of boys, where 69% ($n=11$) of offenders were female and 31% ($n=5$) were male.

Table 2: Victimization by perpetrator gender (NSPCC, 2010)

	Boys	Girls
Male offender	34% (n=1,651)	67% (n=4,972)
Female offender	36% (n=1,722)	6% (n=420)
Unknown gender	30% (n=1,438)	27% (n=2,065)

3.2 Thematic findings

While the previous section focused on CSA in general, here the scope is narrowed to various subsets of CSA. It should be noted, however, that in some respects almost every form of CSA could be said to meet the standard UK definition of CSE. Familial offending was excluded from this review as it was considered to be a form of CSA rather than CSE due to the relationship between the child and the offender.

From the initial search for documents related to the sexual abuse of boys and young men, it was clear that far less attention had been paid to this group than to their female counterparts. When male victims were included in a dataset with female victims, the results were often aggregated, making it difficult to compare the two groups. Despite these issues, 96 documents were identified which offered some insight into the childhood sexual victimisation of boys.

Some documents commented on male victimisation in general terms without specifying the situational context leading to the abuse. These documents provided an idea of prevalence rates and victim and offender characteristics but did not focus on specific forms of abuse. Eleven situational contexts in which the offender first accessed the victim were identified:

- schools
- care/residential homes
- youth groups
- religious institutions
- sport clubs
- prisons
- peer-on-peer settings
- gangs
- commercial settings
- digital/online settings
- internal sex trafficking contexts.

The aim of this section is to understand the distinct characteristics of different forms of CSA against boys and young men. All identified themes are discussed, outlining the key patterns of abuse and particular issues faced by victims in each situational context. It is important to note that these are not discrete categories and, in many instances, several areas overlapped. This is particularly true for online exploitation, as many different forms of exploitation can be Internet-facilitated. No overarching study that systematically explored differences between types of CSE could be identified and, given variations in the different ways behaviour is classified as CSE-related or not, such a study may not be possible. Direct comparison between the different situational contexts discussed here is not possible, due to the variation in the studies' foci, methods and samples.

3.2.1 School

This section covers abuse connected directly with the learning environment (e.g. by a teacher or caretaker). Robins (1998) highlighted the fact that school-based perpetrators are in a position to offer attention, praise and rewards to children without suspicion. These offenders can provide positive experiences that the child may not want to give up by disclosing the abuse. Alternatively, the offender may resort to intimidation and punishment, sometimes using the threat of writing a bad report to the child's parents or failing the child in a particular subject, in order to continue the abuse (Shakeshaft, 2004).

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) conducted two studies on the prevalence of school-based CSE in all state-funded schools in the UK. One study found that each year, approximately 450 accusations of CSE are made against school staff (teachers, caretakers, assistants, etc), with a further 450 allegations of inappropriate behaviour with sexual connotations (National Network of Investigation and Referral Support Co-ordinators (NNIRSC), 2006). The second study found that 0.24% of UK educators had some form of sexual abuse allegation made against them during their career and 65% of all allegations were against teachers (Lawrie, 2006).

In the school environment, a high proportion of offenders are women (Wurtele, 2012). One study found that female offenders accounted for 43% of all cases of sexual abuse in schools and their victims were mainly male students (Shakeshaft, 2004). A government study found similar results: 31% of sex offenders in UK schools were female (Lawrie, 2006).

Following the convictions of several teachers at a private boys' boarding school for CSA offences, ChildLine set up a temporary helpline for boarding school pupils to establish levels of abuse occurring in the residential school setting (La Fontaine and Morris, 1991). Analysis identified that 15% ($n=190$) of calls related to sexual abuse in a school setting. A teacher was the alleged perpetrator in 71% of these cases ($n=135$). The majority of the calls relating to sexual abuse were from boys whereas sexual harassment calls were mainly from girls. In regard to male victims, 87% reported abuse by an adult and 13% abuse by another pupil.

3.2.2 Residential care homes

Studies into the abuse of boys and girls in different residential settings outside of the family environment have found that girls are more likely to be sexually abused in foster homes and boys in residential care (Gallagher, 2000; Sullivan and Beech, 2002). Blatt's (1992) study of 510 randomly selected CSA incidents in care homes over a 14-month period found that 75% of the abuse was against boys.¹⁰

Blatt (1992) also found that residential care home offenders had an average age of 31.9 years, and younger members of staff were more likely to be involved in the abuse of children than their older colleagues. One in four reported offenders in residential care homes were female – a higher percentage than was found in wider studies of child sex abusers (Bunting, 2005), but still an under-representation in an industry where 70% of staff are female.

The conviction of several male care home employees for prolific and prolonged sexual abuse of boys in Northern Ireland in the

10 At that time, boys accounted for 67% of all children in residential care homes.

1970s and 1980s led to the commissioning of a national inquiry known as the Hughes Report (Erooga, 2009). After two years of investigation, Judge William Hughes published his extensive report containing recommendations for future safeguarding measures (Hughes, 1986). Several years later, another school principal was convicted for sexual abuse in a therapeutic boarding school for 'troubled' boys. It was later claimed that the principal had founded the school to facilitate his sexual offending and had created an environment that encouraged older children and other adults to abuse the younger boys (Brannan et al, 1993). Corby et al (2001) implied that the boys' reports of sexual abuse by teachers were largely dismissed due to the troubled background of many of the residents.

3.2.3 Youth groups

Sexual abuse in the Scouts, a youth group aimed predominantly at boys¹¹, was a major focus of studies on youth group CSA. A journalist in the USA published a book on sexual abuse in the Scouts between 1971 and 1989 (Boyle, 1994). In his book, Boyle claims that despite there being 1,151 reported cases of sexual abuse in this time period, only 416 adults (all male) were banned for sexual misconduct with a child. During that same time period, there were approximately one million adult volunteers and four million children connected with the Scouts (Terry and Tallon, 2004).

Although Boyle (1994) did not provide any figures, he reported that, in general:

- scoutmasters were the main perpetrators, followed by assistant scoutmasters
- the boys were aged 11 to 17 years at the time of the abuse
- many perpetrators knew the victim's family and were considered a trusted adult
- the type of abuse ranged from inappropriate touching to penetrative intercourse
- most abuse occurred on camping trips when the child was away from their family
- perpetrators abused between one and 20 victims over the course of their offending.

Many CSA victims abused through the Scouts did not come forward until adulthood. When a boy did report abuse to Scouting officials, it was common for the scoutmaster to be asked to leave rather than law enforcement being involved. No controls were in place to prevent the scoutmaster from moving to another location, rejoining the organisation and continuing their offending behaviour. In a 2010 lawsuit brought against the Scouts, a victim of CSA won \$18.5m for harm caused in the 1980s (Wurtele, 2012). In a recent attempt to better protect children, the Scouts now requires all volunteers to undertake youth protection training every two years (Wurtele, 2012). The Scouts (2005) have also produced a guidebook – *How to Protect your Children from Child Abuse: a Parent's Guide* – which is distributed to all parents when a child first joins.

Although a prominent youth group, the Scouts is not the only one to be associated with reports of CSA against boys. The American organisation Big Brother assigns an adult volunteer to spend one-on-one time with a child to provide support and mentoring. Terry and Tallon (2004) found that although there were far fewer reported incidents than seen with the Scouts, there were still instances of male children being sexually victimised in the Big Brother group.

¹¹ Originally the movement was solely for boys, but some groups now also allow girls to join. During the time period studied by Boyle (1994), no girls were permitted to join the Scouts.

The Big Brother organisation commissioned (but never published) a report into 100 allegations of sexual misconduct against children within the organisation (Wolff, 1982). Similar to the abuse seen within the Scouts, the majority of the abuse occurred when children were away from their families, often on camping trips or at the perpetrator's house (Terry and Tallon, 2004).

3.2.4 Religious organisations

Abuse within the Catholic Church was a focal point for several studies identified in this review. Although no other religious group was mentioned, CSA can occur in other religious contexts.

Sipe (1990) interviewed 1,500¹² priests in the USA and found that 4% ($n=60$) had a sexual interest in adolescent children and an additional 2% ($n=30$) engaged in contact and/or non-contact paedophilia. Another study (Berry, 1992) stated that between 1983 and 1987, the Vatican Embassy received more than 200 reports of sexual misconduct against a child, averaging one a week for that time period. The majority of the victims in Berry's (1992) study were teenage males. More recently, Terry and Freilich (2012) reported that 40% of all clergy abuse victims were 11- to 14-year-old males.

An investigative journalist for the *New York Times* conducted a review of religious-based CSA and found that by 2002, 4,268 victims had reported abuse perpetrated by 1,205 different offenders (Goodstein, 2003). In her piece, Goodstein (2003) commented that approximately 16% ($n=193$) of offenders had abused five or more victims. Eighty per cent of the reported abuse was against male victims and 43% of these perpetrators had offended against a child under the age of 12 years.

3.2.5 Sports groups

Exploitation in organised sport has been highlighted in research for many years (e.g. Curry, 1991; Donnelly, 1997; Jones et al, 2005). The focus, however, has been largely on the female victim/male offender model (Mendel, 1995). Comparatively little attention has been given to the sexual exploitation of male victims in the sporting context (Hartill, 2009).

As more boys than girls are involved in organised sports (Slater and Tiggemann, 2010), sexual abuse within sport may be a particularly significant issue for boys. An early study of offenders who committed CSA against boys within sport found that many were prolific offenders (Abel et al, 1987). The 153 extra-familial, non-incarcerated offenders in Abel et al's (1987) study had committed offences against a total of 22,981 boys – an average of 150 victims per offender. Other research, however, indicated that some extremely prolific perpetrators can skew the figures. Terry and Tallon (2004) found that one coach in their study was charged with 400 counts of abuse against children but no indication was given as to how many children this involved. Most offenders in their study had abused between 10 and 12 victims, although the number of incidents per victim was not provided.

A UK study of abuse within British sport (Brackenridge et al, 2005) found that out of 132 cases of abuse, 10.6% ($n=14$) were sexual in nature. In a second study of sexual abuse in sports of adults and children, Brackenridge et al (2008) found 28% ($n=45$) of victims were male, all aged between 11 and 17 years. The male victim age range was narrower than that seen for female victims (nine to 21 years). This same study also found that 98% of perpetrators were coaches or instructors who worked directly with the victim.

12 This number was split three ways: current priests, current priests receiving therapeutic treatment (not necessarily connected with sexual issues) and laypersons who had previously been a priest or had some other close clergy connection.

Male sports are often characterised by a sense of male camaraderie, closed to those outside of the team (Young, 2005; Hartill, 2009). The majority of sexual abuse in the sports context appears to take place at sports venues, offenders' homes, on sporting trips and during training sessions (Parent and Bannon, 2012). In addition to its main function, the male changing area is often also used as a meeting space to discuss tactics pre- and post-game, and for general socialising. Various states of undress in this environment can quickly become normalised (Brackenridge, 2001). In addition to the sport being played, organised male sport has been seen as an initiation into manhood for many boys (Burstyn, 1999). In the sporting environment, boys are expected to learn and exhibit masculine qualities such as aggression and risk-taking, and resolve is seen as a positive characteristic and complaints are not tolerated (Connell, 1995). This can lead to peers also committing sexual offences through hazing practices and sexual bullying (Robinson, 1998; Johnson and Holman, 2004).

Sexual abuse in a sports context against male victims was categorised as more forceful and invasive than for female victims and included the victim being given alcohol and pornography (Brackenridge et al, 2008). The type of abuse also seemed to be affected by gender. Brackenridge et al (2008) conducted a study involving 145 boys and 338 girls. Whereas boys reported experiences such as touching (33.8%, $n=49$), indecent assault (30.3%, $n=44$) and rape (10.3%, $n=15$), girls were more likely to report 'consensual' sex and kissing (12.7%, $n=43$ and 7.4%, $n=25$, respectively).

3.2.6 Prison

The sexual abuse of juveniles within the prison system can be carried out by other inmates or staff. Key findings from a nationwide USA study of abuse

in youth offending institutions (Beck et al, 2010) found that 91% ($n=24,160$) of all juvenile offenders in the USA are male. Of these incarcerated boys and young men, 10.8% ($n=2,609$) reported sexual activity with a member of staff and 2.0% ($n=483$) reported unwanted sexual activity with another youth.¹³ The majority of the sexual encounters between inmates and staff involved female employees. From a sample of 2,730 male victims of staff/inmate sexual abuse, female offenders accounted for 95.5% ($n=2,512$) of all abuse instances despite only making up 42% of correctional staff.

In contrast, far fewer juveniles in UK offending institutions reported experiencing either form of sexual abuse while incarcerated (Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS), 2013). Eighty-five per cent ($n=155$) of the youth prison population in one UK prison (HMP Feltham) took part in a wide-ranging survey of their prison experiences. Only one report was made of sexual abuse by a peer and two reports of sexual abuse by a member of staff.

Sexual encounters within the prison environment may be a result of female employees seeking acceptance, attention and/or affection from the male inmates (Faulkner and Regehr, 2011). English et al (2010) found that the informal prison code of silence, where inmates withhold information for fear of being branded a 'snitch', could impact on the number of reports of sexual abuse.

3.2.7 Peer-on-peer

Sexual violence can be perpetrated by peers using the same mechanisms as employed by adult offenders. Outside of the environment-related abuse scenarios (schools, prisons, etc) are two additional forms of peer-on-peer CSE. The first of these is 'sexting'¹⁴ and the second is sexual exploitation in peer relationships.

13 As the boys are housed in single-sex units, all of the abuse by other youths was by male abusers.

14 Sexting is the practice of sending and sharing sexual images, typically self-produced, often via mobile phones and social networking sites.

Sexting by young people is concerning, not least because the children involved are creating and distributing child abuse images – a crime under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Images posted online can also be viewed by adult offenders and distributed further. A UK study of the sexting practices of UK children described boys as perpetrators and girls as victims, with only cursory acknowledgment that boys could also be pressurised into creating or sharing child abuse images (Ringrose et al, 2012).

The second area of peer-on-peer CSE that has received attention is that of sexual violence within intimate teen relationships. A UK survey of young people ($n=581$ males, $n=597$ females) aged 13 to 16 years found that 31% ($n=185$) of girls and 16% ($n=93$) of boys had experienced sexual violence within an intimate relationship (Barter et al, 2009). While the majority (ranging from 86% to 97%) of boys in the study said they had never been pressurised or physically forced into any form of sexual activity by their partner, 7.6% ($n=51$) had been pressurised into kissing or touching and 3.4% ($n=23$) into sexual intercourse. A further 3.4% ($n=23$) had been physically forced to kiss or touch and 1.5% ($n=10$) to engage in sexual intercourse.

Boys reported a higher level of sexual victimisation across numerous relationships compared with females (Barter et al, 2009). Girls were more likely than boys to experience sexual violence within one relationship¹⁵, and a similar proportion of both genders experienced sexual violence on more than one occasion¹⁶. Boys, however, were much more likely to report sexual violence often or in all of their relationships¹⁷. Boys were most likely to be a victim of sexual violence within a relationship between the ages of 14 and 15 years. While girls were more frequently victimised by older partners,

boys tended to be at greatest risk with a younger partner (Barter et al, 2009).

In an American national study (Hamby and Turner, 2013) of 1,680 children aged 12 to 17 years in heterosexual relationships, 32.3% of boys and 67.7% of girls reported experiencing some form of sexual force used against them by their partner. Another USA study (Young et al, 2009) found that around 40% ($n=200$) of boys aged 10 to 18 years reported some form of sexual harassment, a quarter of whom said the offender was a peer. Of those boys who had been victimised by a peer, 91% ($n=46$) claimed that the incident did not bother them and only 9% ($n=4$) reported being upset.

3.2.8 Gangs

In 2011, the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England (OCCE) launched a two-year inquiry into the sexual exploitation of young people through groups and gangs (OCCE, 2012). The sexual exploitation of boys in gang settings was identified as occurring in three distinct forms: boys being sexually abused by gang members; boys being targeted sexually by females in order to improve their social status; and boys being coerced into joining in with the sexual exploitation of other victims. Beckett et al's (2013) report for the OCCE involved interviewing young people (male and female) who were, or had been, involved in a gang. During the interviews, it was uncommon for the young men to identify themselves as victims of sexual exploitation unless explicitly asked.

The stigma around homosexuality within gang culture meant that many gang members claimed that boys and young men were rarely the victims of sexual abuse or exploitation. When reports on boys being sexually abused by gang members were

15 Girls: 77%, $n=142$; boys: 50%, $n=47$

16 Girls: 23%, $n=43$; boys: 33%, $n=32$

17 Girls: 0%, $n=0$; boys: 19%, $n=18$

mentioned, it was in relation to gang initiation or as a form of humiliation or control over rival gang members. A more common form of sexual exploitation was by female peers, who targeted boys with high social status and engaged in sexual activity to improve their own standing in the group. The boys involved reported that they often thought they were in a genuine relationship and were not always aware of the true intention of the female exploiter before engaging in sexual activity. The final form of sexual exploitation faced by boys in gangs was being pressurised to engage in group-based sexual activity. This type of exploitation often involved female victims being sexually violated by groups of males, some of whom did not want to partake but were forced or coerced by other gang members. A finding of note was that, as with all forms of peer-on-peer exploitation, there is the opportunity for concurrently exploiting others and being exploited oneself.

3.2.9 Commercial exploitation

The focus of research into commercial exploitation has been on females working in the sex industry, where men and boys exploited in the same way are still a largely hidden population and relatively little is known about either the victims or the offenders (Chase and Statham, 2004; Home Office, 2004; Drinkwater et al, 2004; Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Reid, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck, 2013). Of the 166 academic papers relating to commercial CSE reviewed by Dennis (2008), only a small number mentioned males involved in the commercial sex industry. When males are discussed in the context of commercial exploitation, they tend to be awarded more agency than females (Quayle et al, 2008).

The exact proportion of young people who

have experienced CSA/CSE and then become commercially exploited is unknown. One North American study¹⁸ (Estes and Weiner, 2001) addressed the proportion of adult sex workers who had been abused as children and found that while not all sex workers are necessarily exploited, the results indicated that between 20% and 40% of female and between 10% and 30% of male participants had been subject to CSA. A USA study of 364 homeless children working in the commercial sex industry found that 23% of boys and 60% of girls reported having been previously sexually abused (Estes and Weiner, 2001). The younger a child was at initial sexual encounter, the higher the chance of them being involved in commercial CSE (Estes and Weiner, 2001; Svedin and Priebe, 2007). Reid and Piquero (2013) noted that for every year that a child delayed their first sexual encounter, the likelihood of that child becoming involved in early adolescent commercial CSE fell by 23%.

The prevalence of youths exchanging sex for some form of payment¹⁹ was examined across different countries. Studies showed that 1.4% of Norwegian 14- to 17-year-olds (Pedersen and Hegna, 2003), 1% of Danish 16-year-olds (Helweg-Larsen, 2003), 4% of Canadian 15- to 18-year-olds (Lavoie et al, 2010) and 1.8% of boys and 1.0% of girls in Sweden (Svedin and Priebe, 2007) were believed to have exchanged sex for some kind of benefit. Despite several European studies showing a higher incidence of boys selling sex compared with girls, boys have still attracted little concerted research attention in this context (Quayle et al, 2008). The Department of Health conducted a study of commercial CSE in the UK (Swann and Balding, 2001). The findings from a targeted survey of a third ($n=50$) of all area child protection committees were extrapolated to suggest that, on average, there were 19 girls and

18 No definitive number of study participants was given

19 Not connected to prior CSA or CSE

three boys commercially exploited in each local authority area at any given time.

Estes and Weiner (2001) found that 95% of the commercial sexual acts that boys in their American study were asked to provide were oral sex to male clients. One technique that some boys used to absolve a feeling of shame – particularly those who identified as heterosexual but were paid for sex with men – was to define themselves as an escort rather than a prostitute (Adams, 1998). Some boys reported that they maintained a sense of dignity by refusing to participate in certain sexual acts – mostly anal intercourse.

Three studies were identified that involved boys and young men in the UK commercial sex industry. The first (Davies and Feldman, 1992) involved 81 males from Cardiff, the second (Davies and Feldman, 1997) involved 49 males from London and the third (Darch, 2004) involved 87 males from Bristol. All three papers were in agreement that most males involved in prostitution had few long-term relationships or support networks; most were, or had been, involved in criminality, and few were willing to discuss their sexuality openly. The later study found that 98% of participants were Class A drug dependent, and the majority were homeless and felt ashamed of their work (Darch, 2004) – all contradictions to Davies and Feldman's (1992; 1997) earlier findings. As Lillywhite and Skidmore (2006) acknowledged, it is not possible to tell whether these variations were due to a genuine change in the experiences of young men working in the commercial sex industry.

3.2.10 Digitally enabled CSE

Developments in technology increase the opportunity for child sex offenders to abuse children. This abuse includes providing a space for offenders to meet new victims

or threaten and exploit existing ones, as well as allowing an easy and relatively anonymous way for offenders to share indecent images (Carnes et al, 2001; Webster et al, 2012; Wortley and Smallbone, 2012). It may also be possible for child victims to be unaware that images are being recorded – from a webcam, for example. Equally, a child may create self-generated images that they then send to an offender.

A Swedish study ($n=7,449$) into the online experiences of 16-year-olds found that 46% of girls and 16% of boys had received online requests for online and offline sexual encounters (Shannon, 2007). The most common online requests were for the child to remove clothing while an offender watched over webcam and masturbated. Depending on the study parameters, male offenders are thought to account for more than 95% of all offences committed online against a child (Wolak et al, 2005; Finkelhor and Ormrod, 2004; Seto and Eke, 2005; Sullivan, 2005; Wolak et al, 2005; Bates and Metcalf, 2007; Webb et al, 2007; Baartz, 2008).

Mobile phones are a form of technology that offenders can give to a victim with many benefits: the gifting of a phone becomes part of the grooming process; the offender can contact the victim at all times; and images can be generated and shared easily using the mobile phone camera. The greater connectivity of modern phones means that abuse images can be created and sent quickly, easily and cheaply.²⁰ The implications of these technological developments have been shown by a number of researchers, although none has focused specifically on male victims (e.g. Carr, 2004; O'Connell, 2004; Quayle and Taylor, 2005). Mobile technology can also be used to bypass safeguarding processes (Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006), such as the family

20 Sexting is a form of digitally enabled crime discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.8.

computer being placed in a communal space so that parents can monitor their child's Internet use.

Only very small numbers of victims are ever identified from their abuse images. The US National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) conducted analysis in 2008 and found that only 1,660 children had been identified from their image, of which 27% ($n=450$) were male (Jewkes and Yar, 2009). In the early 1990s, Schujer and Rossen (1992) conducted research into child abuse material and found that of the 6,000 children identified in their study, 42% ($n=2,520$) were boys.

Quayle and Jones (2011) looked at 24,550 images of child abuse posted online between 2005 and 2009.²¹ In this study, 80.9% of the images contained female victims and 20.1% contained male victims.²² Almost three-quarters (73%, $n=3,429$) of male victims were believed to be prepubescent, compared with a quarter (25.4%, $n=1,194$) who were pubescent. For female victims, the split was more even (prepubescent: 51.4%, $n=10,197$; pubescent: 47.9%, $n=9,514$).²³ These figures are supported by a German study ($n=245$ victims) of online indecent images of children (IIOC) (Von Weiler et al, 2010).

This difference in prevalence between the victims' genders may be a true representation of the abuse occurring. It may, however, be a result of how professionals interpret harm and vulnerability differently between genders (Quayle and Jones, 2011). For example, an image with a male victim may be viewed as less damaging than the same image involving a female victim (Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006). Another possibility is that prepubescent children look more similar across genders and so some offenders may abuse boys although their sexual preference is for females, or vice versa.

Although the production of IIOC is an obvious way for pornographic material to be exploitative of children, being coerced into watching other explicit material may also be a form of abuse. In a study of adolescents in the Baltics, Mossige et al (2007) found that 5% of boys admitted to having been exposed to pornography where an adult was sexually abusing a child. Quayle et al (2008) also reported a case study of a boy who was encouraged to view IIOC by an offender who planned on contact offending against the boy at a later date.

3.2.11 Sex trafficking

Child sex trafficking involves recruitment, movement and sexual exploitation (intended or actual) and can be either internal (within a country) or international (between countries) in nature. In 2009, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was introduced in the UK as a national system to monitor trafficking, standardise the identification of victims and ensure their support (National Crime Agency, n.d.). Confusion around what constitutes trafficking – and internal trafficking in particular (e.g. Pearce, 2011) – may mean that cases of CSE that involve trafficking are not necessarily identified as such (CEOP, 2009; Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), 2013).

The most recent annual NRM statistics (SOCA, 2013) showed that 549 children were referred into the NRM as potential trafficking victims in 2012. Of those for whom gender was known, 40% were male ($n=208$). For the children, the most common exploitation types reported were sexual exploitation (28% of cases) followed by 'criminal exploitation' (e.g. pick-pocketing) (24% of cases). No information on the relationship between gender and exploitation type was published. CEOP (2009; 2010; 2011) has conducted several scoping studies of child trafficking

21 Some of the images included in their study were taken prior to these dates but had been digitally scanned and uploaded during the study time period.

22 1% of images contained both male and female victims.

23 Babies and very young children made up much smaller percentages of images of both male (1.6%, $n=75$) and female (0.7%, $n=141$) victims.

in the UK, supplementing NRM data with submissions from other agencies, including NGOs. Between 26% (CEOP, 2011b) and 56% (CEOP, 2009) of the cases were thought to involve sexual exploitation. The vast majority of children identified as sex-trafficked (CEOP, 2009, 2010) – in one report, all of them (CEOP, 2011a) – were female.

While both British and foreign victims can be trafficked internally and/or internationally, British victims are most often associated with internal trafficking. Internal sex trafficking of British minors has been identified as a key trafficking threat for over a decade (Home Office, 2000, 2007). Recent years have seen the first successful prosecutions under internal sex trafficking legislation for offences against British children as part of the high-profile sexual exploitation operations Span (Rochdale), Chalice (Telford) and Bullfinch (Oxford). In a threat assessment of child trafficking in the UK, CEOP (2009) identified 325 suspected victims for the period March 2007 to February 2008. Its figures included 43 internally trafficked British children – all but one of whom were female.

Between 2011 and 2012, Barnardo's worked with 1,452 CSE victims, of whom around 10% ($n=140$) were believed to have been internally trafficked – up 64 cases on the previous year (Barnardo's, 2013). No information was published regarding trafficking victims' gender or nationality. The first academic research to focus specifically on the internal trafficking of British children (Brayley et al, 2011; Cockbain et al, 2011; Brayley, 2013; Cockbain, 2013a) involved the analysis of investigative case files from some of the earliest and largest such cases in the UK, including Span, Chalice and Retriever (Derby). All victims in these cases were female, meaning that the identified

commonalities in recruitment, grooming and abuse may not be generalisable to male victims.

3.3 Victim reactions

This section has been divided into four sub-sections: reported impact; physical and psychological responses; societal expectations of male behaviour; and sense of self and sexuality.

3.3.1 Reported impact

Many publications have made reference to a tendency among male victims of CSA to report a much lower level of harm than do female victims. In Barter et al's (2009) study involving 1,353 British children, 70% ($n=476$) of female victims reported the abuse as adversely impacting upon their lives, whereas 87% ($n=582$) of boys claimed no negative impact at all. Baker and Duncan (1985) in their UK study found only 4% ($n=3$) of men claimed that their abuse had caused lasting damage and 57% ($n=47$) stated no negative effect at all. Boys who had suffered contact abuse, compared with those who suffered non-contact abuse, were found to be more distressed by their experiences (Rew et al, 1991).

Many male victims stated that they were either neutral or had positive feelings towards their victimisation (Fromuth and Burkhart, 1987; 1989). Okami (1991) found that a large number of victims²⁴ described their abuse as physically pleasurable. In contrast to these findings, other studies have shown sexual abuse to be associated with widespread damage to male victims (e.g. Risin and Koss, 1987; Jacobson and Herald, 1990). The differing findings from these reports may be due to how boys internalise their feelings and emotions and their unwillingness to disclose their

24 Made up predominantly of boys abused by a female perpetrator.

vulnerability. Finkelhor (1984) noted that despite boys reporting less negative immediate outcomes of abuse than did girls, the long-term negative consequences were equal for both genders. Finkelhor's findings have been supported more recently by a latent class analysis of the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (APMS) (Scott et al, 2013). This study found that both men and women who experienced sexual abuse in childhood experience a range of long-term negative mental health (and other) outcomes. And in both of the categories of abuse identified (domestic and sexual abuse), men made up around 20% of victims. Holmes et al (1997) commented that reported responses by boys to their abuse were not necessarily a true reflection of reality.

There were also reports of different levels of blame attributed to perpetrators by male victims of CSA; older boys were less likely to blame the perpetrator for the abuse than younger boys (Hunter et al, 1992). Research also showed that as the coercive nature of the abuse increased, so did the level of harm experienced by the victim (e.g. Hunter et al, 1992; Holmes and Slap, 1998). Positive correlations have also been identified between CSE victimisation and youth offending (Day et al, 2008). In Cockbain and Brayley's (2012) study of children accessing support for CSE in one UK town, 40% (n=211) of CSE victims (55% of boys and 35% of girls) had youth offending histories of their own. From the available data, however, the authors concluded that it was unclear whether the victims' own offending was a cause of, consequence of or unrelated to their exploitation.

A factor often found to affect strongly how boys respond to sexual abuse is the gender of the offender. Heterosexual male CSA victims largely reported having a sexual experience with a female as consensual and, in some instances, status-enhancing (Fromuth and Burkhart, 1989; Dhaliwal et al, 1996; Nelson

and Oliver, 1998). The sexual experience between the male victim and female offender may be viewed by wider society as a sign of the boy's sexual attractiveness and manliness (Fromuth and Burkhart, 1987; Holmes et al, 1997). One small-scale study (Nelson and Oliver, 1998) involved asking 16 boys about their interpretation of the sexual abuse they suffered. Nine of those abused by a woman said that the sexual activity was consensual, compared with none of the boys abused by a man.

When asked directly about the issue of offender gender, sexually abused boys responded that they would be less likely to see abuse as exploitative and traumatic if perpetrated by a woman (Holmes and Slap, 1998; Nelson and Oliver, 1998). For boys who had experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by a female, the use of physical force in the abuse led to higher levels of trauma being reported (Condy et al, 1987). Fromuth and Burkhart (1989) found that there were negative psychological consequences for having sex with an older partner during childhood. This included boys with older women.

In reviewing the literature relating to how boys perceived their experiences of CSA, some key sub-themes were identified. There were: emotional response; societal expectations of males' behaviour; minimising abuse scenarios; and sense of self and sexuality.

3.3.2 Physical and psychological responses

Alongside the immediate trauma, CSA has been linked to mental, emotional and behavioural difficulties, including truancy, substance abuse, apathy, aggressive outbursts, stigmatisation and self-harm (Beitchman et al, 1992; Renvoize, 1993; Holmes and Slap, 1998; Oddone et al, 2001; Martin et al, 2004; CEOP, 2011a; Miller et al, 2012; Salter and Richters, 2012). Holmes and Slap (1998) conducted a review of North American studies on the sexual abuse of boys

between 1985 and 1997. They found that abused males were five times more likely than non-abused males to suffer sexual problems in adulthood, four times more likely to suffer depression and twice as likely to have behavioural problems and/or low self-esteem and/or to run away from home. Male victims of CSA were also found to have repressed memories, particularly relating to extremely traumatising sexual activity (Johanek, 1988; Coulborn Faller, 1989; Urquiza and Capra, 1990). Experiencing abuse in a relationship when in adolescence may also result in higher likelihood of involvement – as victim or perpetrator – in an abusive adult relationship (Callahan et al, 2003).

Feiring et al (1999) studied 196 CSA victims and found that girls tended to feel shame in association with CSA, while boys felt shame in some instances but high levels of eroticism in others. It has been suggested that a male victim's feelings of shame may be due to the inability to prevent the abuse from occurring in the first place and guilt that they have been unable to cope with their emotional response afterwards (Dimock, 1988; Evans, 1990; Struve, 1990; Lisak, 1994; Holmes et al, 1997).

Researchers have reported that some boys, when questioned about abusive acts, would trivialise and downplay the abuse (Holmes and Slap, 1998; Harris and Robinson, 2007). For example, one male victim referred to repeated anal and oral rape as a child by older boys as “just playing around” (Boyd and Beal, 1994). The ability of some boys to minimise violent sexual assaults may result in them feeling unable to ask for support and more likely to experience psychological issues later in life (Evans, 1990).

3.3.3 Societal expectations of male behaviour

Research in the 1980s found that many boys felt emasculated by the abuse they experienced, particularly when the

perpetrator was also male (e.g. Nasjleti, 1980; Finkelhor, 1984; Johanek, 1988). Societal views of masculinity and the roles of boys and young men have also been blamed for encouraging the trivialisation of male CSA experiences (Harper and Scott, 2005; NSPCC, 2009). It has been suggested that when boys believe they should be tough, dominant and physically strong, they may find it challenging to open up about their feelings and emotions (Harland, 1997; 2000; Swain, 2003). These traits are not easily reconciled with the experience of being sexually abused (Nasjleti, 1980). The idea that men do not talk about or share their emotions was highlighted recently in an NSPCC report (2009) on calls made to its ChildLine service, which found some boys worried about seeming weak when discussing their problems, even with trained counsellors.

3.3.4 Sense of self and sexuality

It has been noted that sexuality can be a difficult issue for male victims of CSA (Moody, 1999; Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Harris and Robinson, 2007). Two literature reviews of the sexual abuse of boys highlighted findings that some boys believed that there must be something vulnerable or inadequate about themselves that they were unable to hide (Watkins and Bentovim, 1992; Valente, 2005). Gender role confusion and low self-esteem were also mentioned in numerous studies (Sansouet-Hayden et al, 1987; Jacobson and Herald, 1990; Hunter, 1991; Dorais, 2002).

It has been suggested that the physical reaction to sexual stimulation experienced by some male victims (i.e. erection and possible ejaculation) may further confuse victims' assessment of their own sexuality (Watkins and Bentovim, 1992). This arousal can be used by perpetrators to persuade the victim that the abuse was consensual and enjoyed by both parties (Gerber, 1990). One study of 31 male victims of CSA in the USA found that

these males were seven times more likely than their non-abused male counterparts to consider themselves homosexual or bisexual post-abuse (Richardson et al, 1993). Moody (1999), meanwhile, found that younger boys who had been victimised sexually started to exhibit highly sexualised behaviour, often in non-sexual environments.

3.4 Disclosure of abuse

This section has been divided into three sub-sections: disclosure rates; reasons for non-disclosure; and responses to disclosure.

3.4.1 Disclosure rates

There is no consensus on the proportion of male or female victims of CSA in general – let alone of CSE in particular – who disclose their abuse. While some studies have argued that, proportionally, girls disclose abuse more often than do boys (e.g. Gries et al, 1996; DeVoe and Coulborn-Faller, 1999), others stated that there was no difference in the level of disclosure by victim gender (Kendall-Tackett and Simon, 1992; Smallbone et al, 2008). Studies exploring the proportion of male CSA victims who never formally disclose the abuse have produced greatly divergent findings; some researchers reported non-disclosure rates of around 30% (Finkelhor et al, 1990; Cawson et al, 2000; Hébert et al, 2009), and others of around 70% (Roesler and McKenzie, 1994; Holmes and Slap, 1998; O’Leary and Barber, 2008).

Bunting (2011) conducted a study of 2,079 adults in Northern Ireland who had been sexually exploited as children and disclosed their abuse. A considerable number of both boys and girls described having reported the abuse within 48 hours of it occurring: 44% ($n=135$) and 42% ($n=731$) respectively. After this first window of opportunity to disclose had passed, only 17% ($n=51$) of boys said they had disclosed the abuse during childhood, compared with 40% of girls ($n=683$).

The remaining 39% ($n=120$) of boys and 18% ($n=305$) of girls waited until adulthood to disclose. Ponton et al (2004) in their study of 26 male victims of CSA in religious settings, and O’Leary and Barber (2008) in their study of 296 CSA victims, found that those who reported their abuse in adulthood had waited an average of approximately two decades before feeling able to disclose. Researchers have postulated that a long time lag between abuse and disclosure may be due to a victim’s fear and shame, or to not acknowledging or understanding the abusive nature of the relationship until much later (Harris and Robinson, 2007; McNaughton Nicholls, 2013).

Studies have also shown that when disclosures postdate offences by several years, victims may choose to disclose first to a peer rather than to parents or an authority figure (e.g. Schonbucher et al, 2012). Such peers, however, may not be aware of what support is available and may fail to pass on the details to the relevant authorities.

Counsellors working with ChildLine reported that boys tended to call after they were no longer able to cope alone, using the phone line service as a last resort (NSPCC, 2009). In contrast, the ChildLine counsellors reported that girls were much more likely to call them early on in the abuse and would use the service as a ‘person to talk to’ about the problems they were facing.

3.4.2 Reasons for non-disclosure

Numerous researchers have posited reasons why a child may not disclose sexual abuse. Some such explanations proposed on the basis of analysis of investigative case files from two major internal sex trafficking operations in the UK (Brayley et al, 2011; Cockbain et al, 2011) include the suggestions that a victim may:

- not immediately recognise that what is happening is abuse

- be afraid of getting their abuser into trouble
- have been threatened with violence or humiliation
- have been so heavily groomed that they feel complicit
- believe that the behaviour is normal and/or consensual
- have had a prior negative experience of contact with the authorities, including having disclosed abuse, that has left them reluctant to disclose again.

Many of these reasons are highlighted in other research relating specifically to male victims of CSA/CSE (Holmes et al, 1997; Holmes and Slap, 1998; Fondacaro et al, 1999; Alaggia and Millington, 2008; Warrington, 2010). When the offender is an authority figure (e.g. a teacher), has control over the child (e.g. a sports coach) or is seen as a leading individual within a community (e.g. a religious leader), this may add further pressure on the child not to disclose the abuse for fear of not being believed (Gallagher, 2000; Erooga, 2009). It has been suggested that if a male child is abused by a female offender, he – and others – may minimise the abuse ‘because of the broad societal perception that, for a male, any sexual contact with a female would be welcome’ (Erooga, 2009, p 59).

In contrast, if a boy is abused by a male offender, non-disclosure has been linked to fears of being wrongly perceived as homosexual (Harper and Scott, 2005; Harris and Robinson, 2007; Skidmore and Robinson, 2007; Erooga, 2008). Low disclosure rates among boys have also been attributed to a fear of being labelled ‘effeminate’ (Finkelhor, 1984; Rogers and Terry, 1984). Other studies have highlighted a fear that if a male CSA victim discloses the abuse, they may be viewed as a potential

abuser themselves as an adult (Johanek, 1988; Mendel, 1995).

Clinicians working with victims of CSA commented that it appeared that some perpetrators deliberately tried to induce psychological disorders in victims to reduce the likelihood of abuse disclosure (Salter and Richters, 2012). Holmes et al (1997) also suggested that as male victimisation is discussed infrequently compared with female victimisation, some boys may not know that support is available for them to access.

3.4.3 Responses to disclosure

Disclosure of abuse does not always lead to the abuse stopping or to the victim receiving appropriate support (Schonbucher et al, 2012). In the UK, less than 30% of sexually abused children receive any form of therapeutic intervention (Sharland, 1996) and only one therapeutic support programme is available per 25,000 children (Allnock et al, 2009).

Several studies showed that, in some instances, CSA reported in institutional settings resulted in the perpetrator being asked to leave or moved to another location, rather than an official report being made (Berry, 1992; Schemo, 2002; Sullivan and Beech, 2002; Yardley, 2010). These actions were said to have been taken to protect the reputation of the institution. Yet, as Shakeshaft (2004) stated, if a child discloses and is then not believed and/or their report goes no further, this could have devastating effects on their mental and physical wellbeing.

It has been suggested that CSA victims who have been involved in criminality may expect to receive a negative reaction from the police in all instances (Cockbain and Brayley, 2012). This expectation may result in low disclosure rates among victims who have offending histories of their own (Malloy et al, 2011). Disclosure and detection rates may be particularly low for male victims

of sex trafficking, due to stigma, lack of understanding and inadequate service provisions (Palmer, 2001; Lillywhite and Skidmore, 2006; Forrest, 2007).

Von Weiler et al (2010), in their German study of 245 children exploited through indecent image creation, stated that males may not be seen as victims by professionals as easily as females, and that hints of abuse given by boys may be ignored or misinterpreted by counsellors and therapists. Barnardo's (2011) found that girls were six times more likely to be identified as being at risk from CSE than boys. Von Weiler et al (2010) also found that there was a greater propensity to blame male CSA victims than female victims, with one judge commenting during a trial that the boy appeared to have been a willing participant in the abuse.²⁵ Similar findings were identified in other studies from Europe and America regarding professionals dealing with male victims of CSA (Finkelhor, 1984; Hunter, 1990; Dhaliwal et al, 1996; Harper and Scott, 2005; Harris and Robinson, 2007; Maikovich et al, 2009).

25 There have also been similar reports of judges blaming female victims for their abuse.

4. Discussion

In this final section, the key outcomes from the rapid evidence assessment (REA) are consolidated. First, some core challenges and considerations affecting the synthesis of the data are highlighted. Second, findings relating to the existing research on child sexual abuse (CSA) (including child sexual exploitation (CSE)) are summarised.

4.1 Challenges and considerations

A major challenge in analysing and synthesising the existing literature was the wide terminological, definitional and methodological variation. The sample sizes of individual empirical studies reviewed were often very small, raising important questions about their generalisability. Poorly planned and conducted large-scale quantitative studies may also lack external validity. Yet, it proved extremely difficult to provide reliable cross-study quantitative comparisons due to the varied parameters of the studies.

This review highlighted considerable knowledge gaps around the sexual abuse of boys and young men. Many studies focused exclusively or overwhelmingly on the sexual abuse of females. Where both male and female victim abuse was addressed, attempts to compare systematically the experiences of the two genders were rare. Given the fact that boys tended to constitute a minority of victims, a tendency to amalgamate results for boys and girls may have obscured more nuanced patterns in which gender played a role. While the fact that boys can be victimised too was often acknowledged in a cursory fashion, large-scale studies undertaking detailed exploration of male victims' abuse experiences, risk factors and support needs were not to be found.

Particular challenges for the review arose from the difficulties in delineating CSE from CSA more broadly. This could be attributed to various factors, such as the relative

novelty of the term CSE, variations in its use internationally and the lack of clarity around exactly what forms of CSA it encompasses. Many studies used the broader term of CSA to describe the subject under investigation. In some cases, CSA accurately reflected the full spectrum of abuse under review. In other cases, however, the term CSA was used to describe what could equally be defined as CSE. In others still, the terms CSA and CSE were used interchangeably. Far from being mere semantic nitpicking, the difficulties of distinguishing between CSA and CSE in the literature are the prime explanation for why this REA had to focus on what is known about the sexual abuse of boys more broadly, rather than sexual exploitation in particular. Focusing on CSE alone would have excluded highly relevant literature that had not been explicitly framed as CSE.

4.2 Key themes

This review has highlighted commonalities and divergences in the literature on the sexual abuse of boys. In particular, it was evident that the particular context in which abuse occurs (e.g. in schools, online or in religious settings) appears to be associated with differences in the characteristics of the abuse, victims and offenders. Nonetheless, some overarching points of consistency were identified, which are discussed in turn below. These serve as a useful foundation for contextualising this project's novel research into the sexual exploitation of boys and young men in the UK today.

4.2.1 Males constitute a (substantial) minority of child sexual abuse victims

Many of the studies reviewed found female victims greatly outnumber males. The proportion of male victims varied from a low of 4% to a high of 35%. The largest studies of CSA have estimated that around 10% of the male population have been victims of CSA at

some point in their lives. While it seems likely that males are proportionately less likely to become victims than are females, numerous researchers have posited that the abuse of boys may be under-recorded compared with that of girls. Recurrent explanations proposed included: low reporting rates; lack of recognition from practitioners of potential sexual victimisation among the boys they supported for other issues (such as homelessness or youth offending); and a tendency among male victims not to recognise or acknowledge their experiences as abusive. Disclosure rates were shown to be particularly low among male victims during childhood, with a higher proportion of male than female CSA victims waiting until adulthood to disclose their abuse.

4.2.2 Male victims are more likely to be abused by female offenders than are female victims

The review showed that boys, like girls, are overwhelmingly abused by male offenders. Nonetheless, male victims appear to be much more likely to be abused by females than are female victims. The proportion of males to be abused by females appeared to be highly context-dependent. Higher proportions of female offenders were found in environments in which offenders came into contact with victims through professional means (schools, prisons, etc). It may be the case that these females were more easily identifiable as offenders due to their position of trust in relation to the victim. Numerous studies indicated that it was seen as less harmful when boys were sexually abused by women than by men. In some cases, abuse of boys by women was even framed by the victim as being a positive experience. This potential distortion was attributed by researchers in part to societal expectations of the sexual roles of men and women.

4.2.3 Institutional settings may be particularly conducive to initiating and sustaining abuse

A variety of institutional settings were highlighted in this review, ranging from sports and other youth groups to care homes and schools. Common themes were identified across these different settings – including, in some cases, indications that the management had deliberately hidden, downplayed or ignored reports of abuse to protect the reputation of the institution. Another commonality across different institutional settings was the use of control by the offending adult over the child. This was associated by authors with non-reporting or delayed reporting – due, for example, to the fear of reprisals. Many institutional settings also brought adults into contact with boys in more intimate settings, such as sleeping areas (e.g. care homes and camping trips with youth groups) and changing rooms (schools and sports clubs).

4.2.4 Technology creates new avenues for abuse

Computers and mobile phones are now a fundamental part of everyday life for many adults and children in the UK. The increasing use and availability of communication devices has been associated with new and expanded opportunities for would-be child sex abusers to plan and commit offences. Researchers in this area have stressed that technology can be used to generate and share indecent images of children by both adults and children (by peers or self-generated). Images created and shared between children through ‘sexting’ are seen as a growing problem. Another key concern highlighted is the use of Internet forums and chat rooms as a way for victims and offenders to meet, for both commercial and non-commercial abuse.

4.2.5 Male and female victims may react differently to abuse

Studies have found that male victims generally reported a lower level of trauma than did female victims. Some male victims surveyed even commented that the abuse had been a pleasurable experience. Researchers interpreting such findings have suggested that physical arousal during the abuse (e.g. erection and ejaculation) may increase a boy's sense of complicity and lead them not to see or describe the experience as damaging. In contrast, however, clinical studies have found higher levels of psychological, physical and behavioural issues among males who were subject to CSA than among those who were not. This suggests that there may be a gulf between the perceived and actual impact of the abuse.

in particular. It explores potential points of difference and similarities between male and female victim CSE that will allow for more nuanced and targeted interventions.

4.3 Conclusion

This review of the existing research base has indicated that the sexual abuse of boys and young men may reasonably be expected to differ from that of girls and young women. Although this topic has yet to attract concentrated research attention, examples of potential points of difference evident in the research to date include variations in victims' age, abusers' gender, perceived impacts and reporting patterns. Sexual exploitation – as distinct from sexual abuse more generally – has only recently emerged as a key priority in the UK. Its conceptual, if not actual, novelty was reflected in a general dearth of literature focusing on this particular construct. Amid increasing efforts to install and improve preventative and protective programmes around CSE, it seems critical that the evidence base be expanded. The current research is designed to redress the identified knowledge gaps around the sexual exploitation of boys and young men

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