‘BEING HEARD’
Involving Children and Young People in Participatory Research on Sexual Violence: Challenges and Approaches

Dr Silvie Bovarnick and Dr Helen Beckett
with Kirsche Walker, CJ Hamilton,
Helen Veitch, Delphine Girma and Dr Camille Warrington
The International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking

@uniofbedsCSE

Slides not to be reproduced without permission of authors
The webinar will:

- introduce the International Centre and scoping review;
- outline the rationale for youth participatory research on sexual violence;
- define children and young people’s involvement in participatory research;
- focus on the value, training requirements and legacy of participatory research in the context of sexual violence;
- share some cumulative learning from participatory work undertaken by the International Centre;
- provide time for discussion.
The International Centre

Committed to increasing understanding of, and improving responses to child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking in local, national and international contexts.

Achieved through:

• academic rigour and research excellence;
• collaborative and partnership based approaches to applied social research;
• meaningful and ethical engagement of children and young people;
• active dissemination and evidence-based engagement in theory, policy and practice.

www.beds.ac.uk/ic
Being Heard: global scoping

Aim:

• Gather evidence relating to children and young people’s engagement in research on sexual violence.

Methods:

o Review academic and grey literature;

o Elicit data through a call for evidence;

o Conduct key informant interviews;

o Consult with workshop participants at SVRI Forum 2017.
What is children’s participation?

"[empowering] children as individuals and members of civil society, thus giving them the opportunity to influence their own lives"

Save the Children, 2006
Balancing protection and participation rights

In theory: mutually dependent and indivisible

In reality….clear evidence of a ‘hierarchy of rights’
Participation for children affected by sexual violence…

“…the primary concern is about protecting [them] from society rather than considering the opportunities for them to participate in it”

Afua Twam Danso Imoh, 2005
Reasons for avoidance

- Young person is too vulnerable
- Topic is too sensitive
- Researcher discomfort
Reasons for engagement

• Unique insight from key stakeholder can enhance our evidence base
• ‘Better data’ to inform policy and practice
• Challenges cultures of silence/stigma
• Can be ‘empowering’ to young people
A young person’s account:

“Before, I saw what I had been through as a weakness – a horrible part of my life. Well it is still a horrible part but now I can use my experiences for good….. I’ve gone from the person who is coming here to ask for help for me, to someone who’s coming to help other young people.”

Maisy, 2013, from the ‘Be Healthy’ Project
What do we mean by ‘involving children and young people in participatory research’?

- High degree of *collaboration* between those who are normally solely the ‘subjects’ of research and those undertaking research;

- Initiatives that create opportunities for children and young people to influence the research process *beyond* solely providing information; e.g. informing research questions; sampling; research design; governance; data collection; data analysis; reporting and dissemination.
Levels of participation in research

- Children consulted on aspects of the research process
- Children collaborate and work in partnership with researchers
- Children supported to lead and have ownership over the research process

Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011) Lansdown and O’Kane (2014)
Group discussion

- Have you used child-led approaches?
- Have you used collaborative approaches to co-produce research with children and young people?
- In your experience, what were the benefits and challenges of using these approaches?
Emerging themes from the scoping

- Legacy
- Skills and Training
- Value
Reviewing the value of participatory research

- Offering differentiated levels of involvement in various stages of the research rather than ‘trying to enmesh children and young people in all aspects of the research’ (McCarry, 2012):
- Does it ‘add value’ to the research?
- Is a participatory approach appropriate (for both researchers and those being researched)?
- Can participation be enacted in a meaningful and ethical way?
‘the role of the research is to build an evidence base that may improve the situation of children affected by the issue in the long-term, but there is no expectation to improve the situation of individual children (young researchers or participants) as part of the research project’

(Key informant interview)
Skills and Training

Training needs for both adult and youth researchers:

- Understanding sexual violence;
- Research skills; e.g. participatory methods, sensitive interviewing skills; note-taking; analysis, research ethics (notably confidentiality and data protection); dissemination;
- Communication skills.
Legacy

• What happens to youth researchers after the research project ends?

• How can we incorporate considerations around sustainability?

• How can we facilitate transition and ongoing support?

• How can ensure that young people’s participatory involvement has a legacy?
Cumulative learning from examples of participatory research
Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm (ESRC)
Eliciting young people’s views

- Participant welfare
  - Open mind
  - Engage with risk
  - Power balance
  - Safe sharing
  - Support
Discussion

- Did this webinar raise any questions for you?
- Do you want to share examples from your own work?
- Do you want to discuss related challenges that you may have encountered?
- Are there strategies that you have found helpful in addressing some of the challenges we’ve discussed?
- Any other reflections?
For more information and resources visit our website www.beds.ac.uk/ic

Silvie.bovarnick@beds.ac.uk
Helen.beckett@beds.ac.uk
Camille.warrington@beds.ac.uk
@uniofbedscse