



Wigan/ Rochdale Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Innovation Project

A co-design approach: Outcomes, learning and next steps

1.0 Background

- Why adopt a co-design approach?

In March 2015 Wigan and Rochdale Councils together with their partners Research in Practice (Dartington), The Children's Society and our external evaluation team, working with the University of Bedfordshire and NatCen. were awarded almost £1m to deliver 'Project Phoenix: Alternatives to high cost and secure accommodation for victims of CSE in Greater Manchester'. The funding was allocated through the DfE Children's Social Care Innovation Programme which was attracted to our proposal to put the voice of victims at the centre of service design.

The project separates into four phases:

- A research phase that looked at the national evidence base and included revisiting closed CSE case files.
- Interviews with CSE survivors and their families, including in depth autobiographical enquiry and development work with existing professionals in the field.
- A new CSE team called 'ACT' that would hold up to 30 cases and base its practice upon research and authentic voice.
- A co-design approach whereby formal research, authentic voice and practice combined to design new ways of working.

This paper focuses on the co-design approach, provides an overview of the co-design process, the approach, key findings and participant feedback.

2.0 Our Approach

The task of the co-design process was to build a new pathway for young vulnerable adults at risk of CSE and to do so by taking credible research, the voice of the victims and staff into account. This pathway would then be progressively adopted by the 'ACT' team when handling new cases of CSE.

The starting point from the research was a series of agreed principles:

- Young people must be at the centre.
- Communities and families are valuable assets and may also need support.
- No agency can address CSE in isolation, collaboration is essential.
- Effective services require resilient practitioners
- Knowledge is crucial.
- CSE is complex therefore the response cannot be simple or linear.

Co-design can be particularly challenging when it involves vulnerable groups. The young people that participated in our co-design process were all considered to have been clear of their abuse by the local authorities concerned and had expressed a willingness to be involved. Each young person was provided with appropriate support. The co-design process also involved a range of multi-agency staff from children's social care, health, police, drug and alcohol services, Project Phoenix, St. Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Reclaim, the Children's Society and Barnardo's. The process involved almost 100 participants and was facilitated by specialist engagement staff from Research in Practice, the Children's Society and the Innovation Unit.

The process commenced in January 2016 and was completed by April 2016 at a series of neutral venues in Manchester. Appendix C sets out a short journey map. At the outset staff and CSE victims and the ACT team came together to initiate the process. Thereafter they undertook distinct elements of work before once again re-gathering to test and analyse. This ensured that the group grew familiar with each other and felt comfortable in sharing their insights and experiences.

The young people who participated varied in age. The majority had not been previously involved in co-design approaches. Each session was designed to be fun with a mix of visual and creative activities, which was key to ensuring the sharing, confidence building and trust was secure within the group. Group numbers were also restricted to a maximum of 30 to enable smaller 'break off' groups to focus on specific areas and to have some time out if needed.

3.0 Method and Techniques

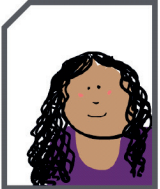
Each session was framed around the following techniques to ensure that all participants were able to actively contribute.

- **Explore:** Gathering of insights, experiences and the development of ideas together via persona and storytelling techniques.
- **Create:** Staff, partners and young people were encouraged to generate ideas and to co-create solutions with the project team. By holding smaller focus groups participants were able to provide detailed insight into their area of expertise. Professionals tended to focus on the system, process and procedures whilst young people explored how they felt at particular stages.
- **Reflect:** This technique enabled the group to consider the future impact and sustainability of the ideas produced. This was facilitated through a whole group event where participants were able to reflect on the work of each group and to make suggestions based on their own experiences.
- **Recommend:** Throughout the events and focus groups participants were encouraged to provide ideas and solutions. These ideas contributed to a proposed CSE pathway which was shared and discussed at the final event.



Personas and Story Telling

The use of “persona exercises” allows participants to create a life story around imaginary characters. These personas featured throughout the entire co-design process. By adopting this technique participants were comfortably able to express views without having to provide details of any personal experiences. This included social and demographic characteristics, desires, habits, cultural and family backgrounds, experience of services and close relationships. The three main personas are included as Appendix A.



Destiny, 15

Innovation Unit

Education:
Destiny is educated at a PRU and is not very motivated in school but is now feeling more relaxed due to having additional support offered to her.

Family:
Destiny has lived in a children's home since being age 14 and has previously lived in foster care, she has contact with mum and dad 6 times a year. She is at risk of going into secure accommodation.

About her:
Destiny is from Liverpool but she is currently living in residential care in Manchester. She enjoys shopping, clothes, music and going to a youth club. Destiny is vulnerable and easily led, she will often copy what her friends do and will go missing at night. This has changed her behaviour, she wears more makeup and clothes to make her look older and she is keeping quiet.

Relationships:
Destiny is involved with a group of older people. Destiny has close relationships with services including mental health and CAMHS, a drug and alcohol worker, social worker, mentor at school, advocate, positive steps education, therapeutic emotional support service, crisis intervention team (sexual health), MIND and the police.

The personas were also used as part of the young people focus groups with a series of case studies developed based on the fictional characters. The young people were then asked to complete a ‘Tops’ and ‘Pants’ exercise based on the case study, highlighting the good times (Tops) and the low points (Pants). This enabled the project team to understand the touch points of the current system and how this translated into service user experiences and relationship with professionals.

This activity involved the use of visual materials as a way of assisting younger participants to make and communicate associations and experiences. Images are more accessible and quick to use and young people were able to attribute their own meaning to them.



4.0 Learning

Process Learning

- The co-design phase confirmed and validated the action research phase and starts to build a ‘what works’ evidence base.
- The process itself is invaluable in that it builds trust and confidence.
- Rushing into solutions without reflecting upon the views of service users and service provider experiences could have led to ‘more of the same’.
- Building relationships is a key in supporting young people affected by, and at risk of CSE.
- The co-design phase began to build relationships and confidence.
- Building a new pathway through co-design is not easy but is ultimately rewarding.

Lived Experience

- **Personal:** The personas presented a group of young people who were struggling with body image issues including weight and appearance and this often led to feelings of isolation and low confidence. The use of online applications e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, etc featured frequently with young people speaking to older people and making friends via this medium.
- **Family:** The majority of personas presented young people from complex and unstable family backgrounds with a recurring issue of step parents or absent parents causing stress and anxiety. Financial issues were a recurring theme, often connected to poor body image e.g. inability to buy fashionable clothes adding to social isolation. The majority of the personas assumed caring responsibilities for their younger siblings and this placed additional strain on them and generated feelings of loneliness.
- **Education:** Instability within the education system was a recurring theme and accessing PRU provision was a recurring theme in the personas with young people often struggling to engage in lessons.
- **Relationships:** Relationships are typically in place with a broad range of services and in some instances these can be closer relationships than with family and peers. This largely depended on how well the persona connected to their support worker. Extended family can also be a good source of support.



Testing the Project Principles

Through the inspiration card technique participants were asked to consider the project principles in detail and to suggest how these can be embedded into practice.

Young people must be at the centre

- Schedule appointments around the young people and work at their pace.
- Establish a relationship with young people and their families and get to know them before completing an assessment.
- Complete an assessment with the young person as an equal partner.

Communities and families are valuable assets

- Educating communities is crucial and this will ensure that the issue of CSE is recognisable.
- Young people could act as mentors.
- Therapeutic support must be available to young people, both timely and accessible.
- Specialist parenting workers in place to support families and to help to build on their assets.

No agency can address CSE in isolation/CSE is complex therefore the response cannot be simple or linear

- Multi agency working is critical to ensure professional and services learn together, are able to capitalise on shared knowledge and can support the whole needs of the family.
- Education partners are important and they need to be included as part of any support plan.

Effective services require resilient practitioners

- Supervision is important to supporting practitioners and this should include time to reflect as well as opportunities for peer support.
- Reduced caseloads will enable practitioners to build effective relationships with families and colleagues.

Knowledge is Crucial

- Young people must be central to generating their own goals and ambitions.
- Communities and families are recognised as strengths and able to support.

Participant Engagement and Feedback

The project's external evaluation team, conducted several interviews with co-design participants to gauge their enjoyment of the event, how freely they were able to express themselves and their expectation of co-design. The feedback is highlighted below:

- **Commitment to co-design:** A positive response to the bringing together of young people and professionals.
- **Listening:** Young people felt listened to.
- **Venue and facilitation:** The venues were comfortable and the facilitators described as upbeat, positive, committed and energetic.
- **Expectations:** The feedback around expectations was mixed with some professionals stating that they didn't know what to expect whilst some felt nervous as they had invested so much into the project and wanted this to be a success. Feedback from the young people highlighted that some felt unsure of what to expect and were nervous.

- **Enjoyment:** Most participants enjoyed the event or elements of it. Professionals were incredibly positive about the involvement of young people and the opportunity this provided for joint working. Some professionals commented on there being a buzz about the co-design sessions. The young people who were interviewed said that they enjoyed this.
- **Being able to say what you thought:** Professionals commented on the range of opportunities for the group to express their views and an environment of openness was encouraged. Feedback from young people highlighted the number of opportunities available for them to say what they thought and most young people were able to provide valuable insights, particularly in smaller groups.
- **Will co-design make a difference?** Participants were generally optimistic that the co-design approach will make a difference and produce better responses to CSE and are committed to it. The young people were clear that they have a lot to offer and they are keen to offer their support and suggestions.

Based on this feedback the project is reassured that the co-design sessions were a success with notable highlights including positive and upbeat facilitators, an environment where young people and professionals were listened to and able to voice their opinions and where participants felt that their involvement would make a difference.



5.0 Outcomes: Designing the new pathway

This can be facilitated by professionals using tablets and mobile applications. By developing an online facility to capture service feedback this will allow young people and families the opportunity to provide their views at a time which suits them and is easily accessible. Further discussion is needed on the specific areas for feedback, should this capture social work interventions or the service as a whole?

Assessment

The primary recommendation is to ensure assessments are asset based and are conducted following positive engagement with the young person. In order to capture the whole picture of a young person's life and to utilise their support networks it is important that discussions are held with key individuals such as family and friends. Conversations need to be open, honest and supportive whilst also bringing a degree of challenge and solution. Conversations also need to be focused and lead to an outcome; this ensures that it's a worthwhile experience for all involved. This will also ensure that the assessment has a real value and meaning to the young person and their family rather than solely to the system. The adoption of new IT techniques to complete an assessment would also contribute to this. Each of these suggestions will ensure that young people are at the centre of their assessment and plan as well as recognising communities and families as valuable assets.

Young People/ Family Centred Meetings

When holding key meetings it is crucial that these are held in neutral venues and are flexible in timing to ensure that young people feel as comfortable as possible. Further exploration is needed around who the attendees should be and how agencies are able to make a contribution. This should be guided by the young person. If a young person does not feel able to express their feelings or wishes then an advocate should be present to do this on their behalf.

Dashboard

The group agreed that all forms of service user feedback must be simple and easy to access and it is critical to ensure that information is presented jargon free. When working with young people and families it is important to ensure that the actions and aims are meaningful to them. IT solutions will need to be utilised to improve the personalisation of dashboards, this could include a cartoon image of the young person, photographs or backgrounds which are of interest. The dashboards must be explicit on what is being measured and this should involve moods and emotional state, outlook on life and experiences, perceptions of a healthy relationship, improvements in self-esteem and the quality of relationships.

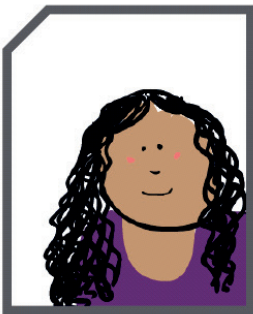


6.0 Next Steps

The commitment to co-design will persist in the following ways:

- The ACT team will adopt many of these practices on live cases and will continue to adopt co-design methods in developing and fine tuning their practice.
- Our external evaluation team will include an assessment of the effectiveness of the co design report as part of its final evaluation report to DfE due in November 2016.
- Substantive CSE teams in both Wigan and Rochdale are already benefitting from their wider involvement in the co-design approach and are adopting some of the tools and techniques.
- The plan to scale up this project to GM level as part of an emerging approach to complex safeguarding has already recommended that co-design forms a central part of its design.

Appendix A



Destiny, 15

Education:

Destiny is educated at a PRU and is not very motivated in school but is now feeling more relaxed due to having additional support offered to her.

Family:

Destiny has lived in a children's home since being age 14 and has previously lived in foster care, she has contact with mum and dad 6 times a year. She is at risk of going into secure accommodation.

About her:

Destiny is from Liverpool but she is currently living in residential care in Manchester. She enjoys shopping, clothes, music and going to a youth club. Destiny is vulnerable and easily led, she will often copy what her friends do and will go missing at night. This has changed her behaviour, she wears more makeup and clothes to make her look older and she is keeping quiet.

Relationships:

Destiny is involved with a group of older people. Destiny has close relationships with services including mental health and CAMHS, a drug and alcohol worker, social worker, mentor at school, advocate, positive steps education, therapeutic emotional support service, crisis intervention team (sexual health), MIND and the police.



Lily, 17

Education:

Lilly is known at the PRU.

Family:

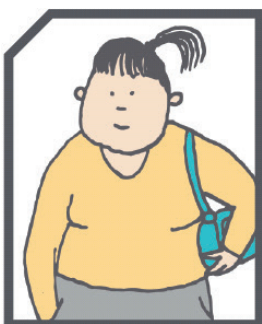
Lilly is a care leaver and has no family support.

About her:

Lilly has a close friend, Destiny, and they often go missing together. Many of her friends are older, up to their mid 20s who they have met online, through Facebook and SnapChat etc. Lilly is vulnerable herself but is a leader to Destiny and she isn't a good role model.

Relationships:

Lilly's closest relationship is with Destiny, she doesn't get much support from services. Lilly may receive support from the CSE service, this depends on the worker as it's important that they can get on well together.



Emily, 13

Education:

Emily has good attendance at school but she doesn't participate in lessons and doesn't do any homework.

Family:

Emily is a young carer to her sister, she lives with mum and mums boyfriend. Emily hates mums boyfriend and would like to live with her dad. At home there are money worries

About her:

Emily is withdrawn and tends to keep herself to herself, she hasn't got the right clothes and isn't trendy and so she lacks confidence and feels isolated. Emily is also struggling with her identity and changed her image frequently, she worries about her weight and spots and sometimes vomits, she is also questioning her sexuality. Emily is often bored and would like to go to a youth club but is too shy. She is part of the chess team at school and enjoys music, she also secretly drinks and is a smoker. Emily is a poor sleeper and sometimes she will self harm.

Relationships:

Emily's closest relationships are with her teacher and a school buddy. She is also close to the young people drug and alcohol service. Her closest family relationships are with her older brother and his girlfriend, followed by mum. The services closest to Emily include family group conference, bereavement services, LGBT youth forum, early help, debt advice, job centre, housing, CSC, police, youth worker, CAMHS, GP, School nurse and young carers.

Appendix B: Proposed Pathway

1. Referring in to the project is kept simple and takes advantage of systems already in place in the area it is being delivered. Golden standards will be shared from lessons learnt.

2. Assessment time scales are negotiated with the manager, with time agreed for an initial rapport building and an engagement strategy.

3. Assessments are joint and continuous pieces of work with young people and family/carers completing sections of them. They utilise IT and remain open with agreed review points.

The Co-designed suggested Pathway

4. New assessments, plans and interventions are used to highlight the young person's and the family's strengths, supporting them to identify their own priorities.

5. Meetings support the family and their network in reducing risk (exploring alternatives to CIN and CP processes). These meetings should encourage professional judgement and put the YP/family at the centre. Meeting rooms and schedules are YP focused.

6. Success is measured via regular family feedback and the objectives the family and young people have agreed, as well as the YP achieving stability.

7. Services are flexible and around the YP/carers needs and are true to the principles of the research and co-design. To make sure this happens **the family plan is coordinated on the YP's/family's behalf by the Innovation SW or IRO.**

Appendix C: Process of Co-design

Event 1: Initiate 18 January 2016

The process of co-design is initiated; the group are introduced to each other and the project, what are the intended outcomes?
What is co-design?

Event 3: Finalise and Agree 26 April

Final session of the whole group to present, discuss, amend and combine their ideas to create a CSE Pathway which will underpin the work of the CSE Innovation team.

Focus Groups: Create and Design February

Focused sessions with young people, staff and partners to identify areas of the CSE pathway and how these can be delivered more effectively.

Focus Groups: Define March

Focus group re-form to discuss the feedback on their work and incorporate this into the pathway. This is where the group define their final product based on the learning and feedback gathered through the co-design process.

Event 2: Test 2 March

Whole group event to enable a presentation of the work completed to date and discussion on what this means for young people and 'the system'. How can this work be further refined to create a new CSE pathway.



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