



# BOYS ARE SEXUALLY EXPLOITED TOO

A guide for professionals working with boys and young men who are being, or are at risk of being, sexually exploited.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The sexual exploitation of boys and young men (BYM) is often unrecognised and underreported leading to a misconception that this issue applies mainly to girls. This leads to services being developed for, and geared towards supporting girls and young women (GYW), making them exclusionary of, and inaccessible to BYM.

The issue of BYM and sexual exploitation is well documented; The Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP) released their “*Threat Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*” in June 2012, stating that difficulties in recognising the sexual exploitation among boys and young men are likely to have led to an underrepresentation of male victims.

In November 2013 the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Gangs and Groups produced their final report. This also stated that boys too often remain invisible victims, as the assumption is that only girls are subjected to these assaults.

In autumn 2013 YouGov released “*Are parents in the picture? Professional and parental perspectives of child sexual exploitation*” which stated both professionals and parents strongly disagree with the assertion that sexual exploitation only happens to girls, with 96% of professionals and 95% of parents in disagreement.

As the grooming and sexual exploitation of BYM is being increasingly acknowledged in various research and guidance, it is disappointing to hear that dual gender CSE services report that they are working with a significantly higher number of girls.

Professionals should remember that simply because girls and young women (GYW) make disclosures and engage with services at a higher rate than BYM, does not mean that BYM are at less risk. It is also important that when professionals are assessing the risk of BYM with regard to sexual exploitation, that they are not inappropriately influenced by gender.

The BLAST Project remains the UK’s only male sexual exploitation project and has provided information and support to thousands of boys and young men since 2003. The specialist work of the BLAST Project was acknowledged in 2011 in the Department for Education’s 2012 ‘*Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan, Progress Report*’.

Since 2013 the BLAST Project has been working with various CSE services across the country as part of the ‘Excellence for Boys’ project, a national development programme which aims to make CSE services more accessible to, and inclusive of, boys and young men. As part of this work we have launched the ‘Boys are Sexually Exploited Too’ national campaign, which includes online resources, awareness posters, awareness leaflets for BYM and this professionals’ guide.

Whilst the grooming and sexual exploitation of boys and girls have similar issues attached to them, BYM have added barriers which include issues relating to gender assumptions and stereotypes, masculinity, sexual orientation and authority. BYM are often criminalised, seen as perpetrators and/or as young offenders. These issues will be addressed in this guide.

Whilst some of the points included in this guide may also apply to GYW, it is concerned primarily with BYM. If you do not have a good understanding of grooming and sexual

exploitation prior to reading this guide we recommend you read *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children*, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2009.

This guide is aimed at all professionals who have a role in tackling the grooming and sexual exploitation of children and young people to help them spot the warning signs, and make their practice more inclusive of, and accessible to, boys and young men.

This guide also provides considerations for professionals which will influence practice and encourage responses that are not inappropriately influenced by various myths, stereotypes and gender assumptions.

## 2. WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

*“Child sexual exploitation? Isn’t that when girls are groomed and raped?”*

16 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a college

The BLAST Project uses the following definition which was created in consultation with the boys and young men the project supports:

**“A boy/young man (BYM) is sexually exploited when someone uses something he needs or wants to get him involved in sexual stuff.”**

It’s important to remember that some BYM do not see what is happening to them as sexual exploitation, others say they are comfortable exchanging sex for something they want/need and others have no idea it is happening at all.

Some examples of child sexual exploitation can be found below. These are all based on boys and young men who have been in contact with the BLAST Project:

### Examples

- A boy is asked by a man if he wants to buy cigarettes from him. The boy says yes, but he has no money. They both end up talking about which one of them is the toughest and has the biggest penis. The man says he will let the boy have some cigarettes for free but only if he climbs on a high wall and pulls his trousers and pants down. The boy does this thinking it’s a bit of fun and that he’s a tough guy and the man gives him the free cigarettes.
- A boy is approached by a man who offers him £50 if he can come and help him move some crates as his work mate hasn’t turned up. The boy grabs the £50 note out of the man’s hand and runs off down the street. The man’s friend is waiting at the end of the street. The other man trips the boy up and holds him. Both men tell onlookers that they are taking the boy to the police as he has just stolen from them. They take the boy to a wooded area and both rape him.
- A boy is at a house party and is offered drugs. He is told not to worry about paying any money for them. The boy takes the drugs and soon becomes a regular guest at future house parties. Once he has taken a significant amount of drugs, he is told that he has accumulated debt and has to pay what he owes. The boy starts stealing to clear his debt and he is eventually persuaded to masturbate in front of a room full of adults who will pay the drug dealer for organising the abuse.
- A boy who plays rugby is told he has the potential to go far and is offered extra training by his coach. After training, the boy showers, but does not know that the coach has set up a small camera which is recording him in the shower and is streaming the footage to viewers across the internet.
- A boy chats online to a girl who says she will flash her breasts if he strips and masturbates on webcam. The boy asks the girl to flash first. The girl does, and then the boy strips on webcam and masturbates. The boy does not know that the girl is

also a victim of sexual exploitation and she is recording the footage and selling it to child sex offenders.

- A boy has been chatting online to an adult for a few days. The adult tells the boy that they could start a loving relationship which would include sex. The boy believes that he will be part of a loving relationship and the both arrange to meet in a hotel. When the meeting takes place, they have sex and the adult never contacts the boy again.

Most of the examples above were never reported to statutory services.

Other examples of sexual exploitation involving boys can be found by visiting the BLAST Project website: <http://mesmac.co.uk/what-is-sexual-exploitation>

There are other definitions of sexual exploitation, and a more detailed definition can be found in *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2009)*

## **Myth Buster**

### **Aren't we talking about 'rent boys' and people 'prostituting' themselves?**

No. There are different grooming methods and different types of sexual exploitation. Regardless of whether a child or young person (male or female) is comfortable with exchanging sex for something they need or want, they should never be referred to as a prostitute or rent boy. Whilst experience tells us some BYM are comfortable with being referred to as a rent boy, it is appropriate that professionals respond to them as sexually exploited child/young person and as a victim of child abuse.

### **It's only CSE when gangs or groups are involved isn't it?**

No. That is a part of the picture, not all of it. There is a misconception that a child or young person is only sexually exploited when it involves groups of men targeting girls on the streets. This is simply not true. CSE can be perpetrated by individuals as well as groups, and children and young people can be groomed in a variety of ways in a variety of places.

### **Girls are more at risk than boys**

The only evidence that professionals believe backs this up is the high number of girls disclosing exploitation and engaging with services. However, this does not actually mean that girls are more at risk than boys. Boys and young men have extra barriers and added pressures specific to their gender which are explored further in this guide.

### 3. WHO IS AT RISK?

***“I thought sexual exploitation was about girls being forced into prostitution. I didn’t realise that there’s more to it than that.”***

15 year old BLAST Project service user

***“I’d never thought boys could be sexually exploited until today.”***

14 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a secondary school

***“I always thought girls were more in danger of being used for sex. I never knew that we (boys) could be in danger too, the same as girls. ”***

14 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a secondary school

*Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2009)* states that there are groups of young people who are particularly vulnerable to being sexually exploited, including looked after children and young people, those missing from home, care or education.

These are vulnerable groups of children and young people (YP), not just GYW and are inclusive of both boys and girls.

Whilst vulnerable groups have been highlighted it is important to remember that BYM from various backgrounds, of various sexual orientations and of various ethnicities can be groomed and sexually exploited.

It could be argued that boys and young men are at particular risk of being sexually exploited. Reasons for this can include:

- They do not perceive themselves as being vulnerable or at risk, and believe girls are more at risk.
- They believe perpetrators are more interested in girls.
- They believe they are tough and can look after themselves.
- Services exclusionary of and inaccessible to BYM.
- Professionals looking out for girls and not boys.
- Professionals responding with more urgency to girls, rather than to boys e.g. a professional initiates safeguarding procedures when they see a 13 year old girl getting into a car driven by an older man. The same professional responds with less urgency when she sees a 13 year old boy getting into a car driven by an older man, assuming he must be the boy’s older friend.

***“We don’t need to know all this. It’s the girls you should be talking to.”***

15 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a secondary school

***“Why you telling us this? Don’t you think we can look after ourselves?”***

14 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a secondary school



## Myth Buster

### **It's the boys from rough backgrounds who are really at risk**

It depends on the circumstances of the BYM. Just because a young person lives in a deprived area does not necessarily mean they are any more, or less at risk of being groomed and sexually exploited, than a young person who lives in a detached house in a middle class area. Risk indicators should be identified to help assess risk level.

The BLAST Project supported one BYM who lived in a middle class, rural area and achieved well at school. He was groomed by 15 individual perpetrators.

### **It's mostly gay boys that are at risk**

Between September 2013 and January 2014 the BLAST Project has worked with 33 BYM who have been, are being, or are at risk of being sexually exploited. Of these 33, 13 identified as Gay or Bisexual, with the other 20 identifying as Heterosexual.

It's not someone's sexual orientation that puts them at risk, it's their circumstances, the situation they're in and their beliefs. For example, if a 14 year old male has recently come out as Gay and wants a boyfriend his own age, and wants to practice safe sex with this person in his bedroom he is not at the same level of risk as a 14 year old male who wants to find a 30 year old female to have unsafe sex with in a public place.

Consideration should be given to what the young person **believes** in. If a BYM believes age does not matter and that it's OK to have an older friend, boyfriend or girlfriend, and he is likely to act on this belief, he is at risk of being sexually exploited regardless of his sexual orientation.

However, Gay and Bisexual young people and those questioning their sexual orientation may be particularly vulnerable to being sexually exploited if parents do not support them, and if schools do not provide adequate information and support that is relevant to them. If they experience homophobia and do not feel able to be themselves in school they may feel isolated as a result. This could lead to them seeking support or exploring their sexuality in adult spaces/venues such as bars, clubs, public sex environments (cruising sites), public toilets used by males for sex with other males (cottaging sites) or going online to visit chat rooms via adult websites and/or mobile phone apps.

By providing good sex and relationship education, raising awareness of sexual exploitation, tackling homophobic behaviour and signposting to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) youth services, professionals working with young people can reduce the risk of young Gay and Bisexual males being sexually exploited.

It's important that BYM of all sexual orientations have the information and the opportunity to explore their sexuality in a safe and appropriate way.

It's also important that professionals do not make assumptions regarding sexual orientation. If a BYM has been groomed and sexually exploited by an older male, this does not mean that he is Gay. Also, if a BYM is associating with older men and engaging in sexual activity with them, this does not mean he identifies as Gay, and it is important that professionals acknowledge this and don't focus on sexual orientation.

Remember, the age of consent (regardless of sexual orientation) is 16.



## 4. THE GROOMING PROCESS

*“I suppose I thought grooming was when an older man pretended to be a girl’s boyfriend so he could rape her. I know now there’s lots of different ways to groom someone.”*

15 year Old BLAST Project service user

*“Everyone knows what grooming is. It’s just that when people talk about, they talk about it happening to girls, not boys.”*

14 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a secondary school

There are two definitions of grooming:

### 1. The General Definition

Developing the trust of a young person or his/her family in order to engage in illegal sexual conduct.

The above definition is from *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2009)* and is the definition that most people are familiar with.

### 2. The Legal Definition

Meeting a child following sexual grooming etc.

The above definition is from the *2003 Sexual Offences Act* and gives more detail below:

The offence is committed when an adult or a child under 16 travel to meet each other, or the adult arranges to travel to meet the child, following two earlier communications and the adult intends to commit a sexual offence against the child during or after the meeting, where the adult does not reasonably believe the child is 16 or over.

You can view the actual offence by viewing section 15 of the *2003 Sexual Offences Act*.

BYM are less likely to tell anyone, or to recognise that they are being groomed, which can make them particularly vulnerable.

*“Grooming? Well, I’m not gunna get groomed am I? Anyway, even if anyone tried it I’d just knock ‘em out.”*

14 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a secondary school

There are various grooming models, some of which include the boyfriend model, peer grooming, the party lifestyle and online grooming. These are explored further in this chapter. The grooming process can occur off or online and can take anything from minutes, hours, days or months. The BLAST Project uses the **7 Stages of Grooming** on Page 9 as this can apply to many different situations.

Whilst we acknowledge that the stages below can apply to boys and girls, we are focusing on BYM and on how these stages apply to BYM.

**1. Targeting** – Perpetrator decides where to find a young person (YP) they can exploit. This can be online via social media, mobile phone apps or online gaming. It could also be via bars or clubs where young people drink underage or places where young people congregate, such as takeaways, parks, shopping centres or outside schools, youth groups and care homes. The perpetrator will identify the ‘need’ or ‘want’ that they can use to exploit the YP and may target those they perceive to be particularly vulnerable.

**2. Contact** – Perpetrator makes initial contact with the YP. This could be by sending a friend request online, chatting outside school or using another young person to make contact.

**3. Keeping Contact** – Perpetrator ensures they are able to contact the YP again. This may be sending phone numbers or emails, adding on phone apps and social media sites, or saying they will be online in the same forum or at the same venue at the same time tomorrow, or next week. They may give the YP a phone with their number saved in it as a gift.

**4. Perceived Positive Behaviour** – Perpetrator tries to appear as a safe person by providing the YP with something that they need or want, and by saying and doing things which seem kind and thoughtful such as offering a lift home, lending them money, buying gifts such as mobile phones or games, giving advice or listening to them when they’re down.

**5. Negative Behaviour** – Perpetrator introduces the YP to things that a safe person would never do. This may include porn, alcohol and drugs and involve other sexual and/or illegal activities. The perpetrator may encourage them to truant from school, and encourage them to lie and keep secrets.

**6. Control and Reinforcement** – The perpetrator now wants to control the YP and reinforce dependency, whilst isolating them from other safe people. This can be via subtle suggestion, and include manipulation, violence, direct threats and mind games. The perpetrator can also try to make the YP feel guilty.

**7. Sexual Exploitation** – This is where the perpetrator involves the YP in something sexual that he/she will benefit from. Examples include:

- The perpetrator selling the YP to adults who want to have sex with the YP
- The perpetrator viewing, selling or sharing sexual images of the YP
- The perpetrator having sex with the YP
- The perpetrator and his/her friends and/or contacts having sex with the YP
- The perpetrator watching or touching the YP

The perpetrator may use information gathered from stages 4 and 5 to make the introduction of sexual exploitation easier, but then again, the perpetrator may not ‘introduce’ sexual exploitation at all, and could simply watch or record the YP without them knowing the sexual activity is happening.

The YP may, or may not get what they need/want, and they may get it before or after the sexual activity takes place. Whether they do, or don’t get what they need/want – it is still sexual exploitation.

# Grooming Models, Masculinity and Sexual Orientation

How a perpetrator grooms a BYM can vary from one situation to the next and it will depend on what he/she wants to gain from the process.

## Boyfriend/Girlfriend Model

*“I didn’t think age really mattered that much. I always thought if I got a boyfriend who was older than me it wouldn’t be a big deal. I was so wrong.”*

15 year old BLAST Project service user

Historically this model was associated with older males convincing GYW that they are in a loving relationship which ends up with the older male using the GYW for sex and/or sharing them with others and/or selling them to others for sex.

We prefer to call this model the **‘Boyfriend/Girlfriend’** model, as this highlights that males and females can be perpetrators, and that boys and girls can be victims.

In this model the perpetrator presents as being a loving boyfriend or girlfriend to the BYM. He/she will groom the BYM by buying gifts, offering support and giving the BYM the impression that they are in a loving relationship.

The perpetrator aims to desensitize the BYM by encouraging him to experiment with various sexual acts which lead up to exploitative sexual activity involving others. The perpetrator often uses persuasion and justification in the grooming process saying how the BYM should view being asked to have sex with others as fun and exciting, and that it’s nothing he hasn’t done before.

Perpetrators can also use emotional blackmail by telling the BYM that they have spent all of their money on them buying gifts and now they can’t afford to pay the rent. They can continue to say that the landlord will get violent if the rent isn’t paid. This is when the perpetrator suggests that the BYM has sex with others for money.

### Case Study – Harry

When Harry was 15 he came out as Gay and was keen to find a boyfriend. Harry thought that getting a boyfriend who was a lot older than him would be weird and creepy, but he didn’t think that going out with someone ten years older than him was that bad, especially if they were good looking.

Harry went online and met 25 year old Dan. After chatting online for a few days, the pair met up and spent the day together. Dan took Harry bowling, to the cinema, paid for a meal and bought him some new clothes. Harry thought Dan really loved him because he didn’t do anything sexual when they met.

Dan suggested that the pair stayed overnight in a hotel which Dan offered to pay for. Harry told his parents he was staying at friend’s house, and spent the evening in the hotel with Dan. Dan encouraged Harry to drink lots of alcohol and when Dan thought Harry had drunk enough he told Harry that a group of men he owed money to had turned up at the hotel. Dan told Harry that he couldn’t pay them as he had spent all of his money on Harry. Dan explained that Harry would have to have sex with the men to get them off his back and help clear the debt that he owed them.

## Commodities

***“I had to have sex with all of his mates. I got used to it, but I suppose it’s a bad thing that I actually got used to it.”***

19 year old BLAST Project service user who was sexually exploited by his older boyfriend

If the perpetrator’s aim is to arrange for the BYM to be sexually abused by a group of men, which he/she may or may not benefit from financially, the perpetrator may choose to groom a BYM who identifies as Gay or Bisexual, as he will not need convincing that same sex contact is acceptable.

A male perpetrator may act as a boyfriend and use emotional blackmail and persuasion to involve the boy in sexually exploitative activities with others. He may also normalise the situation by saying lots of people experiment with sex and that the BYM should appreciate that his boyfriend is letting him have sex with others.

A female perpetrator may act as a best friend, a mother figure or an older sister and use her femininity and maternal side when grooming BYM.

If a perpetrator chooses to groom a Heterosexual BYM, the process may differ slightly, and include the use of force, blackmail, spiked drinks and different sexual acts. See Tough Guy Party Lifestyle below.

## Tough Guy Party Lifestyle

***“I didn’t realise how in danger I was until it was too late. When I think about it now, I suppose I’m lucky to be alive.”***

15 year old BLAST Project service user

This model usually includes parties where drugs and alcohol are available and often sold, shared and passed around. Party guests can be of both genders, and all ages and there are usually a number of older males present.

A BYM who is groomed via the party lifestyle can be made to feel like a tough guy, by being paid various compliments, encouraged to ‘chat up’ girls, watch porn and also take drugs and drink alcohol which are freely available.

Porn, drugs and alcohol are not only used as part of the grooming process to sexualise BYM, lower their inhibitions, reinforce masculinity and make it hard for them to escape; they are also used to accumulate debt which the perpetrator can use to control the BYM later.

Perpetrators also encourage BYM and other party guests to take part in activities that test their masculinity. Activities start with games such as arm wrestling and lead on to more risky activities such as drinking games and dares that often involve sex and/or nudity. These activities make it easier for the perpetrator to introduce sexual exploitation later.

If a male perpetrator is grooming a straight BYM for himself and/or his male friends he will want to see how the BYM responds to male on male contact and may need to be

manipulative with how he tests this out. This can be done by asking the BYM to give him a backrub, hugging, wrestling or sharing a bed.

The perpetrator may also use every day acceptable activities to see the BYM naked or in a state of undress. Activities include trying clothes on whilst out shopping and visiting the swimming baths and the gym and showering afterwards. These activities reinforce masculine stereotypes, desensitise the BYM to male on male on contact and activities involving nudity, and make the introduction of sexual exploitation easier for the perpetrator later on.

Sexual exploitation may or may not be clearly introduced. If it is introduced, the perpetrator may tell the BYM that he owes money for all of the drugs and alcohol he has used, and that in order to clear the debt he has to engage in sexual behaviour. This can include having sex with party guests in front of other party guests, masturbating to porn, or having 'wank' races which involve him and a group of men masturbating to porn at the same time. The perpetrator may also introduce the sexual exploitation as being fun.

If the sexual exploitation is not introduced to the BYM, the perpetrator may spike the boy's drink and arrange for adults to abuse him whilst unconscious. The perpetrator may also use force, violence and blackmail.

It is unlikely that Heterosexual boys and young men will be persuaded to engage in receptive oral and anal sex without the use of force; however some may be convinced to allow men to watch them masturbate as long as they are not touched. This shows a BYM desperately trying to maintain his masculinity.

## Peer Grooming

***"I suppose when I look back, it was obvious what she was doing, but at the time I had no idea. Well she was fit wasn't she?"***

20 year old BLAST Project service user who was groomed by a peer when he was 15

Children and young people can be groomed by their peers. This includes BYM peer grooming GYW, and also GYW peer grooming BYM.

Reasons young people peer groom:

- They believe that they are doing their peer a favour by providing them with a good way of getting something they need/want.
- They have been convinced by the perpetrator that getting their peers involved is a good idea.
- They have been threatened into getting their peers involved.

Perpetrators are more easily able to involve BYM in sexual acts by using their peers to initiate contact and encourage involvement in sexual exploitation.

A warning sign that a young person is at risk of being sexually exploited is associating with other adults or young people who are already involved in sexual exploitation.

The BLAST Project's **THINK AGAIN DVD** contains three short films; one of which is Ryan's Story which highlights peer grooming and the tough guy party lifestyle.

## Case Study – Ryan

Ryan is 15 and one day when he was truanting from school he was approached by Courtney, a 15 year old girl he was instantly attracted to. Courtney invited Ryan to a party at her mate Steve's flat.

Ryan started going to Steve's flat on a regular basis and became mates with Courtney, Steve and other party guests. At the parties Ryan regularly took cocaine, drank lots of alcohol and took part in drunken party games which included stripping and flashing.

Over the weeks Ryan consumed large amounts of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes and was eventually told by Steve that 'you don't get something for nothing' and that he owed Steve lots of money. Ryan started stealing to clear his debt, and eventually Steve used Courtney to persuade Ryan to masturbate in front of a group of men who would pay Steve, which meant Ryan's debt would be cleared.

Steve arranged for the men to watch Ryan, but what Ryan did not know was that Steve was secretly recording him. Steve then used the footage to blackmail Ryan and force him into masturbating in front of the men again.

It is important that professionals respond to GYW and BYM who are associating with young people identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation, with the same level of urgency and focus on safeguarding all associated young people, not just the girls.

It's also important that professionals don't assume that a BYM is a perpetrator because he is associating with a sexually exploited GYW.

## Online Grooming

***"He totally lied to me. I really thought I was chatting to someone my own age. It's scary how easy it is to tell lies over the internet."***

15 year old BLAST Project service user

Technology is ever-changing and advancing and young people are keen to have the latest mobile phone app, be part of the latest social media trend and join in with online gaming. BYM in particular may be targeted through online gaming.

While these mobile phone apps and online sites are important daily parts of young people's lives, perpetrators are also becoming more adept at using such resources to groom and sexually exploit these young people.

Online technology makes it easier for perpetrators to pose as someone else and lie about their name, age, gender, appearance and intentions making it easier for them to groom and sexually exploit young people online. This can lead to young people sending/receiving sexual images and/or videos, sexualised contact via webcam, further contact offline, and perpetrators using technology to arrange various child sexual offences.



## Case Study – Vinnie

When Vinnie was 14 he went online to look for a girlfriend. He ended up chatting to 14 year old Gabby. Vinnie and Gabby spent a few hours chatting online which eventually led to Gabby suggesting that Vinnie strips and get naked on webcam.

Vinnie felt like he knew Gabby really well even though they had only been chatting online for a couple of hours. Vinnie had no problem stripping on webcam because Gabby promised to strip once he did, and Vinnie trusted her.

Vinnie stripped on webcam and when he asked Gabby to return the favour, Gabby replied by revealing she was in fact a middle aged man who had been pretending to be a 14 year old girl. The man said he had recorded Vinnie and that if he didn't keep stripping he would put the footage online.

It is important to remember that perpetrators do not always lie about who they are, or what they look like online. Some perpetrators use online resources to search for young people who believe that age doesn't matter and that sexual contact with someone older isn't a big deal. This makes the perpetrator's job easier as it is likely they will be able to convince the young person to remain quiet about the sexual intentions.

If the perpetrator aims to view, share, distribute or sell images of the BYM it may be easier for them to succeed in doing this online.

In regards to BYM, it is well documented that they are less likely to engage in face to face support, in comparison to GYW. BYM are more likely to access non face to face support which can include online forums, helplines and text support. This is evidenced by the increasing number of BYM accessing phone support from ChildLine:

"Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, the annual number of boys counselled by ChildLine more than doubled, rising from 24,823 to 58,311. The boy-to-girl ratio of callers increased, changing from one boy for every four girl callers to one boy for every two girl callers."

*What boys talk about to ChildLine NSPCC, 2009*

BYM can use mobile phone apps and online technology to explore their sexuality. This can be done safely and appropriately by accessing chat rooms and forums specifically designed for young people, but it should be noted that perpetrators use these chat rooms to pose as young people.

BYM also use mobile phone apps and online technology to explore their sexuality in an unsafe way. This can include the use of adult dating and social networking sites, some of which are predominantly used by adults to search for other adults to have sex with.

Whilst a lot of these sites and apps provide a facility for users to declare their age, it is very easy for BYM to lie about their age in order to access sexual contact, and various adults who may believe sexual contact with someone under the age of 16 is acceptable. This can lead on to further abuse and sexual exploitation.

It's important the BYM are educated on the risks associated with online technology. For example, many BYM believe that once they are 16 they can do what they want. Remember it is illegal to send, receive, possess and/or distribute indecent images of any person under the age of 18, even if the person sending/receiving is under 18 themselves. It's important that BYM do not find themselves as a victim, or a perpetrator, of these offences.



## Gangs

***“He was my mate. Well he was meant to be. If you’d have told me when I first met him that one day he’d rape me, I’d have laughed my head off.”***

16 year old BLAST Project service user who was groomed and then raped by a fellow gang member

There has been much publicised about sexual exploitation within gangs, with a particular focus on GYW.

It is important to remember that sexual exploitation within gangs is only part of the picture, not all of it, and that BYM can also experience sexual exploitation within gangs.

Whilst perpetrators sexually exploit GYW for the purpose sexual gratification and financial gain, BYM can be sexually exploited for the purposes of humiliation, punishment, fun and as part of a gang initiation process. These may, or may not include someone gaining sexual gratification.

### **Humiliation/Punishment**

A 15 year old male who is part of a gang is told that he must give oral sex to another male gang member as punishment for talking to a rival gang member. The BYM is threatened with violence if he doesn’t do this, and the sexual activity is recorded by fellow gang members.

### **Gang Initiation Process/Fun**

A BYM who is part of a gang is told that he has to have sex with a girl whilst fellow gang members record the activity on their mobile phones. The BYM is told that this will show he is a tough guy. BYM are also told they must take part in other sexualised activities which can result in them being accepted into the gang.

It is important to remember that BYM can also be groomed by fellow gang members for sexual gratification.

### **Case Study – Neil**

Neil is 16 and lives with his Mum. He is part of gang that has male and female members of all ages. One evening Neil is with 21 year old Spike and some of the other gang members at Spike’s flat. Spike is a confident gang member, who is good friends with other older gang members. Spike is explaining that he is due in court soon after being arrested for committing burglary, and that he has been told to expect a custodial sentence. Spike says he has no idea how is going to cope without sex.

Later that evening after taking a few lines of cocaine and drinking alcohol, Spike suggested that he, Neil and the others go to the shop to get more alcohol.

As they walk to the shops, Spike once again says he is going to struggle being in prison without any sexual contact with a woman and he says that he will see if he can find a Gay guy inside willing to give him oral sex. The gang members think he is joking, and Spike goes on to say that he can use Neil to practice, by getting him to give him oral sex now.

Spike goes on to say that he knows Neil has never had a girlfriend and has always thought he is Gay. Spike tells Neil that he has to give him oral sex behind the shops. Neil says he isn't going to do it, but Spike and the other gang members force Neil down an alleyway behind the shops and force him into giving Spike oral sex. Everyone except Neil thinks what has happened is fun.

The above case study is not about sexual orientation, it is about using power and control for the purposes of sexual gratification.

## **Myth Buster**

### **People groom only for sex**

Perpetrators groom and sexually exploit children and young people to benefit from it, and gain something. This can simply be for sexual gratification, but not always. Other gains can include financial gain, drugs, love and acceptance, humiliation and sometimes as part of an initiation process. Those who are grooming children and young people for reasons other than sexual gratification may see children and young people as commodities and could be grooming girls AND boys.

### **BYM are mainly groomed for drug running and other crimes**

When professionals see a BYM associating with older males, truanting from school, taking drugs and having unaccounted for money or goods, some automatically assume that it's youth offending behaviour. Would professionals assume youth offending behaviour if the indicators were the same, but the young person was female?

Some BYM can be groomed for crime, sexual exploitation, or both. It is easy for BYM to be hidden as young offenders as the indicators of sexual exploitation are identical to the indicators of youth offending behaviour. It's important that professionals keep an open mind and remember that it's easier to prove a young person is involved in youth offending rather than being a victim of sexual exploitation. Some BYM also prefer to be seen as young offenders, rather than victims of sexual exploitation.

### **Perpetrators that groom boys are mainly 'creepy old Gay men'**

It's not someone's appearance, sexual orientation, ethnicity or gender that makes them a perpetrator; it's their dangerous actions, inappropriate grooming behaviour, and sexual intentions. Perpetrators can be of any gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, background or appearance.

There have been reported incidents where males and females have groomed and sexually exploited BYM in various ways, for various reasons, and these perpetrators range from being good looking men in their mid-20s, to middle aged women with children of their own.

It is important to remember that some perpetrators are sexually attracted to children and young people and are attracted to their young age and vulnerability, not necessarily their gender. They enjoy having power and control over children and young people with no concern or preference for their gender.

### **Only males can work effectively with boys and young men**

Some professionals believe that in order to work effectively with boys and young men the practitioner should be the same gender. Some boys and young men may ask specifically for a male worker, some may ask for a female worker and others may not specify. Whilst it is important to consider how gender stereotypes and assumptions,

along with the gender of the practitioner; may (or may not) affect the interaction between the BYM and the practitioner, consideration should also be given to establishing a professional, healthy and safe relationship. The BLAST Project has found that when a BYM experiences acceptance and empathy in an appropriate relationship, positive change can occur without the need to be concerned about the gender of the worker.

### **Perpetrators are horrible people**

What perpetrators **do** is horrible, but they can live normal lives and be seen by many as a nice friend, family member, partner, professional and/or next door neighbour.

When the friends and colleagues of perpetrators appear on TV or in the media they often state how shocked they are and that the person concerned was a lovely person. Does this mean if they'd have been a horrible person, it would have been less shocking?

Perpetrators do not walk around with a sign on their head, and they want people to see them as a friendly safe person, not a horrible one. Professionals should give young people the message that anyone can groom and sexually exploit them and that someone being horrible is not a sign that they want to sexually exploit them.

## 5. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

*“I’d be able to tell if someone was grooming my mate. I don’t know how I’d be able to tell, but I’d just be able to tell. Do you know what I mean?”*

16 year old male attending CSE awareness session in a pupil referral unit

There is a misconception that the warning signs and indicators of risk for BYM are different to GYW.

It is essential that when professionals are assessing risk they are not inappropriately influenced by gender.

### Example

A 15 year old girl leaves home but does not turn up for school. Teachers and parents have no idea where she could be, and when she returns home in the early hours of the morning, she is seen being dropped off at the end of the street by an older male. When she enters the house, parents smell alcohol on her and see her with a new mobile phone that she says she found.

In the above example a number of risk indicators are present, and it is these indicators that should be used to decide what action should be taken, without focusing on the gender of the young person.

**The gender may be different, but the risk is the same.**

The only risk indicator that is specific to GYW relates to pregnancies and terminations.

Although cottaging (sex in public toilets) and cruising (sex in public places such as wooded areas) is usually associated with males, sex in public toilets and other public places can also apply to males AND females.

Different services and organisations assess risk differently, so it important professionals communicate well with each other to ensure that they have a shared understanding of warning and risk indicators.

The table on page 19 combines all risk indicators and warning signs, and can be used as a screening tool for **both** boys and young men **and** girls and young women.

---

**Physical Health:**

- Physical symptoms suggestive of physical or sexual assault
  - Evidence of drug or alcohol misuse
  - Disclosure of physical/sexual assault which is then withdrawn
- 

**Sexual Health:**

- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections
  - Sexually risky behaviour (e.g. clipping – offering sex and running on payment)
- 

**Emotional Health:**

- Low self-esteem, self-harm, eating disorders, low confidence, suicide attempts
  - Volatile, violent and/or aggressive behaviour
  - Secretive behaviour
- 

**Education:**

- Non-attendance/disengagement with education
- 

**Missing:**

- Staying out overnight, returning late with no plausible explanation and/or going missing
- 

**Social Presentation:**

- Change in appearance
- 

**Family History:**

- History of physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect
  - History of domestic violence and/or parental difficulties
- 

**Housing:**

- Pattern of street homelessness
  - Unstable accommodation/placement breakdown
  - Having keys to premises other than those known about
- 

**Income:**

- Possession of items with no plausible explanation
  - Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of how funded
- 

**Places:**

- Seen at toilets/other public places used for sex (dogging sites, cruising/cottaging sites)
  - Seen at adult venues (pubs, clubs, saunas)
  - Reports that young person has been seen in high-risk areas of concern
- 

**Relationships:**

- Associating with young people (YP) at risk of/involved in sexual exploitation
  - Associating with YP thought to be encouraging other YP into CSE
  - Unexplained and/or sexual relationship with older person
  - Inappropriate/unsafe use of the internet/mobile phones
  - Contact with known or suspected unsafe/inappropriate adults
  - Known or suspected involvement in gang activity
- 

**Other:**

- Reports from reliable sources suggesting involvement in sexual exploitation
  - Youth offending behaviour
  - Known or suspected involvement in trafficking or gang activity
- 

**Female specific:**

- Pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion
-

## 6. HOW DOES IT AFFECT BOYS AND YOUNG MEN?

*“Everyone tells girls to be careful and stay safe and all that, but boys don’t get owt. It’s kind of like we should know it all already. ”*

15 year old BLAST Project service user

Gender stereotypes are often set from a young age. Boys and girls learn that there are certain colours they should like or wear, certain toys they should play with and certain behaviours they should display.

Society is giving messages to boys that reinforce negative stereotypes. Upset BYM are told to ‘man up’ and to ‘stop being a big girl’ and BYM wishing to pursue a career in ballet for example can be told to ‘man up and get a proper job’.

Society is saying that males should be one thing, and females should be another.

### **What are the consequences?**

- BYM believing that they can and should cope and deal with sexual exploitation.
- BYM not being aware of risks.
- BYM having problematic views of masculinity.
- BYM being complacent and believing they are immune to sexual exploitation.
- BYM not expressing their emotions.
- BYM not making disclosures or engaging with services.
- BYM being forgotten and/or ignored and excluded from service development.
- Sexually exploited BYM having extra shame and added pressures.

This also results in BYM feeling that asking for help is a sign of weakness, which in turn leads to less BYM disclosing abuse/exploitation which then leads to the misconception that grooming and sexual exploitation is something that doesn’t really affect BYM. This then leads to services being developed predominantly for GYW.

**Professionals should remember that simply because girls and young women make disclosures and engage with services at a higher rate than boys and young men, does not mean that boys and young men are at less risk.**

### **Boys are perpetrators, girls are victims**

BYM are often given direct and indirect messages that they are perpetrators and GYW are victims. As stated earlier in this guide both genders can groom and both genders can be sexually exploited.

BYM often receive input through school regarding how they should treat GYW with respect and not display inappropriate sexualised behaviour, whilst the GYW in the school receive input regarding safe relationships.

The 2003 Sexual Offences Act even refers to perpetrators of various offences as male (although they can be committed by females) and even has one particular offence that can only be committed by a male (Rape).

It is also worth noting that a large number of BYM are involved in the youth offending system which means they may already have a negative view of authority and the police. This view could affect BYM in regards to their decision to make disclosures and engage with the police. As stated earlier in this guide, BYM would prefer to be seen as young offenders rather than victims of CSE.

Whilst much has been documented regarding how children and young people can be criminalised and seen as criminals, this is an added pressure on BYM, particularly on BYM involved in the youth offending system.

### **Gay or Bisexual BYM**

Whilst it could be argued that children and young people are sexualised from a very early age and can be subjected to various sexual content and imagery, such contact and imagery is made more readily available to BYM who identify as Gay or Bisexual.

Examples include the various Gay lifestyle magazines which include the phone numbers of young men who sell sex, and websites which give details of where males can find public places/toilets to have sex with other males.

Whilst the above could be perceived by Gay or Bisexual BYM as a way of accessing support and fulfilling sexual needs without having to formally 'come out', they can be used to entice Gay or Bisexual BYM into sexual exploitation.

When some Gay and Bisexual BYM access cottaging sites and cruising sites, they are sometimes seen as criminals, rather than vulnerable BYM exploring their sexuality.

Remember, sexual activity in a public lavatory (an activity usually associated with males) is a sexual offence, but sexual activity in a public place is not a sexual offence – it is a public order offence. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64>

Some Gay or Bisexual BYM may also be seeking out sexual contact in isolation with no support as they may be worried that people will view them as promiscuous.

### **Myth Buster**

#### **If a boy gets an erection when being sexually exploited by a male, he's Gay**

No. It's important to remember that sexual orientation should not be inappropriately focused on when supporting BYM who have been sexually exploited by males. If a BYM sustains an erection whilst being exploited and abused, it does not mean they are Gay. Remember, a physical response is not an emotional response.

#### **BYM can take care of themselves**

That's what they think too. However, BYM may have a perception of what a perpetrator may look like and not recognise that they are being groomed because the perpetrator does not fit their stereotype. The perpetrator may also use a BYM's masculinity and tough guy image in the grooming process. Just because a BYM gives the impression they are 'streetwise' and physically strong does not mean they will recognise that they are being groomed, or that they will be able to deal with being in this situation.



## Why Boys Don't Disclose

As stated earlier in the guide BYM are less likely to report and disclose abuse/exploitation in comparison to GYW. A number of reasons why this may be can be found below. Whilst some of these may apply to GYW, we are focusing on BYM.

### **'It's hard to talk about'**

BYM can feel ashamed, guilty and embarrassed when they realise they have been sexually exploited as they may perceive themselves as being 'less of man.' Professionals should not do or say anything that reinforces these stereotypes and listen to BYM, making it easier for them to talk.

### **'No one will believe me'**

Some BYM may not think anyone will believe them if they disclose exploitation. Professionals should always believe BYM when they make disclosures and offer support and gather information.

### **'It will make things worse'**

Some BYM may think that telling someone could result in them, their friends or family being threatened or attacked. Other BYM believe that the court process will be long and painful and sometimes worse than the actual exploitation. Professionals should provide factual information about the appropriate processes and involve the police as and when necessary. It may be appropriate for the professional to act as a link between the BYM and the police.

### **'I don't know what's happening to me'**

Some BYM don't disclose exploitation, because they don't realise, recognise or understand that someone is sexually exploiting them. Professionals should build a good relationship with the BYM, educate them and provide opportunities for disclosure.

### **'I'm not Gay'**

If the sexual exploitation involved a male gaining sexual gratification, Heterosexual BYM may be worried that if they tell someone, they will think they are Gay. Professionals should realise that it is not an issue of sexual orientation it is an issue of safety, and professionals should not inappropriately focus on sexual orientation.

### **'I don't want the police involved'**

Some BYM who have experienced sexual exploitation are worried that the police may see them as 'trouble' and 'time wasters' rather than someone who has been the victim of crime. Others think getting services such as the police and social care involved may make things worse rather than better. This is particularly significant if BYM have previous negative experiences of being involved with the police and/or social care.

A number of co-located teams have been established around the country that are based inside police stations. There are many barriers which prevent BYM from disclosing and engaging, and if they are encouraged to be seen in a police station, this can create another barrier and increase their reluctance. This is even more poignant with BYM who have a negative view of police and/or are involved in youth offending behaviour.

Professionals should be prepared to meet with BYM in alternative, appropriate locations away from police stations.

Professionals should be clear with BYM that if they disclose sexual exploitation the police will have to be told, but that no one can make them talk to them if they don't want to.

### **‘What’s the point?’**

Some BYM don’t tell anyone about their situation (or they aren’t bothered if anyone knows) because they don’t think anything will change, or that anyone will care. BYM also choose to say nothing because the sexual exploitation happened a long time ago, or it was an attempt which they ignored. Professionals should provide information to BYM that can help them make informed decisions which includes being clear on available options.

### **‘I can/must deal with it myself’**

Some BYM don’t tell anyone what’s happening to them because they think they can (or should) deal with it themselves. This can be because the BYM have the idea that being male means they have to display a certain amount of masculinity and give the image that they are tough and can look after themselves. Professionals should give BYM the message that no matter how tough they are, recognising the signs of sexual exploitation, and trying to avoid it or fight it off can be difficult. Professionals should explain that being sexually exploited doesn’t make someone a wimp and asking for help doesn’t mean they’re weak.

### **‘It was just a bit of fun’**

Some BYM who experience sexual exploitation say that it was just a bit of fun, no one got hurt and that no one forced anyone into doing anything they didn’t want to do. Professionals should educate BYM on what constitutes ‘fun’ and how perpetrators can use the idea of fun to sexually exploit BYM.

### **‘I love him/her or they’re my mates’**

Some BYM may have feelings for the person in their life that others suspect is grooming/sexually exploiting him. This person may be the boy’s friend, boyfriend, girlfriend or family member. This can cause the BYM to feel confused between what is the right and wrong thing to do and have conflicting beliefs about what makes a safe and equal friendship/relationship. BYM may not see what is happening to them as exploitation as they may believe they are just helping out a mate. It’s unlikely the BYM will engage with services as he will want to remain loyal to the perpetrator and not want them to get into trouble or be separated from them. Professionals should build a healthy relationship in which the BYM feels he can be honest and open whilst being aware of when you need to pass on information. Professionals should also educate the BYM on what constitutes a safe, healthy and equal relationship.

### **‘I don’t want to lose what I get’**

Some BYM who experience sexual exploitation know that what is happening to them is wrong, but they are willing to continue experiencing the abuse/exploitation because they don’t feel or realise that they have any other choice, and they also get something they really need or want. This could be drugs, a relationship, money or something else. If a BYM thinks he will stop getting what he needs/wants, he may not tell anyone about the situation he is in. Professionals should be honest with BYM in regards to potential outcomes and explore alternative ways BYM can get needs/wants met.

### **‘It only happens to girls’**

Some BYM think that only GYW can be sexually exploited and that there’s no need for them to discuss anything with anyone. Professionals should highlight that girls **and** boys can be groomed and sexually exploited.

# Why Professionals Don't Refer

A number of reasons why professionals may not refer BYM for support around CSE can be found below. Whilst some of these may apply to GYW, we are focusing on BYM.

## **'He's Gay or experimenting with his sexuality'**

Professionals often wrongly assume that BYM who are being, or are at risk of being sexually exploited are Gay. Perpetrators will use the fear that boys have about people thinking they are Gay to control them. When dealing with disclosures professionals should not make assumptions about or focus inappropriately on sexual orientation. If professionals do this it may result in BYM retracting their disclosures. It's important to remember that a physical/biological response to sexual activity, such as sustaining an erection is not the same as an emotional one and does not mean BYM are Gay.

## **'He's a bit of a handful. He can take care of himself'**

BYM are given messages saying they should be strong enough and tough enough to deal with anything. Professionals should not reinforce such stereotypes, and not assume that simply because they are male means can look after themselves. BYM often do a good job of **appearing** tough, but sexual exploitation is something that no one – boy or girl, should be expected to deal with.

## **'He's hanging around with an older guy, but they are both straight, so it doesn't matter. I'd refer if the older guy was Gay'**

Sexual exploitation is not always about sexual orientation. A Heterosexual male can groom and sexually exploit a Heterosexual BYM. Professionals should make referrals based on risk indicators without being inappropriately influenced by sexual orientation.

## **'He's not disclosed anything'**

That doesn't matter and should not affect the decision to make a referral. As stated in this guide, it's unlikely that BYM will disclose. They might not know, or recognise that they are being, or are at risk of being sexually exploited, and there are often more reasons for them not to disclose than there are to disclose.

## **'It's just youth offending behaviour'**

BYM who are being sexually exploited can sometimes be hidden as young offenders. Professionals should remember that it is easier to prove youth offending behaviour than it is to prove sexual exploitation behaviour.

## **'He's a perpetrator, not a victim'**

BYM who are displaying certain behaviours are often labelled as perpetrators; however when GYW display the same behaviours they are often seen as victims. Professionals should not assume that BYM who display behaviour such as sexualised behaviour are at risk of perpetrating sexual exploitation, this could be a sign that they are being, or are at risk of being sexually exploited.

## **'We don't know it's definitely sexual exploitation'**

The only way anyone will know for certain that someone's being sexually exploited is if it is seen or disclosed. Both of these are unlikely, but if there are a number of significant risk indicators present, knowing if the BYM is definitely being sexually exploited is not relevant to the referral being made.

### **‘He won’t engage’**

There’s only one way to know for certain. *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2009)*, states that children and young people may respond initially to professionals from the voluntary sector. Professionals who work for CSE services are skilled in engaging challenging young people. Whether or not a BYM will, or will not engage should not affect the decision for a referral to be made.

It can be useful for professionals to ask themselves how they would respond to BYM if they were a GYW.

Professionals should make decisions and judgements based on risk indicators, not gender and those working with BYM at risk of being sexually exploited should **actively encourage** professionals to refer BYM.

## 7. HOW TO ENGAGE WITH BOYS AND YOUNG MEN

*“I suppose if I’d have been a girl, people would have been more worried about me sooner.”*

16 year old BLAST Project service user

The BLAST Project is often asked what we do to engage with boys and young men, and what’s different about working with and supporting BYM compared to GYW.

Our experience is that there are not huge differences between engaging with BYM or GYW, and that one of the key elements is establishing and maintaining a positive relationship with clear boundaries.

Chapter six of *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children*, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2009 states that boys and young men are generally harder to work with, which is why it is essential that a good, healthy relationship is established. It is important to remember that building a good, healthy relationship may take some time and that some BYM might not think that they need protection for sexual exploitation and might be resistant to what they perceive as interference from authorities.

You can find further details about how to engage with children and young people in *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2009)*.

When working with and supporting BYM, professionals should adopt and maintain an **informal** approach which can include considering how you introduce yourself, what you wear and the language you use. This can help the BYM to feel more relaxed and at ease. Professionals should also give consideration to the points below. We consider text in **black** to be appropriate responses, and text in **red italics** to be inappropriate responses. We also accept that some of these responses may be applied to working with and supporting girls and young women:

### Language

Whilst BYM should rightly be seen as victims of CSE, consideration should be given to the use of the word ‘victim’. BYM may think that you see them as weak which could result in them not disclosing or engaging. Some BYM also think that being called a ‘boy’ is patronising, others think young man is too formal. Listen to them and follow their lead by using the words they use.

### Introducing yourself

If you have not met the BYM before it’s important you create a good first impression. Be honest and open with them, don’t be too direct or forceful. It may not be appropriate in a first session to mention the phrase ‘sexual exploitation’, then again it might. You will need to consider the BYM’s age, any learning difficulties he has, his ability to engage and the reason he was referred. If you introduce yourself as someone who works with sexually exploited young people, the BYM could tell you to get lost and that they are not being sexually exploited. If you introduce yourself as someone who works with young people to help keep them safe, this may be met with less resistance.

If the BYM acknowledges that he has been the victim of child sexual exploitation (CSE) then it may be appropriate to use the phrase.

It is also very important to be honest and upfront regarding confidentiality issues, and to convey your organisation's confidentiality policy in a young person friendly way. It's important to follow their lead.

**“Hi Tom, it's good to meet you. Do you know why I've come to see you? Yes? How would you feel about telling me in your own words, why you think I'm here. No? OK. How would you feel if I told you why I think I'm here?”**

***“Hi Tom, it's good to meet you. My job is to work with children who go missing a lot, like you do and that's why I'm here. My aim is to get you to stop going missing and to keep you safe, so what we are going to be doing over the next few weeks is . . .”***

The professional who referred the BYM may have important information that you need to give consideration to, before you meet the BYM e.g. the BYM may be going missing, but becomes very angry when confronted about it. You may then wish to consider a different approach:

**“Hi Tom, it's good to meet you. I know there's lots of stuff going on for you at the moment and I've been told you don't want to talk about it, so I'm not going to make you. Maybe I could tell you a little bit about the sort of work I do and how I might be able to do some stuff with you that you might find useful.”**

***“Hi Tom, it's good to meet you. I know that you've been going missing and I really need to know why and where you're going. I know you don't want to talk about it, but you need to tell me what's going on.”***

If you already have a good relationship with the BYM you will not need to focus on this part.

### **Don't make assumptions**

Don't assume its youth offending behaviour, don't assume it's an issue relating to sexual orientation and don't assume the BYM is Gay. Do not focus on, or ask questions about, sexual orientation. Take your lead from the BYM. If a BYM is not Gay and believes you think he might be, he could disengage.

### **Give them control**

BYM often have to see their social worker, teacher and youth offending worker. In order to start a good relationship, explain that you do not want to be another professional that they have to see. You want to be someone that they'd like to see. If the BYM does not want to see you, tell them it's OK, and that it's also OK for them to change their mind. This lets BYM know that they are in charge.

**“Tom, I'm not here to tell you off, or have a go at you, or tell you what to do. I can't force you to see me. Let's have a little chat, and if after that, you want to see me again, great, we can arrange another time to meet. If, after we've had a chat, and you decide you don't want to see me again, just tell me and I'll leave. You might want some time to think about it, and that's OK too.”**



***“I’ve been told that you don’t want to see me, but you’ve got to understand that you are putting yourself in a potentially dangerous situation, and something really bad could happen to you, so until you start behaving differently you’ve got to see me.”***

## **Resources**

Consider the use of resources which contain activities that includes males. This reinforces that sexual exploitation isn’t something that applies to just GYW. The BLAST Project has experienced that young people respond well to visual materials such as DVDs and PowerPoint presentations. BYM have also responded well to the use of real life stories. This provides BYM with a clear idea of the types of situations you work with. If a story is used that is similar to the situation that the BYM you are working with is in, it can provide the BYM with the opportunity to relate to something without feeling that you are directly saying he is at risk of being sexually exploited.

**“So Tom, let me give you an example of the type of people I see. I once saw a boy who as about the same age as you and he kept leaving school and staying out overnight. He never told anyone where he was going and he thought he could look after himself. It turned out he was staying at this man’s house, and this man was getting him to do all sorts of risky stuff in exchange for a place to stay.”**

## **The relationship**

What do you already know about this BYM? What are his likes and dislikes? How can you use what you know to help build a good relationship? Spend some time getting to know the BYM and think about how you can include his hobbies and interests in working towards establishing an appropriate relationship. Also, think about the BYM’s personality. If he is quiet and shy you may have to adopt a different approach compared to someone who is loud and outgoing.

## **Consider their reactions to sexuality**

The BYM you will be working with will define their sexual orientation in a number of ways. Some may not define it at all. It is important not to make assumptions regarding a BYM’s sexual orientation, or about his thoughts and feelings on this. Some BYM may be homophobic, others may feel confused about their sexual orientation and others may not have even thought about it. It is important to follow their lead.

## **Consider their thoughts on masculinity**

It may be useful to ask the BYM you are working with what it means to him to be male and how he feels his situation would be if he was female. There may be huge differences, there may be none. This not only helps in the relationship building, but it can also give you an idea as to how the BYM views himself as a male which could influence how you work with him, and what activities you choose to use with him.

## **Breakdown gender stereotypes**

This can include avoiding statements associated with gender stereotypes such as ‘man up’. This could reinforce negative stereotypes that BYM should be tough enough to deal with what happens to them.

If the BYM does not want to see you, it may be useful to find out why. Below are some of the reasons we hear and the responses we give:



They say:

**“I’m not at risk of anything”**

We say:

**“I can totally see why you’d say that, and from your point of view, you don’t think you need any support. However, there have been young men like you, who have been in the same situation you’re in now. Some of them ended up in a really horrible and dangerous situation and others didn’t. I’m not saying something bad will definitely happen to you, I’m just saying that it might be good to get more information on how to stay safe in case something bad was to happen to you. What do you think?”**

***“You are definitely at risk! You’re going missing, not telling anyone where you are and hanging around with a load of older guys, of course you’re at risk!”***

They say:

**“I can look after myself”**

We say:

**“I’m sure you can look after yourself because you’ve probably got lots of knowledge on how to keep yourself safe. How would you feel if I gave you even more information that could add to that knowledge to enhance your ability to keep yourself safe?”**

***“I used to think that when I was your age, but I was wrong! No one your age can completely look after themselves!”***

They say:

**“I don’t want to/it’s difficult to talk about it”**

We say:

**“That’s OK. If you don’t want to, or don’t feel comfortable enough talking about what happened you don’t have to. We can just get to know each other and then maybe I could give you some general information on how to keep yourself safe. What do you think?”**

***“I’m sorry, but if you want things to change you’re going to have to talk about it.”***

They say:

**“I don’t want people thinking I’m Gay”**

We say:

**“Well it doesn’t matter if you’re Gay, straight, bisexual or not sure. If you want to talk about how you feel about your sexuality, you can do. If you don’t want to, that’s OK too.”**

***“So, did you get an erection when this man touched you? Have you ever had a girlfriend? Do you think that you might end up Gay because of what this man did to you?”***

They say:

**“I don’t want the Police or Social Services involved”**

We say:

**“OK. Well if you say anything to me that makes me think I’m worried about you, or someone else, I will have to pass this information on to the Police or Social Care. I will always try and let you know that I’m doing this. If I ask you anything and you don’t want to tell me, I’ll respect your decision not to tell me. If you tell me that someone has done something horrible to you, like forcing you to do something sexual, I will have to tell the Police, but it’s your decision what you want to tell them, if you want to tell them anything at all. No one can make you speak to the Police if you don’t want to. If you tell me that you’re not going to go home, I will have to phone Social Care. If you start telling me something that worries me, I will tell you as soon as I can that I have to tell someone what you have told me. It is then your decision if you want to tell me anything else. I have to share information with other people in your life, like school and your Social Worker. The only reason for this is to make sure we all have the same information, and that we are working together to keep you safe.”**

***“They have to be involved; it’s as simple as that”***

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Make decisions and judgements based on risk indicators not gender

However a professional responds to a GYW who they perceive as being at risk of being sexually exploited, is the same way they should respond to a BYM who is displaying the same, or similar risk indicators. It's not someone's gender that makes them vulnerable, it's their actions, who they are with and the situation they are in.

### 2. Make services inclusive of, and accessible to boys and young men

A simple step is to talk about children and young people, not girls and young women. By doing this, we are including BYM, rather than excluding them.

Dual gender services should ensure they are inclusive of, and accessible to BYM. This can include reviewing policies, procedures, resources and literature. Do posters and leaflets include images of boys **and** girls, and do resources include examples of boys and girls at **risk** of sexual exploitation? Do policies and procedures apply to both genders, and does group work delivered to young people include activities and examples that cover boys **and** girls.

Services that support both genders should not convey that they support girls **and** boys without taking appropriate steps to ensure all parts of their service are inclusive of, and accessible to both genders.

National and local procedures should be gender neutral, whilst also acknowledging the specific issues which apply to boys and young men.

National awareness campaigns should include images of girls **and** boys to highlight that both genders can be at risk, and CSE specialist services and young people should be consulted when such campaigns are being developed.

### 3. Work together and share information

As with GYW, information should be shared appropriately with all professionals involved. Parents and carers should also be involved. Professionals should have a shared understanding of the issues and of how they apply to BYM.

Professionals from different organisations may have different agendas and these should also be made clear.

### 4. Be familiar with trends and technology

When supporting children and young people who are at risks of being sexually exploited, professionals should be familiar with the latest grooming trends (off and online) and any local areas where BYM are known, or suspected to be targeted for sexual exploitation. Professionals should consider becoming familiar with online resources such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, Instagram and many more. Professionals can keep up to date with various trends by registering with CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre) and attending local CSE subgroups and forums.

### 5. Consider approach and break down gender stereotypes

See chapter 7.

## 6. Challenge and encourage professionals to refer boys and young men

Whilst girls are often referred to CSE services for support, the BLAST Project finds that professionals need to be challenged and encouraged to refer BYM. This approach should be adopted by other professionals working with BYM at risk of being sexually exploited. This can be done by the use of case studies which aim to challenge stereotypes and perceptions. A number of case studies can be found at the BLAST Project website [www.mesmac.co.uk/blast](http://www.mesmac.co.uk/blast)

## 7. Train and educate

This includes providing training to professionals that specifically addresses the grooming and sexual exploitation of BYM and ensuring that existing training also includes BYM.

The BLAST Project provides the nationally recognised 'Not Just Our Daughters' training which is one of the country's oldest and most recognised male only CSE training.

BYM, particularly Heterosexual males, are less likely to recognise they are being groomed or sexually exploited, as they may perceive themselves as strong and tough, not as being at risk. This is why it is important to educate BYM that anyone can be targeted, groomed and sexually exploited.

Schools, youth clubs, children's homes, secure units and other youth and educational establishments should take steps to ensure all children and young people have access to information which aims to raise awareness of grooming and sexual exploitation, lower risk and increase safety and awareness.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a legal duty on all schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

Chapter five of *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary Guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2009)* also states that **all** children and young people are potentially at risk of being sexually exploited and that specialist services should, where possible, be involved in education and awareness raising programmes.

Schools should **not** focus on the reputation of their school, or assume that sexual exploitation does not happen to young people in their school or area. Schools making use of specialist services should ensure that input is delivered to both girls **and** boys.

Schools already delivering CSE awareness sessions should ensure it is delivered to both genders and includes examples and images of girls **and** boys.

## 3. MALE SPECIFIC RESOURCES

### **The BLAST Project**

As the UK's leading male only sexual exploitation project, the BLAST Project provides various resources aimed at tackling the grooming and sexual exploitation of BYM. This includes the nationally recognised 'THINK AGAIN' DVD and resource pack.

For details visit [www.mesmac.co.uk/blast](http://www.mesmac.co.uk/blast) or phone 0113 2444209

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### **The National Working Group (NWG)**

As a member of the NWG network you will have access to a wide variety of resources and access information regarding specialist CSE services in your area.

For details visit [www.nationalworkinggroup.org](http://www.nationalworkinggroup.org) or phone 01332 585371

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### **Barnardo's**

Barnardo's provide a range of resources aimed at tackling child sexual exploitation including the 'No Son of Mine!' report and the DVD 'Hidden' which contains the story of Martin, a boy who is groomed online.

For details visit [www.barnardos.org.uk/what we do/policy research unit/research and publications/sexual exploitation research resources.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/policy_research_unit/research_and_publications/sexual_exploitation_research_resources.htm)

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### **CEOP's Thinkuknow**

CEOP's Thinkuknow programme provides a range of free educational resources - films, lesson plans, presentations, practitioner guidance, games and posters - to professionals working with children and young people. Some of these include 'Tom's Story' and 'Matt Thought He Knew.'

For details visit [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

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