

Northern Ireland

Social

Care

Council

Lunchtime Seminar

The Influence of Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland on the Recognition of Child Sexual Exploitation in Young Males

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OVERALL RESEARCH AIMS

- Identify barriers to disclosure of CSE for young males
- Identify impediments to identification of CSE in young males by professionals
- Consider any relationship between these two phenomena.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- UK wide
- Mixed methods approach
- Professional surveys (n= 91)
- Professional interviews – 1:1 (n= 30)
- Young male interviews – 1:1 (n= 10)
- Young Life and Times Survey (n= 1,158)

DATA LIMITATIONS

- Did not distinguish between young males who were paramilitary gang members and those not
- Unknown if abuse was wielded by gangs or individuals
- Did not debate nuances of paramilitary gangs against definitions

POLICY CONTEXT

- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI
- Children and Young People's Strategy
- Fresh Start Agreement 2015
- Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime 2016

The background is a blue gradient. In the corners, there are white line-art illustrations of circuit boards or neural networks, with lines and small circles representing nodes.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Links between gangs and CSE
- Recruitment of young males
- 'Punishment attacks' perpetrated against young males
- Concerns of UNCRC 2016

LINKS BETWEEN GANGS AND CSE

- Focus on links between gangs and CSE primarily England centered
- Studies reveal females as the victims; less known about young males
- Dynamics and complexities within gang culture provide significant learning

RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG MALES

- Evolution of paramilitary organisations – young males actively recruited
- Fear generated and power exerted

PUNISHMENT ATTACKS' PERPETRATED AGAINST YOUNG MALES

Late 1960s to mid-1990s: over 3,000 'punishment shootings'
over 2,500 'punishment beatings'

(Harland 2009)

25% of victims were under age of 19 (Muldoon et al. 2005)

CONCERNS OF UNCRC 2016

The Committee recommended that the State party:

“Take immediate and effective measures to protect children from violence by non-State actors involved in paramilitary-style attacks as well as from recruitment by such actors into violent activities, including through measures relating to transitional and criminal justice.”

Recent evidence

A 2017 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILTS)¹² with 1,203 respondents provided data on the public's perceptions of and attitudes towards paramilitary influence and activity in Northern Ireland:



agreed or strongly agreed that paramilitary groups 'create fear and intimidation' within their area.¹³



agreed or strongly agreed that paramilitary groups have a controlling influence.¹⁴



agreed or strongly agreed that paramilitary groups contribute to crime, drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour within their area.¹⁵

Paramilitary attacks in Northern Ireland April 1998 to June 2015¹⁶

2732 casualties of paramilitary style attacks:



89
children aged
16 years or
under



1297
young people aged
between 16 and
24 years;



1346
adults aged
over
24 years.



20 Prosecutions



5 Convictions

SIGNIFICANCE OF PARAMILITARISM TO THE STUDY

- Created an environment which reinforced masculine ideology
- Established a climate of fear and control – silenced victims of CSE
- Longevity of conflict helped embed and normalize a culture of violence

FIELDWORK: ISSUES AS IDENTIFIED BY STUDY PARTICIPANTS

- Impact of fear, control and constrained choice
- Fear of consequences for self and others
- Control (including through use of drugs)
- Coercion to perpetrate
- Gains versus disclosure
- From tolerance to normalisation

IMPACT OF FEAR, CONTROL AND CONSTRAINED CHOICE

There was one young man one night when I was on nightshift, and he came down in tears, floods of tears...and then he disclosed he was in huge drug debts and a paramilitary group were making him perform oral sex as a way to pay off this favour. His social worker at the time was involved and reported it to the police but he didn't want to proceed with the investigation. He withdrew his statement and retracted what he had said. (PI 16, Social Services).

IMPACT OF FEAR, CONTROL AND CONSTRAINED CHOICE

*...that touts get a hard time or get beat up,
especially by this known group of paramilitaries.
(PI 16, Social Services).*

Cycle of exploitation and silence for young male victims of CSE in paramilitary controlled communities.

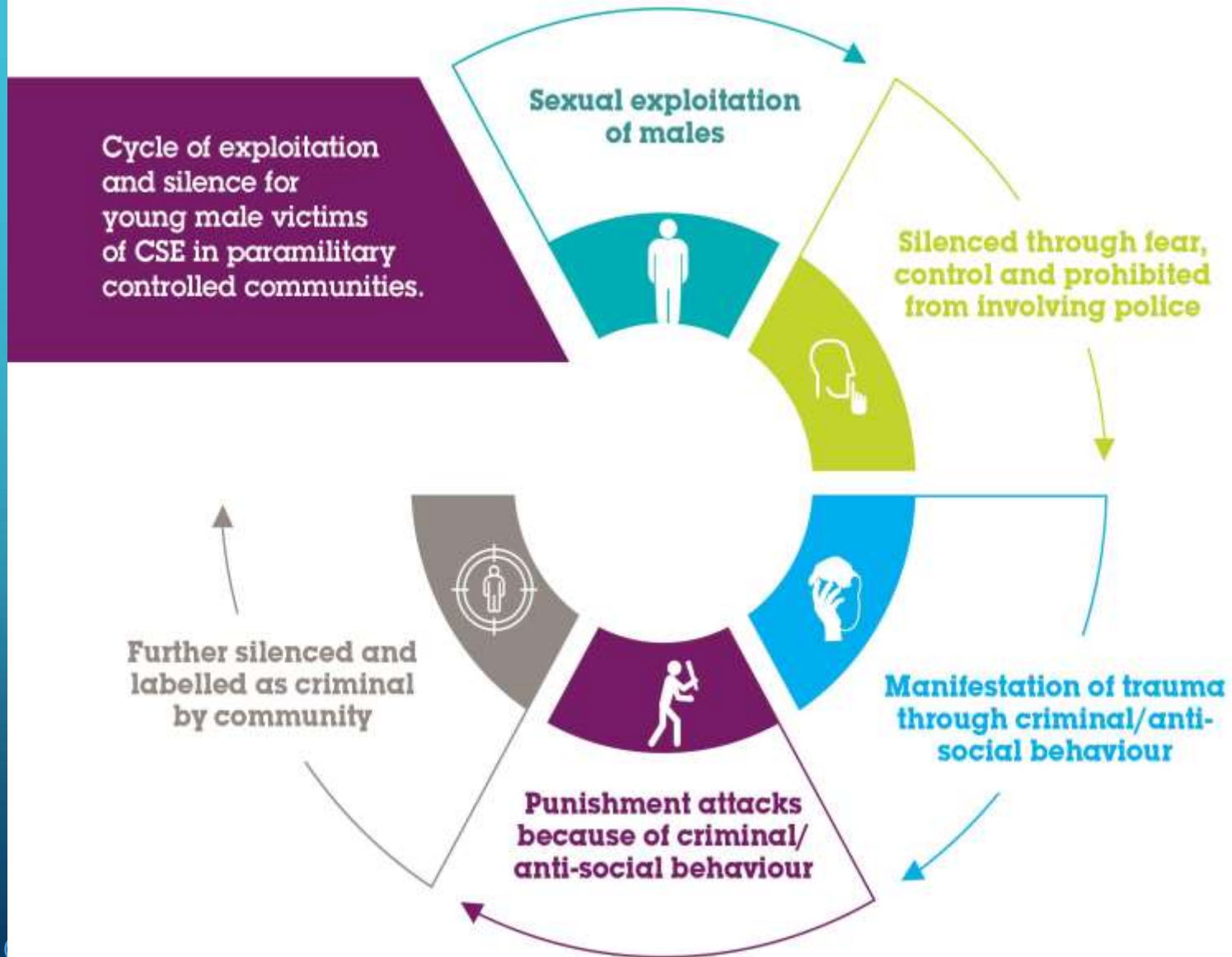
Sexual exploitation of males

Silenced through fear, control and prohibited from involving police

Manifestation of trauma through criminal/anti-social behaviour

Punishment attacks because of criminal/anti-social behaviour

Further silenced and labelled as criminal by community



FEAR OF CONSEQUENCES FOR SELF AND OTHERS

Northern Ireland has this real sense of community where... 'we can work it out,' but because of the way it is with the paramilitaries and no equal rights here, ...everyone in the estate knows everyone... You walk outside your door and everyone knows what time you left at... but because of those other things (sexual exploitation) it's just surface level. It's 'I will tell you about this and this and this, but I won't tell you ever about this'. (Sammy, aged 21).

FEAR OF CONSEQUENCES FOR SELF AND OTHERS

Especially in [named paramilitary area] – that's all I've known... these are all manly men and I know, if I went and told my dad, him and his manly paramilitary friends would go up and kill him, I mean literally kill him there and then on the spot. So, for a young male feeling that sense of responsibility, knowing you've caused someone's death because you've told about something happening. (Sammy, aged 21).

CONTROL (INCLUDING THROUGH USE OF DRUGS)

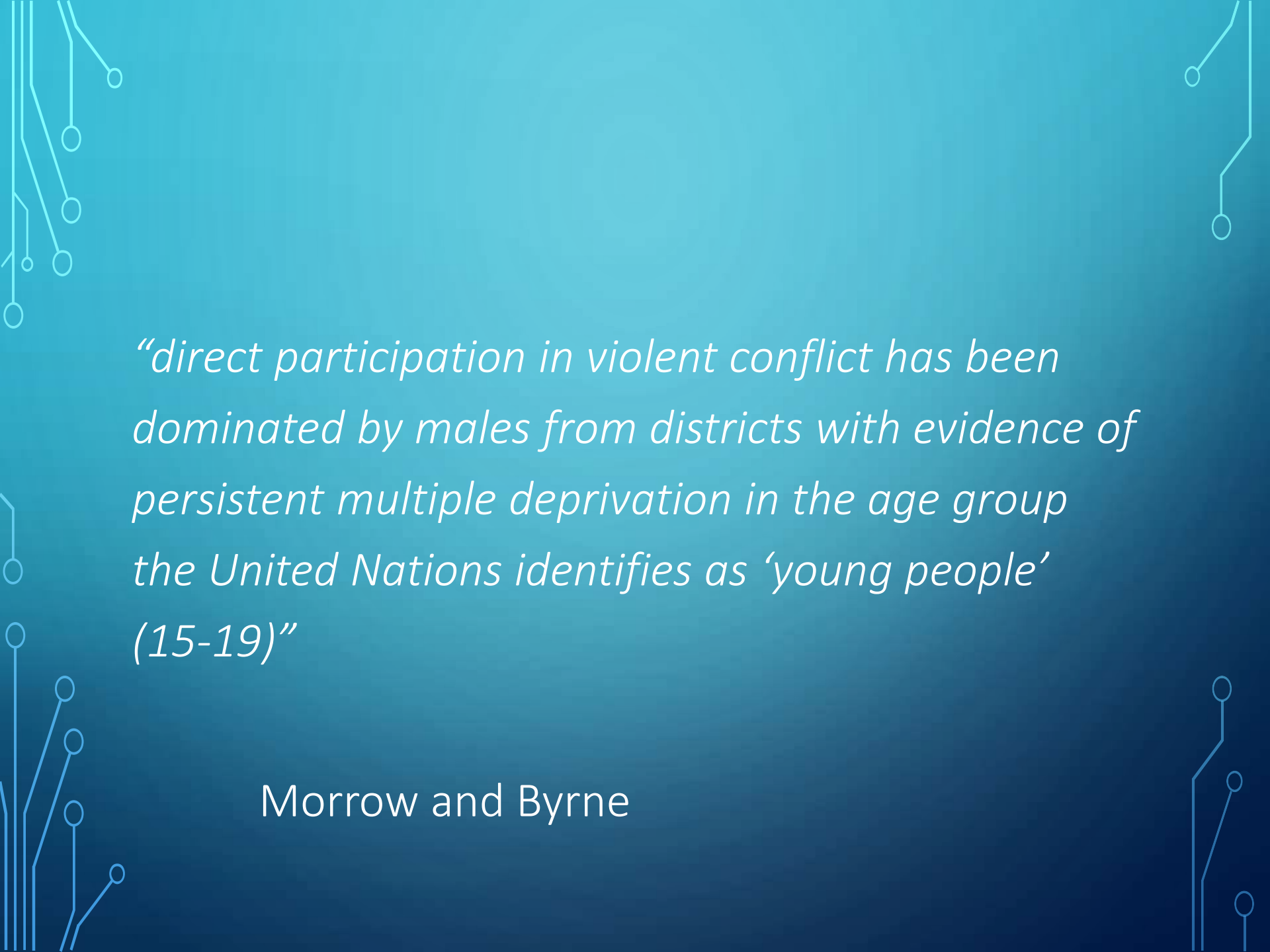
With females it's more about control; in that they would be given a bit of the substance and 'here's a party' and 'you take a wee bit of this love'; it's less of that party atmosphere and more of this big man, hard man atmosphere, you know 'you're part of our group now and you're part of moving this [drugs] from here to here' and it's very much tied in...like a job rather than a party situation. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-specialist).

CONTROL (INCLUDING THROUGH USE OF DRUGS

... that whole aspect of having total control over a community, one that closes down and that sense of the young person...they are involved with ourselves because of drugs or alcohol issues...It's very scary... they get the drugs to deal with the issues that are going on at home. ...they go to the paramilitaries, get involved in getting drugs when they don't have the money to get them, so eventually they get to the stage of 'well how are you going to pay the debt off?' So, they may do a couple of runs but maybe they get into the habit and create a dependency and the aspect of that is that it becomes a greater dependency...and then I suppose thinking who would they tell, who would believe them? (PI 12, Social Services).

COERCION TO PERPETRATE

...so there would be powerful individuals in the community who would organise line-ups and then there would be fear attached if young men don't turn up and do as they are asked; then there would be repercussions – could be very, very sinister; they could be beaten up...Young males would be expected to perform sexual acts on girls as well so then they look like they are the predators but essentially, they are being controlled by the paramilitaries. So, there is a very fine line between victim and perpetrator. (PI 21, Voluntary, specialist).

The background is a solid teal color. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements resembling circuit boards or neural networks, with lines and small circles connecting them.

“direct participation in violent conflict has been dominated by males from districts with evidence of persistent multiple deprivation in the age group the United Nations identifies as ‘young people’ (15-19)”

Morrow and Byrne

GAINS VERSUS DISCLOSURE

You've got a lot of these young males coming from very deprived areas and I suppose a lot of the deprived areas, if they are run by paramilitaries, they are the men that are held in high esteem. (PI 12, Social Services).

The paramilitaries have access to guns, they have access to drugs and a lot of things that would be used to lure young men into involvement in certain things. (PI 21, Voluntary, specialist).

GAINS VERSUS DISCLOSURE

I think a bit of both status and fear. 'I've met someone and he's really powerful'.... In a way you are living the dream because you are with him, but no-one knows and he's buying you a drink. I think in their heads it's not a bad thing because there's this powerful person...It's almost like this mobster's wife, you know. With the paramilitaries I don't think it's so much 'oh I'm so scared'; it's more 'I've more status now.' Especially if you grow up in [named paramilitary area]. (Sammy, aged 21).

GAINS VERSUS DISCLOSURE

...it's nearly glorifying paramilitary groups what you see young men doing. 'I know such and such who will look after me when I'm out in the community' or 'I'll be fine down there because such and such is the head of that group' There's that protection, the status, so 'if I'm in with them I'm safe'. (PI 16, Social Services).

FROM TOLERANCE TO NORMALISATION

...if you grow up in the wrong place...if you are born into the wrong house...He saw that he was never going to live anywhere else in his life; that was him for the rest of his days, he was never going to be employed or have proper education but...this was how he was going to make his money, this was his future; so everything was tied in to this and whatever was going on, on the side, you just had to soak it up, you just had to get on with it; that was life and just accept it. Young men get very stuck, 'this is my life, this is the way it is. This is the way it was for my brother, my da, my cousin'. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).

FROM TOLERANCE TO NORMALISATION

...that structure is really important to the young men...that's the be all and end all. Potentially a longevity thing in that the young men are maybe being primed to take over and to go into this because it's a man's world – there's no women really in charge of these housing estates. Young women are only needed for sexual exploitation to a certain age and then 'off you go' whereas these young men will be sexually exploited to a certain age but then 'you will be staying on to help us move our money, move our drugs – you are part of this now...so, it's that potential lifelong kind of thing. (PI 8, Voluntary, non-CSE specialist).

FROM TOLERANCE TO NORMALISATION

...he was only 13 when he came through to ourselves, but huge history of drug use, being found in flats in [named area], being found in his own faeces so very much gone in his functioning on a day to day basis, known to be around a lot of older males... There was a huge influence with the paramilitaries and he seemed to gravitate towards known figures in the community. Again, police were informed and investigated what they could, but there was nothing substantive for them to go on and this young man would never have talked about it. (PI 16, Social Services).

IN CONCLUSION...

- Impact of this cultural environment on recognition of CSE in males
- Direct impact on young males from sexual exploitation perpetrated by individuals with a paramilitary connection
- Indirect impact through the fear of living within such communities, as a victim of CSE
- More is known about the potential barriers to disclosure than identification

RECOMMENDATION 1

CSE policy, practice and training for professionals should specifically consider the influence of paramilitary gangs in relation to the sexual exploitation of young people, including young males. This should include a response that reflects an understanding of potential complex trauma experienced from living in a paramilitary controlled community.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Northern Ireland Executive Strategy aimed at tackling paramilitary activity by supporting vulnerable young people/males, should include awareness raising and training for youth workers and other professionals about the links between paramilitarism and sexual exploitation.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Youth services should take a key role in creating forums where young males can address issues around cultural identity, masculinity and the need for power and protection.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Existing services addressing issues, such as drug and alcohol misuse and mental health, should be trained in CSE awareness, and in particular, all the nuances of this for young males.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Further research is required on:

- ▶ the role of paramilitarism in relation to CSE, to include a specific focus on young males;
- ▶ impediments to the identification of CSE, by professionals, amongst young males in specific cultural environments.

BRIEFING PAPERS

Briefing Paper No. 1: Impediments to the recognition of the sexual exploitation of young males under 18.



Briefing Paper No. 2: The influence of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland on the recognition of child sexual exploitation in young males



Briefing Paper No. 3: The association between youth offending and the recognition of CSE in young males.

Available:

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