

Boys 2 - Barnardos



Type of intervention



Counselling

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:

Communities / Families	Tertiary prevention
	Young Boys (12 -18 Years)) Males Counselling English

Target population

Boys and young men who have experienced abuse and trauma and who may be at risk of developing harmful sexual behaviours or being criminally exploited.

Delivery organisation

Boys 2 was a research project undertaken by Barnardo’s and funded by the Home Office. It was a national project managed between Barnardo’s Better Futures Cymru and Barnardo’s Base Project in the South West of England. Better Futures Cymru, formally known as the Taith and Seraf Services, provides, across Wales, assessment and longer-term therapeutic services for children and young people with sexualised histories, including young people who have been the victims of sexual abuse (CSA); young people who display problematic or Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB); and young people who are at risk of or are abused through Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

Mode and context of delivery

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Level/Nature of staff expertise required

No information provided regarding staff expertise, however as research is being conducted it seems appropriate for staff to have knowledge of research practices as well as knowledge of Barnardo’s. It also feels important for staff to have experience of working with young people who have been affected by child sexual abuse or exploitation.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Seventeen boys and young men participated in a semi-structured interview. They also completed questionnaires to support the standardisation of new measures.

Thirty-two professionals were spoken to from front line agencies. Such agencies included social work, childcare disability services, family support services, youth homelessness, youth offending, psychology services, secure estate, and CSE safeguarding hubs. Professional participation involved three one day long focus groups, as well as seventeen one-to-one interviews, in order to capture views and opinions around boys and young men at risk of CSE.

Description of intervention

The Boys 2 research supported the development of targeted interventions that enable boys and young men to achieve positive outcomes. The research involved a number of steps:

- A systemic literature review in the areas of CSE and CSA was carried out on males and examined what is currently known regarding risk and vulnerability factors in male victims of CSE and CSA.
- We engaged with 32 professionals across front line agencies including social work, childcare disability service, family support services, youth homelessness, youth offending, psychology services, secure estate, and CSE Safeguarding hubs.
- A review of historic and current case file information was undertaken for the boys and young men who participated.
- Semi-structured interviews with 17 boys and young men, in order to explore pathways of risk, abuse, exploitation, and journey into service, in order to identifying key engagement and intervention points. The analysis that was carried out was thematic analysis.
- The development of seven questionnaires to be administered to boys aged 12 to 18-years-old impacted by CSE. These questionnaires assessed the following areas, loneliness, self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, measures of cognitive and emotional empathy, sexual knowledge and overall attachment style
- Standardisation of the questionnaires with boys and young men within mainstream education aged 12 to 17 years old.
- Co-production of a workbook resource to support professional engagement, assessment and intervention with boys and young men at risk of CSE.

Evaluation

General themes arising from the professional focus groups included:

- Assumptions: Assumptions that the term abuse applies to males in a physical sense rather than sexual; CSE being associated with white teenage females rather than males, influencing gender assumptions that females are abused and males are abusers.
- Identification and engagement: CSE was viewed as harder to identify for boys and young men. Professionals felt that it takes longer to build up rapport with males as opposed to females. If the boy does not engage or shuts down, then it was felt that cases are closed more quickly. Greater focus is given to criminal behaviour or anger management for boys and young men. Their own behaviour is seen as the priority, and hence the most obvious thing to focus on.
- Time constraints: If the boy was not working with the professional specifically around risk of CSE, it was felt that due to competing priorities, limited resources, increased case-load etc, there is no time to delve deeper and consider CSE.
- Professionals' lack of confidence in their own expertise: There is a lack of confidence around 'going off script' or outside of their usual role. Workers reported that there is nowhere to go for guidance and support; they were worried about being laughed at for considering boys being victims of sexual assault, because boys are seen as sexual, perpetrators, of wanting

sex, and/or are 'horny teenage boys'. Concerns about appearing homophobic: the professional noted that, 'What if it's just exploration? What if it's their right to explore? There was a fear of 'getting it wrong.'

The thematic analysis with the 17 boys and young men identified four themes:

- Family environment – parents, nature of relationship, living arrangements
 - School environment – sex education, pastoral support, exclusion
 - Risk indicators and interventions – persona risk and vulnerabilities, advice to others
 - Transition – friends and pers, good/bad experiences, current view on friends, support worker
- The questionnaires found that boys affected by CSE are:

- Significantly more emotionally lonely ($p < .001$).
 - Significantly more socially lonely ($p < .001$).
 - Showed significantly less problems with being able to handle negative emotions ($p < .001$).
- As for the other questionnaires, although not significant, the responses of the boys and young men who participated in the research, in comparison to the control sample:

- Have somewhat lower levels of self-efficacy.
- Report a somewhat more external locus of control.
- Have somewhat more empathic concern about others.

For fuller details providing the Boys 2 research findings, please see the references below.

References

Better Futures Service (2018). *Boys 2 – Supporting Boys and Young Men to Develop Healthy Sexual Relationships*. Home Office: London, UK

Contact details

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