BEING HEARD: PROMOTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S INVOLVEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Findings from an international scoping review

Silvie Bovarnick with Delphine Peace, Camille Warrington and Jenny Pearce

August 2018
BEING HEARD: ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE AT SVRI FORUM TOOLKIT

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GLOSSARY

**Violence against children**
"All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (Pinheiro, 2006; CRC, 1989).

**Sexual violence**
"Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work." (Jekwes, Sen & Garcia-Moreno, 2002).

**Children and young people (C&YP)**
‘Child’ means any person up to the age of 18 (UNCRC, 1989) whereas the terms ‘young person’ and ‘young people’ refer to the age range between 10 and 24 years (Hagell, Shah and Coleman, 2017). The report primarily, though not invariably, focuses on young people between the ages of 16 and 24, reflecting the available data.

**C&YP’s participation**
Forms of social engagement relating to C&YP’s right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives: C&YP “taking part in and influencing processes, decisions, and activities that affect them, in order to achieve greater respect for their rights” (Lansdown, 2003, p. 273).

**Participatory research**
Any research that entails a degree of collaboration between those undertaking the research and those who are typically ‘the researched’ (Pain, 2004). In the context of child/youth participatory research, the term refers to opportunities for C&YP to inform the research design and process beyond solely providing information. Degrees of collaboration (and therefore “participatory practice”) will vary along a spectrum from opportunities to consult on some of the issues to research which is fully instigated and led by participant-researchers (Lansdown and O’Kane, 2015).

**Consultation**
Research initiatives that elicit C&YP’s perspectives and offer them opportunities for influence (Ibid.).

**Collaborative research**
Research projects in which adults work in varying degrees of partnership with C&YP, creating opportunities for them to actively influence the design and processes of projects and to share decision-making. Research generally remains adult-initiated although its inception and development may be informed by C&YP (Ibid.).

**Child/youth-led research**
Research projects that are initiated and led by C&YP. Entails providing opportunities and resources to enable C&YP to initiate and run their own activities. Processes are owned and led by C&YP, but adults may facilitate, provide resources, funding or guidance and support on aspects of their work (Ibid.).

**(Adult) professional researcher(s)/ facilitator(s)**
Trained adult professionals who work in a capacity related to research and/or participation in academia, the private, governmental and/or non-governmental sector or related fields. Their role varies according to the levels of C&YP’s participation (see above) and power-sharing arrangements between the adult and C&YP involved in a given research project.

**Participant-researcher**
Individuals (not necessarily C&YP) who are typically ‘subjects’ of research but who take on the role of a ‘researcher’ in a participatory study. Unlike professional researchers/facilitators, participant-researchers are usually not formally trained and do not work in a professional research capacity.

**Young researcher(s)**
Participant-researchers (see above) up to the age of 24.

**Research subject(s)/ respondent(s)**
Those who are the ‘researched’ or ‘subjects’ of the research study, e.g. individuals who fill out questionnaires, respond to surveys, are observed as part of ethnographic studies, or participate in interviews, focus groups or other research activities.

**Participant(s)**
Those who are invited to ‘participate’ in a project or research study (participant or non-participant). The term can refer to participant-researchers and/or respondents but usually does not include ‘professional’ researchers.

ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>C&amp;YP</td>
<td>Children and young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>(United Nations) Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIC</td>
<td>High-income countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMIC</td>
<td>Low- and middle-income countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAG</td>
<td>Project advisory group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVAC</td>
<td>Sexual violence against children</td>
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<td>SVRI</td>
<td>Sexual Violence Research Initiative</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team is grateful for the commissioning of this scoping review as part of the ‘Being Heard’ project and for the support of Oak Foundation. We appreciated the encouragement and input from our colleagues at the Sexual Violence Research Initiative and the valuable advice from members of the ‘Being Heard’ Project Advisory Group. In particular, we would like to thank Elizabeth Dartnall for her ongoing commitment and support.

Special thanks go to those who agreed to be interviewed as part of the scoping review for giving us a deeper insight into their work. We would also particularly like to recognise the invaluable contributions of Kirsche Walker, CJ Hamilton, Helen Veitch, Dr Helen Beckett, Tricia Young and the international delegates at the SVRI Forum 2017. They shared their knowledge and expertise during a pre-conference workshop, which allowed us to identify key themes for this scoping review and gave us a unique opportunity to consult on emerging findings.

Any errors in the report are the responsibility of the authors.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE SCOPING REVIEW

This report presents findings from an international scoping review about the involvement of children and young people (C&YP) in participatory research on sexual violence. The scoping review was commissioned as part of the ‘Being Heard’ project, a collaboration between the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) and the University of Bedfordshire’s International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, trafficking and violence (ICE). It was commissioned to inform work on promoting ethical and meaningful child/youth participatory research on sexual violence. The project ran from January to December 2017 and was funded by Oak Foundation.

In the context of this scoping review, ‘participatory research’ is defined as any research that entails a degree of collaboration between those undertaking the research and those who are typically ‘the researched’ (Pain, 2004). The conceptual framework used here draws from Lansdown and O’Kane’s (2015) ‘participation continuum’, whereby participatory involvement of C&YP ranges from ‘consultation’ at one end, to ‘child/youth-led’ research initiatives at the other, with different levels of ‘collaboration’ in between these two ends of the spectrum (see Figure 1, p. 28).

The scoping review is a multi-method study; in addition to identifying relevant academic publications (n=76) and grey literature (n=42), data was elicited through a call for evidence (n=58), a small number (n=10) of key informant interviews and a consultation with international delegates (n=37) as part of a pre-conference workshop that was held at the SVRI Forum in September 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. 112 of these resources were cited in the final review and form the evidence base for this report. The report also draws on additional background literature, identified through hand-searches, to substantiate and contextualise key themes that emerged as scoping progressed.

THE FINDINGS

1 Participatory research practice in this field is still emerging

Overall, the scoping review found very little practice that involved C&YP in participatory research on sexual violence or related topics. Of relevant examples identified, the majority were consultative (n=53) and collaborative (n=44), with very few examples (n=4) of child/youth-led research (see Table 2, p. 30).

Due to the lack of evidence specifically on participatory research in this area, the scoping review also draws from learning about children’s and youth participatory initiatives more broadly. This attempts to give us a better understanding of the barriers and challenges associated with C&YP’s engagement in participatory practice on sensitive topics.

Most of the data underpinning this scoping review originates in Europe, North America and, to a lesser extent, Australia, reflecting an existing evidence base that is skewed towards high-income countries (HIC). Although efforts have been made to locate relevant resources from a range of geographical areas around the world, including from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), the findings presented here must be seen in the context of what has been published rather than as a genuine reflection of all participatory research activities that exist globally.

2 There is evidence of benefits to multiple stakeholders of involving C&YP in participatory research addressing sexual violence against children

The evidence reviewed suggests that C&YP’s participatory involvement in sexual violence research can have a range of benefits to:

(i) the research community;
(ii) those involved in such initiatives; and
(iii) the constituencies and communities they represent.

Participatory approaches can enhance the evidence base on sexual violence against C&YP by incorporating the insights of those affected, directly or otherwise. Such approaches can add relevance and credibility to research findings and help to inform thinking on the prevention of, and responses to, sexual violence against children (SVAC). C&YP’s participatory involvement can potentially add value to all stages of the research process, including the research design, ethics, governance, participant recruitment and engagement, data collection and analysis, and dissemination (see Table 3, p. 34). Participatory approaches are conducive to redressing power differentials in research, including between those present in data collection processes. For example, involving young researchers has been shown, in some instances, to promote engagement between researchers and respondents, facilitating the gathering of sensitive information that might otherwise be difficult to access.

Participatory research can also offer a range of benefits to C&YP affected by SVAC, both as individuals and collectively. Involvement in participatory research addressing sexual violence can present opportunities for C&YP to develop confidence, acquire new skills and strengthen resilience. It can give those involved in such initiatives a chance to represent their views to wider stakeholders. The act of ‘self-representation’ may offer some therapeutic benefits to those directly involved in such initiatives. It can also benefit wider communities of C&YP by establishing them as political agents for social change, and by raising awareness of SVAC and its consequences.

3 Barriers to initiation of child/youth participatory research on sexual violence

Despite evidence of benefits, there are significant barriers to C&YP’s involvement in participatory research addressing sexual violence. These include:

(ii) reluctance to engage with vulnerability, including concerns over managing risk and pre-empting re-traumatisation and secondary/victimous trauma;
(iii) lack of confidence and knowhow amongst the wider research community of age-appropriate, participatory and creative methods, and more broadly, of involving meaningfully C&YP in sexual violence research;
(iii) (perceived) lack of C&YP’s competencies in relation to their ability to undertake research and handle sensitive topics.

C&YP’s vulnerabilities must be central in thinking about whether and how an individual can be engaged in participatory research safely. For many individuals, involvement in particular research projects may be neither desirable nor ethically appropriate.

Many of the ethical considerations around involving vulnerable children in research equally apply to vulnerable adults. There are additional legal requirements arising from national and international legal frameworks relating to those under 18. Child protection is not only a moral or ethical issue but a legal requirement. Researchers must carefully consider the legal obligations alongside the ethical implications of involving vulnerable C&YP in sexual violence research, including the risks of re-traumatisation and secondary/victimous trauma.

C&YP affected by sexual violence may not see themselves or be perceived by others as ‘vulnerable’. It is important to recognise, however, that individuals who have experienced significant trauma may have complex needs and may require additional advocacy and support during, and potentially beyond, their involvement in research. This is likely to have implications for project staff and research organisations. Sexual violence research, participatory or otherwise, must be trauma-informed, especially when engaging vulnerable groups; it needs to be facilitated by trained staff with specialist (participatory, youth work) training. As such, it is underpinned by adequate levels of time, training and resources. The complexities associated with this work may explain why child/youth participatory research on sexual violence represents a very small proportion of research in this area. The dearth of academic literature suggests that there is a tendency amongst academic researchers to shy away from the associated risks. Given that risks can never be completely avoided, some researchers suggest a focus on working with and managing risk as opposed to adopting more risk-averse approaches. Such perspectives highlight that an experience of sexual violence should not automatically preclude C&YP’s involvement in participatory research opportunities. When weighing up the risks of C&YP’s participation in research, the potential benefits of their involvement and the risks of non-involvement should be considered equally.

4 Complexities of participatory research on sexual violence against children: challenges and strategies

Learning from participatory research and wider participatory practice involving vulnerable groups on sensitive issues highlight the complexities of such processes. This report discusses several specific challenges that can arise during such processes, and strategies to address them. Research processes and C&YP’s involvement in them can vary, and the report attempts to discuss identified challenges and strategies corresponding to different stages of the research process (outlined in Table 3, p. 34):

(i) Research oversight and governance: C&YP’s involvement in research oversight and governance usually comes through their role in advisory or steering groups. While these can be organised in different ways, and provide important opportunities for influence, there may also be significant limitations on C&YP’s ability to exert control through these mechanisms.

(ii) Ethical approval: Ethics committees fulfil the crucial role of ensuring that potential harm to research participants/respondents and researchers is minimised. Committee members may not always have the relevant expertise, however, to scrutinise and provide guidance. Researching on developing ethical participatory research in this area.

(iii) Recruitment and engagement: Sexual violence is highly stigmatised; consequently, C&YP may feel reluctant to be associated with this topic or may face opposition from their family, friends or community in relation to participating in sexual violence research.

The transient and complex lives of some marginalised C&YP can also create logistical barriers to their involvement and mean that some groups are rarely engaged in participatory research. Specialist services can sometimes facilitate and support the involvement of marginalised C&YP. These services, however, may themselves struggle to prioritise involvement in

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE AT SVRI FORUM TOOLKIT

BEING HEARD: ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE AT SVRI FORUM TOOLKIT

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The Being Heard project is a collaboration between the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) and the International Centre, University of Bedfordshire. Funded by Oak Foundation, the project’s goal is to promote the meaningful and ethical involvement of C&YP in participatory research in the field of sexual violence. It also presents some examples of strategies identified as useful in addressing some of the challenges discussed.

1.1. The Being Heard project

The ‘Being Heard’ project is a collaboration between the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) and the International Centre, University of Bedfordshire. Funded by Oak Foundation, the project’s goal is to promote the meaningful and ethical involvement of C&YP in participatory research in the field of sexual violence. It also presents some examples of strategies identified as useful in addressing some of the challenges discussed.

1.1.1 The Sexual Violence Research Initiative

The SVRI is a global research initiative that promotes and supports good quality research in the area of sexual violence in LMIC. It seeks to build an experienced and committed network of researchers, policy makers, activists and donors to ensure that the many aspects of sexual violence are addressed from the perspective of different disciplines and cultures. The SVRI believes that prevention efforts and service provision must be informed by sound research and evidence (for more information, see www.svri.org).

1.1.2 The International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking

The IC is a research centre based at the University of Bedfordshire in the UK. It is committed to increasing understanding of, and improving responses to, child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking, in local, national and international contexts, achieved through:

- collaborative and partnership-based approaches to applied social research;
- meaningful and ethical engagement of C&YP;
- active dissemination and evidence-based engagement in theory, policy and practice.

The International Centre has a focus on C&YP’s participation and aims to promote such approaches wherever possible (for more information see www.beds.ac.uk/intcentre).
1.1.6 Rationale for focusing on C&YP affected by sexual violence

The scoping review focuses primarily on C&YP with experience of sexual violence whilst also considering the broader category of C&YP affected by sexual violence. The first category includes children who are victims and/or perpetrators of sexual violence. The second category includes C&YP who may have been indirectly affected by sexual violence, for instance, through witnessing sexual violence or living in environments with high incidents of sexual violence, such as gang-affected neighbourhoods (see Beckett et al., 2013). These C&YP may know or have supported someone close to them with direct experience of sexual violence and may themselves be at elevated risk of experiencing this form of abuse.

The rationale for including the second category stems from a recognition of the ‘ripple effects’ of sexual violence (Morrison, Quadra and Boyd, 2007; Warrington et al., 2017) and acknowledges the secondary trauma experienced by individuals that can result from having a family member, friend, and/or partner who has experienced sexual violence.

The two categories can be problematic, not least because they exclude those individuals who have undiscovered experiences of sexual violence and those who do not self-identify as victims of sexual violence because of shame, self-blame, stigma, mental health problems, or due to sexual violence being normalised (Morrison, Bruce and Wilson, 2018). Research on children’s disclosures of sexual abuse shows that disclosures can take a very long time and, sometimes, sexual abuse will never be disclosed at all (Allrock and Miller, 2013; Stoltenborgh et al., 2011; Ullman, 2003).

SVAC is known to be a serious and widespread problem across the globe (UNICEF, 2017; Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Evidence from the pan-European STIR (Safeguarding Teenage Intimate Relationships) study highlights that prevalence of interpersonal violence and abuse among young people is pervasive, with between a half and two-thirds of young women and between a third and two-thirds of young men aged 14 to 17 years old from five European countries (England, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Italy and Norway) reporting such forms of violence and abuse (Barker et al., 2016). Data from national surveys conducted between 2007 and 2013 in Cambodia, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Zambiap, Swaziland and Tanzania indicate that the lifetime prevalence of experiencing any form of sexual violence in childhood in most of the seven countries studied was greater than 25% (Surner et al., 2015).

The aim of this scoping review is to explore ways to harness the expertise and specialist knowledge of those C&YP affected by sexual violence, either directly or otherwise. It is hoped that the report provides a starting point for a deeper conversation about what it means to ethically and meaningfully engage C&YP in sexual violence research and why it is important to do so.

1.1.7 Key research questions:

The scoping review explored the following key questions:3

- How is participatory research on sexual violence with C&YP conceptualised in the literature and practice?
- What are the benefits of C&YP’s participation in research on sexual violence?
- What are the barriers that hinder participatory involvement of C&YP in research on sexual violence?
- What are the key challenges emerging from child and youth participatory involvement in research on sensitive topics?
- What research strategies or approaches have been used to support C&YP’s involvement in participatory research in this field?
- What are the training and support needs of researchers and C&YP to enable meaningful and ethical participation?
- What resources would be useful to build capacity, knowledge and skills to facilitate more child/youth participatory research in this field?

1.2. Methods

1.2.1 The rationale for choosing a scoping review

This study is not a systematic literature review, but a multi-method scoping exercise. The importance and role of systematic literature reviews in contributing to a rigorous evidence base is recognised in social research, but this approach can be limiting in exploring new avenues of research where the evidence base is still emerging.

According to Rutter et al. (2010), a scoping review seeks to clarify the nature of research questions, to identify the range of relevant resources and to make a broad assessment of the coherence and quality of knowledge. Given that the scoping review focuses on an area where academic literature is relatively scarce and predominantly originates in HIC (Eltsig et al., 2014; Know Violence against Children; 2017); and much relevant knowledge resides in practice4 and may not be documented in a format that meets the criteria for systematic review, adopting a scoping review was an appropriate choice.

The decision to adopt a broader search strategy (explained below) was carefully considered and undertaken to explore the evidence base in more depth.

The search was conducted in two stages. During the first stage, relevance and retrieval, key words and phrases were entered into relevant databases and titles and abstracts were reviewed according to the following line of inquiry:

- What are the benefits of C&YP’s participation in research on sexual violence?
- What are the barriers that hinder participatory involvement of C&YP in research on sexual violence?
- What are the key challenges emerging from child and youth participatory involvement in research on sensitive topics?
- What research strategies or approaches have been used to support C&YP’s involvement in participatory research in this field?
- What are the training and support needs of researchers and C&YP to enable meaningful and ethical participation?
- What resources would be useful to build capacity, knowledge and skills to facilitate more child/youth participatory research in this field?

1.2.2 Research design

A multi-method research design was created to facilitate data collection, consisting of three distinct yet interdependent parts:

- (ii) Defining the remit of the scoping review;
- (iii) A review of academic literature;
- (iv) A review of grey literature;
- (v) A call for evidence;
- (vi) Key informant interviews; and
- (vii) A consultation as part of a pre-conference workshop at the SVRI Forum 2017.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the scoping review was sought and granted by the Institute of Applied Social Science’s ethics committee at the University of Bedfordshire. Consent forms and information sheets were developed to explain the purpose of the research and how the data would be used (see Appendix F). These documents outlined the project’s policies around data protection, confidentiality, anonymisation, and child protection obligations. Informed consent to use data for the scoping review was obtained from all key informants, delegates attending the pre-conference workshop at the SVRI Forum 2017, and individuals and organisations who submitted materials as part of the call for evidence.

Defining the remit of the scoping review

A comprehensive research protocol containing a catalogue of research questions, parameters, inclusion and exclusion criteria and search strategies was established in consultation with the research team and the PAG (see Appendix A). The search protocol was piloted over two weeks in February and March 2017.

In addition, a concept note was developed to clearly define the focus, remit and parameters of the study (see Appendix B). Academic literature review

The research protocol was piloted5 on the University of Bedfordshire’s online library’s ‘Discover™ search engine and subsequently revised. A degree of flexibility was applied to the searches, allowing modifications of search terms and/or combinations to better adapt to the different databases. Journals and databases that did not generate any relevant results during this search process were excluded from the search.

The search was conducted in two stages. During the first stage, relevance and retrieval, key words and phrases were entered into relevant databases and titles and abstracts were reviewed according to the following line of inquiry:
Is the article about participatory involvement of service users from vulnerable groups in research?

Does the article discuss relevant ethical or methodological issues that can offer learning that is applicable to the sexual violence context?

Are there relevant lessons from this article that can be transferred to the context of involving C&YP in sexual violence research?

Articles were then included or excluded based on a review of abstracts or tables of content (in the case of longer reports or books). Results that met some but not all of the above-mentioned criteria were retained to be considered in the second selection process. Sporadic quality checks were conducted by two peer researchers to determine whether criteria were applied with consistency. This first stage included 304 sources.

The second selection process consisted of reviewing the articles selected during the first stage and coding them according to the categories listed below. Reasons for including or excluding each source and the category codings were then discussed and reviewed. In the event of diverging opinions, reviewers discussed these differences to reach a mutual decision. After the second stage, 76 sources remained (see Appendix C).

The scoping review, coding and selection process were undertaken by two independent reviewers to ensure consistency and reduce bias. A coding system, consisting of five categories, was established to ensure systematic weighting of the evidence. Articles were rated according to key themes and relevance, in order of priority:

**Category 1: Literature on participatory research methods**
- C&YP and sexual violence (or other relevant marginalised groups/issues, e.g. participatory research with adults on sexual violence OR participatory research with marginalised C&YP, such as street-connected youth);

**Category 2: Literature on participatory research methods and C&YP**;

**Category 3: Literature on (non-participatory) research methods with C&YP on sexual violence and broader abuse issues**;

**Category 4: Background reading relevant to broader concepts, focusing on participation and definitions of participation or participatory research; and**

**Category 5: Literature with transferable conceptual or ethical issues from different contexts (for example, health research involving children or vulnerable groups).**

Grey literature review
A grey literature search was conducted alongside the academic literature review to identify learning from participatory research projects and to capture examples from practice. This consisted of hand-searching organisational websites and databases of relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs); international NGOs; UN agencies; research/academic institutions; national, regional and international practice, policy and research networks, including Childhub, Participatory Methods, Save the Children, the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC), the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), and the UK’s National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children’s (NSPCC) ‘Inform’ library. The search identified 42 relevant resources that were included in the review (see Appendix D); of these, two were sourced through Childhub and 39 were found on the Participatory Methods website (www.participatorymethods.org).

**Call for evidence**
A call for evidence was launched to complement the academic and grey literature searches (see Appendix E). This was distributed widely through associated national, regional and international networks, including SVRI, the RISE Network, Childhub and the ‘Our Voices’ Research and Practice network, requesting relevant materials to be submitted and for the call for evidence to be re-posted to achieve wider circulation. The call generated 86 submissions, 20 of these were included in the review.

**Key informant interviews**
Ten key informants were interviewed on specific participatory research initiatives on sexual violence and related areas. In semi-structured interviews, they were asked to elaborate in depth on the benefits and challenges they encountered, and to identify strategies they had employed to address these (see interview topic guide in Appendix G). If not stated explicitly as a source, data emerging from these interviews are referenced in the scoping review as ‘(Int.)’. All data were anonymised to ensure confidentiality and minimise the likelihood of being able to attribute contributions to individual informants.

Key informants were selected based on being associated with a particularly relevant project identified as part of the scoping exercise. They were selected in consultation with the PAC, with specific consideration of closing evidence gaps, for instance relating to geographic representation, emerging from the academic literature review.

**Young key informants:**
Three of the key informants were young women between the ages of 20 and 24, representing Western Europe, Latin America and Africa. In addition to studying at university, these key informants had been involved in a range of participatory research initiatives facilitated either by NGOs or academic institutions.

**Adult key informants:**
Seven of the key informants were adult professionals, three males and four females. They had been identified as experts in C&YP’s participation with experience of facilitating participatory research with marginalised or vulnerable C&YP representing a range of professional sectors, five informants were based at NGOs, one was based at a research institute and one was a university-based academic researcher.

In terms of geographic representation, three of the seven were based in the UK but had substantial experience of facilitating participatory research with C&YP in LMIC (mostly Africa and Asia); the remaining four were based in Africa (two in Uganda, one in Tanzania and one in Nigeria).

**Workshop consultation**
A pre-conference workshop was run with 37 international delegates at the SVRI Forum 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The aim of the workshop was to gather data on the training needs of researchers who are interested in, or already using, participatory approaches to researching child sexual violence. In addition to testing emerging findings from the scoping review and identifying gaps in current knowledge, workshop activities explored the values and challenges of and barriers to involving C&YP in research in this field.

The workshop also elicited feedback on what types of information and range and format of resources might be useful to facilitate more participatory research on sexual violence. The data emerging from the workshop were anonymised so that they cannot be attributed to individual delegates and to ensure data protection. The information elicited through the workshop informs the scoping review and is integrated into the findings section of this report. If not stated explicitly as a source, data emerging from the workshop consultation are referenced in the scoping review as ‘(WS)’.

**1.2.3 Limitations**
Several limitations arise from the chosen methods. As noted above, the scoping review was not a systematic literature review and therefore does not claim to be exhaustive. Furthermore, there are some limitations in relation to the geographic reach and regional representation arising from the chosen remit and methods. The time and resources allocated to this project allowed a review of materials that were accessible in English. This resulted in gaps in the data generated in relation to specific regions, most notably Eastern Europe, parts of Asia (particularly North and South East Asia) and Latin America and the Caribbean. Efforts were made to address these gaps by targeting individuals and networks in under-represented regions and re-coding the call for evidence with an invitation to submit non-English resources. A small literature search was undertaken in French, Spanish and Portuguese; however, none of the materials generated by searches focusing on non-English materials met the inclusion criteria. Consequently, the geographic and linguistic focus of the scoping remains Anglo-centric. Due to these limitations, the scoping review is more accurately described as ‘international’, rather than ‘global’.

**TABLE 1: Key informants (anonymised)**

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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Key Informants</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Region(s) of professional activity</th>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>Africa</td>
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<td>Africa</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Young person</td>
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<td>Africa</td>
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<td>Adult</td>
<td>University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Young person</td>
<td>Young researcher and student at university</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Associated with university</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Associated with university</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY INFORMANTS REFERENCED AS**

- **Int. 1**: Female Adult/YP, NGO, Africa
- **Int. 2**: Female Adult, NGO, Global
- **Int. 3**: Male Adult, NGO, Africa
- **Int. 4**: Female Young person, NGO & university student, Africa
- **Int. 5**: Male Adult, NGO, Africa
- **Int. 6**: Female Adult, University, UK & Africa
- **Int. 7**: Male Adult, NGO, Africa
- **Int. 8**: Female Young person, Young researcher and student at university, UK
- **Int. 9**: Female Adult, Associated with university, Global
- **Int. 10**: Female Adult, Associated with university, Global

**BEING HEARD: ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE AT SVRI FORUM TOOLKIT**
Other limitations reflect existing gaps in the evidence bases that underpin this scoping review. Much of what is known about SVAC originates from HIC (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Similarly, much of what has been published on C&YP’s involvement in participatory research on sensitive issues appears to emerge from HIC, and, as BabyLab Ock (2015) notes, uses ‘Western’ models and ethical frameworks for conducting research with C&YP.

Given the existing limitations in relation to the available evidence base, the authors acknowledge the dangers of reproducing a geographic bias in this report, despite attempting to address this issue. A series of concerted efforts have been made to locate relevant research initiatives in LMIC through the grey literature searches. In consultation with the PAG, the call for evidence was recirculated through established networks, including the RISE network, to increase its geographic reach in Africa, Asia and the Latin American region. In addition, much of the learning that was elicited through key informant interviews and the pre-conference workshop drew from initiatives in LMIC.

Reflecting gaps in the available data, the scoping review was, unable to systematically aggregate data according to gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith background, socio-economic status, disabilities and other factors which shape C&YP’s lives. The authors recognise this as a significant shortcoming. Further research is needed on the implications of diversity for children’s ability to participate in research and/or researchers’ abilities to involve children; on C&YP’s and researchers’ individual training and support needs; and on the specific benefits of involving particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups in such initiatives.

1.3 Defining key concepts

1.3.1 Sexual violence against children


In practice, definitions of SVAC vary just as norms differ across national and socio-cultural contexts (Coward, 2016). Similarly, the concept of SVAC varies according to whether it is understood as a legal, medical or societal issue (Save the Children, n.d.). SVAC is used in this report as an umbrella term, connecting the diversity of meanings ascribed to it in different contexts and research projects.

UNICEF explains SVAC by noting that it:

“...can take the form of sexual abuse, harassment, rape or sexual exploitation in prostitution or pornography. It can happen in homes, institutions, schools, workplaces, in travel and tourism facilities, within communities – both in development and emergency contexts...as well as in non-emergency contexts in developed countries. Increasingly, the internet and mobile phones also put children at risk of sexual violence as some adults look to the internet to pursue sexual relationships with children.” (UNICEF, 2017, p.1)

In recent years, ‘peer on peer’ violence, including sexualised forms of abuse and bullying perpetrated against C&YP by their peers, has gained increasing recognition (Barker and Bembridge, 2011; Finckelhor and Jenkins Tucker, 2015; Firmin, 2015). An in-depth exploration of ‘peer on peer’ abuse is outside the remit of this scoping review; however, it is important to note that the types and forms of SVAC discussed in this scoping review include those perpetrated by adults as well as by other children.

There is a growing evidence base focusing on virtual forms of abuse, including sexual abuse (UNICEF 2017). It is also recognised that forms of SVAC, whether perpetrated by peers or adults, extend beyond the physical world into virtual realms and that online and offline abuse can be interlinked (Burton et al., 2016; Davidson et al., 2012; Hann et al., 2015; Smeaton, 2013).

SVAC is pervasive and underreported

SVAC is a global reality across all countries and social groups (UNICEF, 2017; Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Reliable data on SVAC, as on violence against children more broadly, are difficult to obtain, partly because such violence frequently takes place within interpersonal relationships and is hidden by cultures of silence (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Sexual violence is reasonably believed to be underreported with the reported scale of the problem likely only to portray the ‘tip of the iceberg’. Global evidence reveals that the self-reported prevalence of child sexual abuse victimisation is more than 30 times higher than official reports (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011).

1.3.2 C&YP’s involvement in participatory research

It is important to provide a clear definition of what is understood as ‘participatory research’, and C&YP’s involvement in it, given the broad range of activities that are described as ‘participatory’. To this end, a concept note has been developed, outlining the focus and parameters of this study (see Appendix B). The report limits itself to briefly discussing the key principles and models in relation to C&YP’s involvement in participatory research that are used throughout this scoping review.

‘Participatory research’ can be broadly defined as:

“A range of methodological approaches and techniques, all with the objective of giving power from the researcher to research participants... Participatory research involves inquiry, but also action.” (Participate, n.d.)

AS the quote above highlights, alongside the concern with power, much, though not all, participatory research has a focus on (social) action and retains a strong commitment to influencing or delivering tangible benefits and changes for those involved – either as individuals or communities. In pursuing these aims, collaboration and dialogue between stakeholders, such as between researchers, service users, communities, policy makers and/or practitioners, tend to underpin participatory research processes.

As with action research, the distinction between research and social change can be blurred as the process of developing new knowledge becomes integrated with responses to the issues under exploration (Banks, Herrington and Carter, 2017). Social action may include the capacity building inherent in these processes, campaigning work and/or influencing and changing practice. As Williams and Brydon-Miller note (2004), participatory action research:

“...combines aspects of popular education, community-based research, and action for social change. Emphasising collaboration within marginalized or oppressed communities, participatory action research works to address the underlying causes of inequality while at the same time focusing on finding solutions to specific community concerns.” (p. 245)

An associated benefit inherent in participatory research practice relates to the creation of opportunities for those who are typically the ‘subjects’ of research to ‘self-represent’ themselves, thus shifting the role of communities directly, rather than relying on representation by others. This marks a critical shift in traditional research relationships and specifically addresses concerns about power relations associated with the means of representation (Castello, 2000 [1996]; Foucault, 1980). It also aligns with traditions in feminist and narrative research which value multiple subjectivities as opposed to searching for objective ‘truths’ in research (Plummer, 1999). Additionally, alongside other (mainly qualitative) approaches to research, participatory research challenges positivist conceptualisations of knowledge, raising epistemological and methodological questions in relation to what constitutes ‘evidence’ and who is involved in producing it (Bovmark with D’Arcy, 2018).

To summarise, though used variably in different contexts, ‘participatory research’ can be understood to incorporate some shared principles and assumptions. For the purposes of this scoping review, four key characteristics have been identified:

- a commitment to redressing existing power imbalances in research;
- a concern with social action (e.g. improved services or responses);
- a focus on collaboration among stakeholders – and particularly those usually marginalised from such processes;
- a subsequent increase in opportunities for research respondents to self-represent.

1.3.3 Models of participation

C&YP’s involvement within participatory research processes can occur in different aspects of the research project and afford C&YP different degrees of influence. One useful model to characterise this variation is the three-tier typology of collaborative, participatory and ‘child-led’ practice developed by Lansdown and presented in Lansdown and O’Kane’s children’s participation evaluation toolkit.
Leading theorists on children’s participation (Hart 2008; Lansdown, 2011) note that when using such models (in research or practice) the different levels of participation should be viewed as a continuum, rather than a hierarchy, and that the nature of children’s influence in participatory activities can frequently fluctuate, overlap or encompass different levels simultaneously, even within a single research project. Similarly, different levels of participation are possible or appropriate at different times, depending on the capacity, interests, and circumstances of individuals; funders’ requirements; and resources available.

Shortcomings and critiques of participation

Despite offering a range of benefits, participatory research has been critiqued for several shortcomings. A key concern relates to a dissonance between the rhetoric of participation and its ‘sometimes glossy (or glossed-over) presentation’ (Pain, 2004). Full collaborative practice and power sharing remain rare (Cooke and Kroth, 2001). Such critiques (Ibid.; Cornwell, 2004; Gaventa, 2003) emphasise the need to analyse relationships of ‘power’ in research within a wider framework of contextual influences, existing inequities, and ongoing exclusion. They note that there is often limited evidence of genuine empowerment in many initiatives purporting to be participatory (Gaventa, 2003). This is not to fault research or practice for failing short of aspirations to be fully participatory, but rather to encourage practitioners and academics to reflect honestly and transparently on where meaningful influence is enabled among those involved and the limitations involved. Cornwell (2004) highlights the critical distinction between participation in ‘invited spaces’, where individuals are ‘invited into’ existing structures; and situations in which marginalised individuals claim, inhabit or forge decision-making spaces of their own-choosing (p. 78). This is highly relevant to a consideration of participatory research with C&YP. It suggests a need to review and analyse projects according to management and funding arrangements and to consider how and where the impetus for research originates. Additional concerns relate to diversity and exclusion within groups of C&YP. A concern with the power differentials between C&YP and adults can often mask the diversity within groups or communities of C&YP themselves, or even the forms of adversity that C&YP share with adults. As Hinton (2008) notes, diversity among children and adults is often subsumed and questions about who is excluded from participatory processes and on what grounds remain unquestioned. In this way, participatory practice often fails to consider barriers to participation and the unequal distribution of power that the label ‘participation’ can itself obscure. This is particularly important given the documented tendency of participatory initiatives to involve more compliant children (Hart, 2008; Morrow, 2001). Finally, several writers also draw attention to the risk of ‘tokenism’. Hinton (2008) argues that children’s participation can potentially be used as a domesticating or governing strategy. This aligns with arguments about the potential for marginalised groups’ or service users’ involvement to be ‘co-opted to serve professional or organisational agendas – consciously or otherwise’ (Carr, 2004; Adams, 2008). Furthermore, Braye and Preston-Shoot (2003) note how activities (including research) labelled ‘empowering’ can often work to conceal existing inequities and structures of power. As both Morrow (2001) and Cotmore (2004) have argued, participatory processes may involve both empowerment and co-option at the same time.

1.4 Theoretical framework

To a large extent, both the rationales for and the barriers to C&YP’s engagement in sexual violence research are borne out of inherent tensions between children’s rights to participation and protection enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Archard, 2004; Healy, 1998; Healy and Darlington, 2009; Hinton, 2008). It is therefore useful to explore some of the relevant key debates arising from a rights-based framework that underpin this scoping review.

1.4.1 Tensions between children’s participation and protection: vulnerability and resilience

Historically, children’s rights narratives have placed paramount emphasis on children’s needs for protection from violence and abuse. This is partly due to children’s specific and additional vulnerabilities in relation to violence and abuse that arise out of conditions of their dependency. It also partly responds to evidence that shows the potentially long-term and wide-ranging detrimental impact of experiencing different forms of maltreatment, including sexual violence, during the sensitive and formative years of childhood (Feltiti et al., 1998; Feltiti and Anda, 2009; Finkelhor, 2007; Finkelhor and Jenkins Tucker, 2015; Fisher et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2016).

Recognising children’s specific vulnerabilities has been significant in helping to afford them a special status of protection. At the same time, it has arguably diverted attention away from children’s ‘agency’, i.e. their ability to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on their world (ACECQA, n. d.; Jago et al., 2011). As a result, children who are considered ‘vulnerable’ are typically side-lined from participatory initiatives and decision making about their own needs and futures or discussions about how to help others (Cody, 2017; Warrington, 2016; Warrington et al., 2017).

While the CRC enshrines ‘the indivisibility of rights’ and highlights their interdependence, a pragmatic approach which prioritises children’s protection rights above those of participation is often adopted in practice (Feinstein and O’Kane, 2008). This “hierarchy of rights” is particularly pronounced in the area of sexual violence, where notions of ‘victimhood’ and ‘vulnerability’ have often been linked conceptually.

Individuals react differently to adversity (Center on the Developing Child, 2007); C&YP who have been affected by sexual violence may or may not present with a range of trauma-related symptoms, reflecting a wide spectrum of vulnerability and resilience factors that can exacerbate or mitigate against the harmful effects of sexualised trauma (Match, Foster & DeLillo, 2010).

Evidence from research shows, however, that both vulnerability and resilience are multifactorial, not static but fluid; existing along a continuum; and interrelated (Allagia et al., 2016; Anthony and Kohler, 1987). It could be argued that considering adverse childhood experience exclusively in the context of ‘vulnerability’ diverts attention away from C&YP’s inherent capacities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). It overshadows measures that can boost these, and the crucial role they play in building resilience to cope with adversity (Bagattini and Gutwald, 2016; Coleman and Hagell, 2007; Logan-Greene et al., 2014; Solomampour, Geierstanger and Bindts, 2017).

1.4.2 Maximising benefits alongside minimising harm

C&YP affected by sexual violence may not see themselves or be perceived by others as ‘vulnerable’ (Brown, 2006), but it is important to recognise that they may present with high levels of complex needs. This has implications for participatory research and means that C&YP may, at some point, require advocacy and support within and potentially beyond the remit of a participatory (research) project. Professional researchers and other adults must take extremely seriously the vulnerabilities of C&YP who have suffered significant trauma. These must be central in thinking about whether and how an individual can be engaged in participatory research safely. This may mean that for some individuals, involvement in particular research projects is neither desired nor ethically appropriate. Any risks of re-traumatisation must be taken extremely seriously, and the impact of sexualised trauma and its consequences considered carefully by informed professionals.

This may explain why engaging vulnerable groups in participatory research on highly sensitive and stigmatised social issues appears to be rare. The dearth of academic literature suggests that there is a tendency amongst academic researchers to shy away from the associated risks. Given that risks cannot be eliminated, Warrington (2016) argues that we should consider “…working with and managing risk as opposed to adopting more risk averse approaches” (p. 3).

An experience of sexual violence should not automatically preclude a child or young person’s involvement in participatory research opportunities. It undermines their chance to inform the evidence base and to represent their perspectives (and those of their peers and communities) to wider audiences. It is therefore important also to consider the ethical implications of excluding them. The guiding principle is to …”maximise benefit for individuals and society as well as minimise risk and harm” (ESRC, 2017; Graham et al., 2013).
FINDINGS

The second part of the report presents the findings that have emerged from the scoping review. It has four sections. The first section provides an overview of the evidence reviewed. The second section presents the rationale for involving C&YP in participatory research on sexual violence and elaborates on some of the documented benefits of participatory approaches. The third section focuses on barriers to initiating participatory research with C&YP affected by sexual violence. And the final section highlights some of the complexities of participatory research processes engaging vulnerable groups, exploring ethical and practical challenges that can be encountered in practice. Where possible, it includes potential strategies which have been identified as useful in addressing some of the challenges and includes signposts to relevant resources. Some of these are illustrated through examples.

TABLE 2: Breakdown of participatory research initiatives identified in the scoping review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SOURCES REVIEWED IN FINAL SELECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-led</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory monitoring and evaluation of youth services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory action research projects with young people</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1. Overview of resources reviewed

The scoping review identified a range of ways in which C&YP are involved in participatory research on sensitive topics. In keeping with the continuum of children’s participation (Figures 1 & 2), research activities reviewed ranged from consultative to collaborative to child/youth-led research activities. The distinctions between these three categories are largely conceptual as projects often used different types of participatory practice at different stages of the research. Despite this, it is worth noting that the scoping review identified far fewer research activities that could be categorised as collaborative and youth-led than consultative (see table below).

TABLE 3: Documented opportunities and benefits associated with C&YP’s involvement in participatory research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROCESS</th>
<th>NO. OF IDENTIFIED STUDIES INVOLVING C&amp;YP</th>
<th>IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR C&amp;YP’S INVOLVEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH</th>
<th>PERCEIVED BENEFITS/IDENTIFIED VALUE OF ENGAGING C&amp;YP IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Defining research focus/agenda.</td>
<td>Identifying/prioritising the most pertinent issues affecting C&amp;YP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adapting research questions or formulating new ones.</td>
<td>Formulating research questions in age/context-appropriate language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Piloting research design.</td>
<td>Ensuring methods are youth-friendly, engaging, and age-appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contributing to funding bids.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Co-developing risk and needs assessments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contributing to risk management; e.g. by developing group working agreements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring that materials (e.g. consent forms, project information leaflets) are accessible to child/youth respondents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research governance/management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Serving as a member of Project Advisory Boards, advising on research process and content, including ethical, methodological and logistical issues and dissemination.</td>
<td>Ensuring that research projects incorporate a child’s/youth person’s perspective throughout the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Providing guidance on research management, including monitoring and evaluation.</td>
<td>Supporting accountability to key stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing research governance and ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening project monitoring and evaluations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and engagement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Assisting in identifying marginalised communities/individuals.</td>
<td>Facilitating recruitment of participants/respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying ‘spaces and places’ of target population.</td>
<td>Facilitating reach and rapport; young researchers may be perceived to be on a more equal footing and more approachable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example sources:

Example sources:
- Aparajeya-Bangladesh, 2010; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Ficker, 2008; Houghton, 2015; Girl Effect 2017a; Lushey and Munro, 2015; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010; Warrington et al., 2017; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010

Example sources:
- Bradbury-Jones 2013; Beckett et al., 2013; Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Brown, 2006; Busza 2004; Cossar et al., 2013; Houghton, 2015; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Warrington et al., 2017

Example sources:
- Addy, 2015; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Dentith, Measor and O’Malley, 2009; Ficker, 2008; Girl Effect, 2017a; Kaime-Atterhög and Ahlberg, 2008; McClean-Sills et al., 2011; McLean and Modi, 2016; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010, van Blker, Shand and Shanahan, 2017

10 This table combines data from child-led and collaborative research projects involving young researchers in all or various stages of the research process, as well as some consultative research projects in which young people were involved in dissemination and/or developing recommendations for policy and practice.
Conducting interviews, surveys, undertaking ethnographic research or using a range of other (e.g. creative or visual) methods.

- Reducing power imbalances between researchers and researched.
- Building rapport by having the same frame of reference as respondents.
- Increasing respondents’ sense of safety and comfort.

**Data collection** 25


**Analysis** 21

- Interpreting data.
- Sense-checking/making; i.e. deriving meaning from information collected and critically reviewing the research findings through a young person’s lens. This can include verifying terms and expressions commonly used by C&YP and making sure meanings are conveyed correctly in accordance with the specific contexts in which information was relayed.
- Prioritising research findings.

**Example sources:** Addy, 2015, Beckett et al., 2013, Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Braye and McDowell, 2013, Challenging Heights, 2013; Chappell et al., 2014; Coser et al., 2014; Fleming, 2011; Ficker, 2008; Girl Effect, 2017a; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Holland et al., 2010; Houghton, 2015, Kirby, 2004; Lushey and Munro, 2015, McLean and Modi, 2016, Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Porter, 2016; SANLAAP, 2010; Smith et al., 2010; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017; West, 1999; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010

**Dissemination** 24

- Facilitating workshops.
- Creating accessible research outputs to share messages to young/larger audiences (e.g. reports, films, leaflets, briefings).
- Engaging in dissemination events (e.g. public/community meetings; conferences, policy forums at regional, national or international levels).
- Developing messages for action.
- Supporting youth campaigns and participatory advocacy.

**Example sources:** Addy, 2015, Årnsden and VanWynberghe, 2005; Apaarejo-Bangladesh, 2010; Blanchet-Cohen, 2014; Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Brown, 2006; Challenging Heights, 2013; Chappell et al., 2014; Coser et al., 2014; Caudill and Measor, 2001; Edstein and Pinto, 2013; Fleming, 2011; Ficker, 2008; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Girl Effect, 2017a; Hagell, 2013; Hollard et al., 2010; Houghton, 2015, Kirby, 2004; Loves and Hulatt, 2013; Lushey and Munro, 2015; MacDonald et al., 2011; McLean and Modi, 2016; McClery-Sills et al., 2011; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017; Plan, 2009; Porter, 2016; Ruiz-Casares et al., 2013; SANLAAP, 2010; Smith, Monaghan and Broad, 2002; Stuart, Maynard and Rouncefield, 2015; Tutty, 2014; van Blerk, Shand and Shanahan, 2017; West, 1999; YPP Youth from Maiti Nepal, 2010

### 2.2. Rationales for C&YP’s involvement in sexual violence research

The benefits outlined in Table 3 present a rationale for considering and supporting participatory research processes in the field of sexual violence. It responds to a challenge identified during the pre-conference workshop at the SVRI Forum 2017 to better understand and demonstrate the values of participatory approaches. Delegates emphasised that, without this, it may be difficult to ‘sell’ participatory approaches to funders.11

Responding to this need, the following section elaborates on the documented benefits of involving C&YP in sexual violence research, to the research community and to the individuals involved and their communities. For the purposes of clarity, benefits of participatory research have been categorised as follows:

1. Enhancing the evidence base: improving the quality of data and relevance of research messages;
2. Strengthening dissemination;
3. Enhancing outputs for individuals and communities;

It is worth noting that the above categorisation is artificial as the benefits discussed here often overlap in practice. As such, they are rarely bounded by distinct categories but rather are interlinked and mutually dependent: for example, an improved evidence base may lead to better policy and practice responses, which in turn may lead to better outcomes for C&YP affected by sexual violence.

#### 2.2.1 Participatory research can enhance the evidence base

A recurring theme from the sources studied was that C&YP’s involvement in sexual violence research could strengthen and refine the evidence base. Central to this argument is a recognition of C&YP’s unique insights into their own and their peers’ circumstances and the need to access these perspectives directly. As one key informant stated:

> ...we are getting information from the horse’s mouth"10 (int. 1).

Additionally, while C&YP’s contributions can enhance understanding of the topic, it is also a means of demonstrating their capacity to act as competent commentators on their lives. This can enrich the evidence base in various ways. Findings from UK-based research projects on CSE identified that C&YP’s participatory involvement has resulted in research evidence that both supports the existing evidence base, and adds nuance, additional detail or reprioritises key messages (Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Beddall et al., 2013; Cody, 2017; Warrington et al., 2017). For example, a participatory research project exploring C&YP’s experiences of criminal justice responses supported existing evidence about the lack of sensitivity by professionals, but also identified new findings about CSE among the experiences of investigations and court processes (Beddall and Warrington, 2015).

### Access to respondents

A growing body of academic and grey literature supports the view that participatory approaches can be helpful in identifying or accessing groups that researchers have typically struggled to engage with (see Table 3 for a full list of references). Pover imbalances between researchers and research subjects can create barriers to engaging marginalised groups in research. According to Graça, Gonçalves and Martins (2017), such barriers can arise from a researcher’s affiliation with a university or other aspects of the researcher’s biography that identify them as ‘privileged’ or more powerful in relation to those with whom the researcher seeks to engage. The literature discusses a range of related challenges in accessing populations who are highly ‘stigmatised’ and who can understandably be suspicious of academic researchers who express an interest in them, including resulting from previous negative experience with research (ibid.; Houghton, 2015).

There is some evidence to suggest that participatory approaches can help to address these barriers by helping to rediscover power differentials in traditional research relationships (Martin, 2013; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Ficker, 2008). In a collaborative participatory study examining the vulnerabilities of C&YP living in so-called ‘red light districts’ (where sex is for sale) in Kolkata, India, the participatory research design harmonised the expertise, proximity and access to peer groups of young researchers (SANLAAP, 2010). Most of the young researchers involved lived in the red light areas themselves and were trained as peer researchers, surveyors and primary data collectors. They identified other C&YP living in vulnerable situations for recruitment as respondents. Similarly, a youth-led research project investigating urban crime and youth employment in slum areas in Kampala, Uganda, documented by Addy (2015), highlights that young researchers added unique value by means of their in-depth understanding of the complexity of their local communities. They were able to recruit respondents; acted as translators; identified high-risk and unsafe areas; and even negotiated access to slum areas with local gatekeepers, allowing research activities to proceed (ibid.).

The familiarity of participator-researchers with research contexts and respondents, however, can also be ‘used’ by stakeholders. If the ethos of power sharing and the principles of participation (as outlined in Part 1) are not well understood, the specific dynamics of participatory research can easily turn exploitative, rather than being an ‘empowering’ experience for young people.

### Access to data

Participatory methods can potentially establish more equal ground between those undertaking the research and those being researched. For instance, engaging peer researchers can challenge assumptions about the nature and dynamic of interaction and facilitate trust (Chappell et al., 2004). Peer research12 typically involves members of the research target group assuming the role of active researchers who undertake data collection activities (O’Keeffe, 2006).

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11 English colloquialism for getting information from a direct or first-hand source.

12 Peer research is but one approach that can be used in participatory research. It should not be presumed to necessarily be developed through participatory principles, however. Placed in the traditions of participatory action and ‘empowerment’ research, peer research methods, like other participatory approaches, assume that peers are ‘experts’ within their field of experience (O’Keeffe, 2000).
Collaborative research with young peer researchers in Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa by Porter et al. (2013) suggests that their position as friends, relations or neighbours was conducive in establishing trust and dialogue between peer researchers and community respondents, facilitating the gathering of highly sensitive information. This contrasts to international evidence from both academic and grey literature which indicates that young researchers may enhance data collection by establishing rapport more easily with their peers than adults (Bray and McDonnell, 2013; Devries et al., 2015; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Martin, 2013; SANLAAP, 2010; van der Meulen, 2015).

As noted previously, power differences can equally exist between peers (Beckett et al., 2013; Firmin, 2015; Schumann, Craig and Rosu, 2014). Despite the advantages described above, it is important to note that C&YP are always best placed to access sensitive information from their peers. Indeed, there may be important ethical reasons why the opposite may be the case in certain contexts. For example, Barter et al. (2016) note that not all young people are comfortable sharing sensitive information with peers, and, depending on the topic, may feel more comfortable with adult researchers. Similarly, UK-based research into gang-related sexual violence notes that young researchers are typically avoided using peer researchers as it was felt this could place young people at risk of violence, given the sensitivities within communities about information being attributed to a young person (Beckett et al., 2013). Reflecting on her experience of researching violence with a group of young people in a conflict-ridden borough in Medellín, Colombia, Blanchet-Cohen (2014) also acknowledges the significant risks associated with involving peer researchers in research in high-conflict settings. As stated in Part 1, the principle of ‘maximising benefits and minimising harm’ provides helpful guidance for planning research projects.

Producing relevant research messages

As outlined in Part 1, participatory research seeks to enable those that are typically subjects of research to actively shape the design and process of knowledge creation on a topic affecting them. A range of studies highlight the benefits of participatory approaches to qualitative data analysis in research addressing sexual violence and/or wider forms of abuse.

Creating opportunities for C&YP to speak with authority and authenticity on issues affecting them or their communities can be a powerful vehicle for promoting their perspectives in broader policy and practice forums.

It is important to recognise that not all participatory dissemination requires young researchers to be involved in communicating research messages and creating impact are critical. One key strength of involving C&YP in research dissemination is the opportunity to garner their support in ensuring outputs are accessible to a wide range of audiences, including C&YP themselves. A range of research projects on sexual violence both participatory and otherwise have involved C&YP in developing accessible outputs to ensure that research messages are relevant to, and understood by, their peers and wider communities. 13 14 These may include short briefings, leaflets, films, animations and websites (Barter et al., 2015; Beckett and Warrington, 2015; Cossar et al., 2013; Hagell, 2013; Warrington et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Participatory research can strengthen dissemination

Several benefits in relation to C&YP’s involvement in disseminating research findings have been documented in the academic grey literature (for a full list of references). Most notably, these relate to C&YP’s role in informing dissemination plans (Blanchet-Cohen, 2014) and delivering these through dissemination events (Brown, 2006) or by co-accessible communication channels. For example, young people involved in data collection shared their findings with a large number of power holders (Cossar et al., 2013; Hagell, 2013; Warrington et al., 2017). This aligns with children’s right to influence decisions affecting them. Data from the SVRI Forum 2017 pre-conference workshop consultation suggest that C&YP’s involvement can lend impact to dissemination (WS). The significance of C&YP delivering research messages themselves is further represented by an adult spokesperson, was thought to increase the authenticity of research messages (WS). Blanchet-Cohen argues that drawing on young people’s own experience of living with, or affected by, sexual violence can feel that they are making a positive difference by speaking out on behalf of themselves and others affected about the injustice they face (Bonvini and Díazley, 2014; Cody, 2017; Hagell, 2013). In a similar vein, one workshop participant at the SVRI 2017 Forum who identified as a survivor of child sexual abuse described the act of ‘speaking out’ and ‘joining forces’ with other ‘survivors’ to challenge sexual violence as a ‘healing experience’ (WS).

Though bringing together vulnerable groups can entail a range of challenges, meeting others with similar experiences can foster peer support and a sense of solidarity (Matthew and Baron, 2015). Participatory action research undertaken by Graça, Gonçalves and Martins (2017) with adult street-based sex workers in Coimbra, Portugal, illustrates that continued participatory action research can enhance solidarity in stigmatised groups that otherwise have little cohesion. Cossar et al. (2014) further argue that involving a collective of young researchers can also allow for a range of activities that instil a sense of belonging and community among participants which can form a platform for collective political action. This in turn relates to a growing evidence base about trauma-informed responses to sexual violence, highlighting the importance of ‘connection with others’ and ‘peer support’ (see Hickle, 2016). This resonates with the literature indicating that C&YP’s involvement in campaigning and advocacy relating to sexual violence is therefore a powerful vehicle for promoting their perspectives in broader policy, self-confidence, self-worth and can foster a sense of connectedness (Batesler, 2011; Brown, 2006; Hagell, 2013; Houghton, 2015; Levy, 2012; Martin, 2013; Oliver et al., 2006).

Several authors also note that involvement in participatory action research with C&YP can help ensure that young researchers acquire important research methods and skills, and to develop a positive self-identity and sense of purpose (Cossar et al., 2014; Dentith, Measor and O’Malley, 2009; Ngutuuko and Okwany, 2017). Drawing on an example from a project investigating the issue of peer support in relation to adolescent sexuality and reproductive health in Ethiopia and Uganda, Ngutuuko and Okwany (2017) noted that the young researchers reported a sense of pride in gaining respect and praise from peers, teachers, parents and the community, which boosted their self-confidence. Establishing a new strength-based or ‘professional’ identity (as a researcher or advocate) that is not primarily defined by deficit or victimhood can be valuable when young participants are trying to move away from situations of violence and abuse and into continued education or formal employment (Brown, 2006; Houghton, 2015).

2.2.4 Participatory research can challenge sexual violence

Transformative action and a commitment to social justice are at the heart of participatory research, and as such, participatory research projects can be a vehicle for social change. Specifically, there is evidence that participatory research can play a part in challenging policies and attitudes which allow sexual violence to flourish.

As mentioned in Part 1, sexual violence is ‘stigmatised’ and shrouded in cultures of silence (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). Pearce (2018) argues that there is a relationship between society not openly discussing the issue and children feeling that they, in turn, cannot either (Ibid., p. 24).
2.3 Barriers preventing initiation of participatory research

There is evidence of significant barriers which prevent the planning or initiation of participatory research on sexual violence with C&YP. These have three major themes: C&YP’s vulnerabilities, the research competencies of adults and professionals, and the research competencies of C&YP.

2.3.1 C&YP’s vulnerabilities

The ethical and legal considerations of involving children in research “...become even more complex when children are involved. This may explain why the scope of review identified very few research initiatives that engaged children under the age of 14, and fewer still that adult-led or collaborative approaches were employed. It is suggested that older children and young adults may be better equipped than younger children to undertake research activities on sexual violence because of their educational level, research-related skills, understanding of the research topic and their maturity to address sensitive issues (Ints. 1, 2, 3 & 6). At the same time, there are examples of younger children being successfully involved in participatory research addressing different social issues by using creative methods including photography, mapping and interviewing (Carroll and Sixsmith, 2016; Eckhoff, 2017; Levy and Thompson, 2015; Palaeologou, 2017).

According to Embleton et al. (2015) additional considerations also apply to involving C&YP in sexual violence research in LMIC, which may require...”

2.3.2 Barriers preventing initiation of participatory research

It is based on a recognition that there is likely to be a range of additional factors and vulnerabilities to be taken into account that may affect C&YP’s participation in research, including their ability to give and withdraw consent. Re-traumatisation, secondary and vicarious trauma...”

It is crucial to acknowledge the potential for re-traumatisation when involving C&YP affected by sexual violence in participatory research on this topic. Addressing sensitive and abuse-related information can trigger bad memories and prompt individuals to relive traumatic experiences. Participatory research on sexual violence therefore needs to carefully consider if and how exposure to such stories is ever acceptable for C&YP. An additional consideration of sexual violence research involving vulnerable individuals is the potential for “secondary trauma” and “vicarious trauma.” Both are increasingly recognised as an occupational challenge for professionals who work on trauma-related subjects or with trauma-affected populations (Molnar et al., 2017).

Researching sexual violence in any context is a highly emotional experience and difficult task (Colles et al., 2014), involving repeated exposure to painful experiences of abuse and humiliation (Campbell, 2002; Dickson-Swift, James, & Limpertott, 2008). There is, therefore, an inherent tension in sexual violence research between the need to retain a high level of emotional involvement, sensitivity and empathy towards respondents and participants, whilst at the same time keeping a degree of psychological and emotional distance to work off the negative effects of secondary traumatisation. By way of example, Campbell (2002) argues that, more than in most other research contexts, sexual violence research requires a high degree of empathy and identification with research subjects and repeated exposure to stories of violence. She notes that...”

2.3.3 C&YP’s competencies

This occurs both for those directly involved, inviting young researchers and respondents to participate in research on sexual violence involving C&YP. The ethical and legal considerations of involving children in research “...become even more complex when children are involved. This may explain why the scope of review identified very few research initiatives that engaged children under the age of 14, and fewer still that adult-led or collaborative approaches were employed. It is suggested that older children and young adults may be better equipped than younger children to undertake research activities on sexual violence because of their educational level, research-related skills, understanding of the research topic and their maturity to address sensitive issues (Ints. 1, 2, 3 & 6). At the same time, there are examples of younger children being successfully involved in participatory research addressing different social issues by using creative methods including photography, mapping and interviewing (Carroll and Sixsmith, 2016; Eckhoff, 2017; Levy and Thompson, 2015; Palaeologou, 2017).

According to Embleton et al. (2015) additional considerations also apply to involving C&YP in sexual violence research in LMIC, which may require...”

Resource implications

Even when professionals are willing to engage vulnerable C&YP in participatory research, the process can be challenging and is often resource-intensive (Åkerström and Brunnberg, 2013; Cody, 2017; Coser et al., 2014). In a collaborative research project involving street-involved youth by Coser et al. (2014), for instance, the involvement of researchers devoted a great deal of time to supporting young researchers to overcome personal barriers to their involvement in research activities, some of which related to childhood trauma, homelessness, poverty, addiction, parenting responsibilities, mental and physical health issues, and unhealthy relationships. The provisions made to accommodate and support young researchers affected the project’s timelines and budget (Ibid.). The example highlights the incredible amount of time and resources an ethical and participatory research will always require additional resources to ensure that C&YP’s wider related needs can be properly met. Putting in place resources to meet those needs is an integral part of risk management strategies and it is important for funders and those involved in research design to understand this...”

2.3.4 (Adult) professional research competencies

Given the limited number of relevant research initiatives reviewed, the evidence suggests that there are few individuals with experience of using child-led or participatory approaches to sexual violence research. The scope review identified concerns over the capacity of professional researchers to involve vulnerable C&YP in this field. ‘Competencies’ here broadly refer to skills and knowledge required to undertake research with vulnerable C&YP on highly sensitive issues. The available academic and grey literature by large represents high levels of expertise in this area, but some of the workshop discussions, in contrast, cast a lack of experience and knowledge across the wider academic research community about how to engage vulnerable C&YP safely in sexual violence research. Specific concerns related to: 1) navigating ethical issues; 2) managing the risks associated with sexual violence research; and 3) ways of working with C&YP in a research context more generally, using participatory, age-appropriate and creative methods (WVS). Due to limited capacity, specialist expertise and confidence, some delegates argued that professional researchers may shy away from considering participatory approaches...

2.3.5 C&YP’s competencies

The scope review also identified concerns over C&YP’s competencies in relation to participatory research. ‘C&YP’s competencies’ refers to the ability to perform research and project-related tasks and, more generally, to speak with authority about issues affecting them. Some authors raised specific concerns over C&YP’s ability to undertake research on sexual violence. Ngutu and Okwany (2017), for instance, report that project staff may be concerned about C&YP’s research’s language and communication skills, and have doubts regarding their willingness to talk openly about the topic of sexuality with their peers. In a similar vein, it is worth noting that participatory research does not always require C&YP to speak directly to their peers about sexuality or sexual violence and that participatory research will always require additional resources to ensure that C&YP’s wider related needs can be properly met. Putting in place resources to meet those needs is an integral part of risk management strategies and it is important for funders and those involved in research design to understand this...”
2.4 Obtaining ethical approval

Ethics committees fulfill a vital role in promoting stringent ethical standards in research and seek to ensure that risk and harm to participants, researchers, and vulnerable communities involved in the research are minimised (Block et al., 2013; ESRC, 2017). 

Unsurprisingly, ethics applications tend to rise in complexity in accordance with the degree of sensitivity of the proposed research, the perceived risks emanating from the proposed methodologies, and the levels of vulnerability of those the research seeks to involve. This is revealed that concerns over ethics applications not holding up to the scrutiny of research ethics committees can act as a major deterrent to using, or considering, child/youth participatory approaches in sexual violence research (WG).24

The typical nature of many processes involved in participatory research with C&YP may mean research committees are ill-equipped to advise or assess such applications. In addition, relevant expertise and ethics infrastructure, including processes for applying scrutiny and offering feedback on the ethical implementation of research, may not be readily available in some places. Ethical standards and requirements for conducting research vary widely across the globe and some authors note the need to develop stronger awareness of the importance of considering ethical issues and in ensuring proper research governance in LMICs (Regmi et al., 2016).

Research consortia can potentially strengthen ethical research

Recruiting children from resource-poor settings as research subjects for “foreign sponsored” studies has come under scrutiny (Roth, 2000). Such research is riddled with ethical challenges and issues (Teck Chun and Schafer, n.d.). However, partners often rely on research partners from LMIC for their local expertise, including language skills, knowledge of local customs, understanding of “how things work” and their ability to identify and access suitable research subjects and to engage key local stakeholders.

However if managed correctly these research consortia between researchers from HIC and LMIC can be ethical and build capacity, if these relationships are based on mutual respect, equity, and trust. This includes researchers from LMIC must have the ability to analyse and publish the data gathered. Wherever possible, ethics approval for research being undertaken must be sought from a local ethics board as well as the ethics board of the institution based in the HIC. Similarly, collaborations between organisations that have specialist expertise in facilitating participatory research with vulnerable C&YP in the field of sexual violence and those who are still developing expertise in this area may constitute a promising vehicle for cascading relevant knowhow and building capacity across the sector.

23 Three key informants, two of them young people, concurred that adopting an ethical approach to participatory research could dissolve researchers from adopting participatory approaches (Ints. 4, 9, 10). To young key informants it was important to ensure that informed consent was freely given and that access to C&YP was not affected by being included in the research.

24 For instance, potential barriers could emanate from domestic or intimate partner violence (abusive/partner family members exerting pressure on the potential participant to participate in the research or being restricted by the need to provide sufficient time/funds to participate in research), homelessness (participant not part of family-based research), substance abuse or mental health issues.

Challenges related to stigma

As mentioned in Part 1, sexual violence is commonly associated with high levels of stigma, albeit in different ways in different contexts (Know Violence in Childhood, 2007; Pain, 1991; Saevyc et al., 2008). In many societies, sexual violence is a taboo topic that is not openly talked about (Aronson Fontes and Plummer, 2015; Aveyssan, 2018; Cody, 2017). Talking about this very personal issue to anyone, let alone a stranger, can provoke feelings of shame, embarrassment and fear (Babylaw Okoi, 2015).

Data from the workshop consultation indicate that stigma is a barrier to recruitment and engagement, causing C&YP to feel reluctant about getting involved or being associated with this topic (WS).

Barriers to C&YP’s involvement can also emanate from external sources: three key informants reported that C&YP commonly faced opposition arising from decisions made from family, peers or the wider community in relation to their participation in projects focusing on sexual violence (Ints. 1, 6 & 8). One key informant argued that there may be fears amongst the family or wider community regarding potential disclosures and social pressures to protect the identity of an abuser.

“...in some cases, the child might still be living with the abuser[s]...participation can trigger fears that the child might tell” (Int. 1).

Consideration about how projects are described, both internally to stakeholders and externally to wider audiences, may be one means (Coser et al., 2014; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Matthews and Barron, 2016). Researchers may feel put off by complex recruitment processes and have concerns over potentially high drop-out rates and logistical challenges (Busza, 2004; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017).

Logistical challenges

The highly transient lives of some marginalised groups, such as street-connected C&YP or those affected by street-based forms of CSE, and the specific vulnerabilities arising from these may constitute logistical barriers23 to their involvement in participatory research. Similarly, issues of representation (Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017; Matthews and Barron, 2016). Researchers may feel put off by complex recruitment processes and have concerns over potentially high drop-out rates and logistical challenges (Busza, 2004; Graça, Gonçalves and Martins, 2017).

Brown (2006) notes that common personal difficulties amongst vulnerable C&YP include stress or anxiety, depression, or fatigue, which may be compounded by situational difficulties, such as travel restrictions, child care obligations or partners or other family members exerting control over them. Managing the logistical and practical challenges associated with these often-complex situations has significant time and resource implications which is addressed in turn below.

26 BEING HEARD: ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE AT SVRI FORUM TOOLKIT
...taking it as an excuse not to involve C&YP" (int. 9).

Evidence from UK-based research suggests that an overly risk-averse stance can replicate power differentials that exist in services targeted at vulnerable C&YP (Warrington, 2016). The young key informant stated that making unilateral, 'professional' decisions to exclude a vulnerable child or young person...can undermine their agency and be in itself, experienced by some C&YP as disempowering and re-traumatising" (int. 9).

Accessing marginalised groups

The scoping review listed several strategies that have been successfully used in participatory research to access marginalised groups of C&YP:

- Snowballing: word of mouth;
- Respondent-driven sampling: C&YP recruiting their peers (see WHO and UNAIDS, 2013);
- Facility-based outreach (e.g. visiting shelters or community centre);
- Outreach via local partners and/or service providers;
- Outreach via schools (local partners facilitating access); and
- Advertisement via parenting networks and public spaces (e.g. faith-based institutions, recreation or shopping centres).

24.4 Gaining and maintaining consent

Challenges relating to consent

As with all research involving C&YP, participatory research raises issues concerning informed consent. How to obtain informed consent, whether consent can be truly informed, and how to account for influences or constraints that compromise children’s ability to freely opt in or out of research, are pertinent questions for researchers. (Cocks, 2006; Jupp-Kraica, 2015; Houghton, 2015; WSIS). They highlight the role of C&YP arising from unequal power dynamics in research and expose the significant role of consent in situations where vulnerable individuals may not have sufficient relevant information, understanding or capacity to make a free and informed choice. Attempts to capture marginalised perspectives such as those of younger children, street-based youth, C&YP with learning disabilities or those with low literacy levels provide additional challenges and mean that reliance on written information sheets and consent forms may not always be appropriate. Reflecting on ethical dilemmas in doing research with younger children and street-connected youth (SRSC, 2013) notes that the formality of a consent form can in some circumstances be off-putting. The children who were invited to participate in this study were given a one-page form seeking permission from their parents or guardians, some children chose to give consent verbally and some refused to take the form out of fears of being reprimanded or prevented from vending on the streets (ibid., p. 549).

Due to common perceptions regarding their limited capacity to give informed consent, younger children as well as children with communication difficulties or learning disabilities are frequently excluded from research rather than assessed on an individual basis (Dutton et al., 2016; p. 590). Although issues of consent tend to be more complicated in such contexts, researchers should not assume that children are necessarily incapable of providing consent because of their age or lack of verbal communication skills (ESRC, 2017).

Strategies for obtaining informed and engaged consent

There is broad agreement that consent should be a fully informed, continuous and active process. Age-appropriate, arts-based, creative and interactive methods, for example using ‘consent games’, drawing, or video or audio tools can be useful in obtaining and maintaining informed consent (Cocks, 2006; Houghton, 2015; Jupp-Kraica, 2015; Warrington et al., 2017).

Obtaining consent using a rights game

In a participatory research project exploring participatory practice in vulnerable C&YP contexts in São Paulo, Brazil, the lead researcher developed a ‘rights game’ to explain her research and their rights as participants to the young people, and to stimulate dialogue between the researchers and the children engaged and entertained through physical activity. Such processes support children to think critically, reflect with others and challenge adults. The use of physical activity also ensures that the children are fully engaged and motivated. Such processes can help researchers feel confident that consent is fully obtained. This study provides good evidence that participatory research can engage children in the research process. Consent workshops can be a meaningful tool for gaining consent from participants/respondents with low or no literacy who may not be able to meaningfully give consent based on written information.

As noted, consent is an ongoing process and it is important to build in multiple opportunities and ways for C&YP to opt out at any stage of the research process (Beckett et al., 2013). Participants should be reminded of their right to withdraw consent at any stage of the research process (and if relevant) to have an option to have all, or part of, any personal data they have provided removed from transcripts and interview notes.

Maintaining consent may entail checking in with young researchers and respondents at regular intervals in a friendly and supportive manner to make sure that they are still happy with their level of involvement and contribution to the research (Beckett, 2010). It can be conducted through face-to-face conversations, regular telephone calls, emails, WhatsApp or text messages or other forms of communication.

24.5 Confidentiality and disclosures

Data protection and managing confidentiality emerged as significant challenges in the evidence reviewed, arising at various stages of the research process. Significant reference is
made here to managing confidentiality in group and participatory analysis settings and managing disclosures.

Confidentiality in group settings Challenges relating to confidentiality can arise from group-based processes, which often form a central part of participatory research. These need to be carefully planned and managed as confidentiality can never be guaranteed by professional researchers in these contexts (Warrington et al., 2017). For example, C&YP need support to make truly informed decisions about what they will share in the presence of others, especially if these are peers. Encouraging C&YP to share personal data may not always be appropriate in group-based settings and may increase individuals’ sense of vulnerability and stigma (Ibid.).

Confidentiality in data analysis One key informant suggested that there are complexities arising from the practice of generating data in shared physical space (Int. 10). In research where young researchers produce their own data, maintaining their personal experiences may be unethical to engage the same C&YP in the analysis of this data, as this practice may render data anonymity ineffective (Ibid.). In addition, the key informant stated that in many practice-based participatory research projects, young researchers and respondents tend to know each other well as they are commonly drawn from the same peer group. This can make it very easy for young researchers to identify each other’s data, with the implication that anonymity may be compromised almost by default (Ibid.).

Managing child protection issues including disclosures Child protection is not merely an ethical or moral issue but a legal requirement. A central issue when involving children in research (participatory or otherwise) is to ensure that child protection obligations, including those arising from potential disclosures, are met (Graham et al., 2013; ESRC, 2017; The Research Ethics Guidelines). Because ethical considerations around working with children equally apply to vulnerable people over the age of 18, they are not formalised in the same way through legal requirements. The responsibilities of meeting the ethical and legal obligations of child protection must lie with the professionals who are facilitating or supporting the research initiative, even if research initiatives are child/youth-led. The onus must not be, inadvertently or otherwise, on C&YP to handle potential child protection concerns resulting from potential disclosures, nor should they feel required to support others through, or to prevent experiences of, sexual violence (Hellevik et al., 2015). In practice, this means that adequate support structures, mentoring, child protection protocols, and referral processes need to be in place to safeguard the well-being of young researchers and respondents, and to ensure that child protection concerns are handled in a timely and appropriate manner (SANLAAAP, 2010).

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When delegating child protection obligations to project partners in different countries, careful consideration should be given to how the fulfilment of ethical and legal obligations can be ensured and monitored. This was highlighted as a complex challenge in collaborative research projects between partners in HIC and LMIC by most key informants (Ints. 2, 3, 6, 7 & 8). This discussion highlights the changing landscape of participatory research processes including disclosures of sexual violence in contexts where referral mechanisms work poorly, and adequate service provisions are not available (Devries et al., 2015). Although not drawing on participatory research, learning from Devries et al.’s ‘Good Schools Study’ in Uganda provides relevant learning.

Meeting legal and ethical obligations in the context of undertaking research on SV in LMIC As part of the ‘Good Schools Study’ in Uganda, a large-scale survey was conducted. More than 3,700 primary school children were asked about their experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional violence from a range of different perpetrators. The researchers encountered significant challenges in relation to disclosures of abuse occurring during the survey. To respond to children’s disclosures, referral procedures had been developed in conjunction with local services. The implementation of these procedures was straightforward, but the research team also encountered major challenges in relation to the response of local services to children’s disclosures of violence. In some instances, the respondents were intervenors to ensure that children received appropriate support and that ethical obligations were met.

The authors conclude that, in resource-poor settings, finding local services that can provide appropriate support for children can be challenging. Furthermore, this need to have confidence in local services that legal and ethical obligations can be met. In view of the challenges described, the merits of mandatory reporting of sexual violence in children and young people who are considered on a case-by-case basis, as in some places, this has the potential to do harm. Research teams should agree on appropriate levels of ancillary care, and budget accordingly. There is also a need to identify further practical examples of how these challenges can be addressed, to share learning and promote best practices (Devries et al., 2016).

Establishing effective referral mechanisms In any sexual violence research initiative involving vulnerable C&YP (in HIV, AIDS), having clear and adequate infrastructure to provide services is crucial. Two key informants cited a research project involving young people aged 18-24 in an emergency setting and reported that a referral pathway had been established for young researchers and respondents to address potential cases of secondary/victimised traumatisation, based on existing community networks set up by UNHCR (Ints. 2 & 3). To reduce the burden of responsibility of handing child protection concerns on young researchers, key informants highlighted the need to establish clear protocols whereby any disclosure arising in the context of a project is mandatorily reported to a designated adult professional who will ensure that the child is handled according to protocol (Int. 2). The process of handing over responsibility should be made as easy as possible for young researchers. For instance, one key

26 Photovoice promotes the use of photography to create opportunities for people living with HIV to tell their own story. It can be used in participatory projects to build the skills and capacity of underrepresented communities, create opportunities for authentic communication. For more information, visit the Photovoice website: photovoice.org

28 Barlow and Hurlock (2013) recount that participant-researchers involved in participatory research processes, facilitating the study, too, should share their personal stories through photographs. This constituted a departure from one-directional inquiry that allows researchers to ask questions, to observe, and to shed behind a professional facade, leaving respondents comparatively exposed. The call for self-disclosure required the professional researchers to become an active part of the process, rather than merely facilitating the research (Ibid.). It marked a shift in researcher and re-defined who was in control of the research process.

Setting safe parameters for involvement Involving C&YP in participatory ways in the development of group work arrangements and establishing the rules and parameters of their engagement can be a useful strategy to mitigate against some of the challenges associated with group work. Such approaches draw heavily on traditions in youth and community work and offer the development of shared working agreements or contracts which all participants sign up to (professional and otherwise) (Factor, Chauhan and Pitts, 2001). Similarly undertaking risk assessment exercises collectively provides opportunities to draw on multiple perspectives and use group problem solving to develop risk management strategies (Warrington forthcoming).

2.4.7 Data collection and analysis The scoping review identified several challenges in data collection and analysis that are linked to the specific complexities of involving vulnerable groups in participatory research processes. These were based on C&YP’s lack of research competencies and C&YP’s confidence and skills in relation to data collection and analysis.

With reference to data collection, Fleming (2011) reports that based on her experience of working with young researchers on a variety of research projects, young researchers do not always probe and get the level of depth an adult researcher might seek. Similarly, two key informants noted that younger and less experienced the young researcher, the longer it took them to reach a point at which asking probing questions came naturally (Ints. 2 & 8).

With reference to data analysis, there is evidence to suggest that young researchers may require support and guidance, participant-researchers may feel overwhelmed at the prospect of independently managing and synthesising large data sets, establishing consistent coding mechanisms, developing rigorous strategies to interpret the data consistently across different data sets, and deriving meaning from the information collected (Challenging Heights, 2013).
research project with young fathers, the close bonds between peer researchers led to a reduction in time spent on direct conversations with children and youth. This relationship was characterized by trust and rapport, enabling open and honest communication. The research team worked closely with the participants, fostering a supportive and safe environment for sharing information.

Challenges related to reflexivity

Concerns over C&YP’s ability to exercise ‘researcher neutrality’, in part due to the issue discussed above, emerged as a recurring theme in the evidence reviewed. Four key informants noted that there was a tendency to distance themselves from other participants’ and/or respondents’ views, at times concurring with ‘false’ beliefs during interviews and reinforcing misconceptions about sexual and reproductive health issues (Ints. 3, 5, 6 & 8). Brief and McDonald (2013) report that, in their study involving young fathers, peer researchers felt inclined to give respondents personal advice to ‘overcome their problems’. This inclination may have been due to the issue discussed above, emerging as a need to address sensitive topics in a supportive way.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that poor knowledge of sexual violence – in part resulting from the issues described above – can affect C&YP’s involvement in participatory research.

Data collection

Five key informants reported that the normalisation of sexual violence can lead to a de-sensitisation to the issue, which can potentially compromise a researcher’s ability to engage with vulnerable respondents (Ints. 1 & 6). Four key informants believed that the normalisation was directly linked to C&YP’s own experiences of abuse (Ints. 1, 2, 3 & 6). Reflecting on involving young people as researchers to explore wider protection issues in emergency settings, one key informant recounted:

“So young researchers have been through tough experiences and are very direct – almost shouting at respondents, or asking very direct questions about violence in some forceful ways... The adult research team left it to eight months until the young researchers were ready to ask questions about gender-based violence in a sensitive way. It was an ongoing process with feedback and supervision by research staff.”

Challenges arising from poor understanding of sexual violence

The challenges in relation to reflexivity are in part conditioned by the high levels of stigma attached to sexual violence. Given that sexuality is a taboo topic in many societies (Avetisyan, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2008), gaining the involvement of young people as researchers can be particularly fraught in some settings, including refugee or internally displaced persons camps (Liebing-Kaffari et al., 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2008). As one key informant noted:“...when basic needs [of water, food and shelter] are not being met, sexual violence may be the least of their [children’s] problems” (Int. 1).

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that poor knowledge of sexual violence – in part resulting from the issues described above – can affect C&YP’s involvement in participatory research.

Data analysis and implications for dissemination

Limited understanding of the topic, due partly to the reasons described above, may undermine the identification of references to sexual violence in the evidence gathered. Important information may be lost or not considered as ‘sexual violence’. In addition, poor understanding of the research topic may also inform unhelpful or harmful messages that can potentially be disseminated, formally or informally, to a wider audience, as the following participatory research project exploring reproductive health issues in Ghana demonstrates.

Challenges arising from misconceptions around sex

During a child-led study on reproductive health issues in Ghana, limited knowledge of the research topic (teenage pregnancy) at times made it difficult for some young researchers to distinguish between ‘opinions’ and ‘facts’ in respondents’ responses. Some of the data emerging from peer interviews were not critically reviewed, but rather taken as ‘true’ (e.g., ‘condition is real’). The lack of critical engagement with the evidence produced research findings that were problematic. This had serious implications for dissemination. During a school event, the young researchers presented research messages to their classmates, which included several harmful beliefs about sex. The facilitators were then faced with the challenge of having to ensure that the attendance of the presentation did not leave with misinformation whilst, at the same time, being mindful not to undermine the legitimacy of the research findings. The children had produced. (Challenging Heights, 2013).
While little is written about integrating trauma-informed approaches into research, some evidence was identified of data collection activities that consider the impact of trauma and adapt approaches accordingly. In particular research methods which rely on practical or physical tasks, such as mapping, drawing or other creative research tools, were noted to reduce the emotional intensity of involvement in research (Warrington et al., 2017). Three key informants highlighted the benefits of using methods that enable C&YP to discuss and reflect on issues without direct reference to personal experience, such as using composite case images. Images or vignettes are also commonly used in participatory research to give participants a chance to distance themselves from the data (Ibids. 3, 2 & 6).33 Distancing or ‘projective’ techniques that encourage C&YP to talk about a hypothetical person rather than themselves were highlighted as helpful in structuring research activities in a way that enables young researchers to maintain some emotional distance (Ibids.).

The academic and grey literature also note the importance of taking practical steps to guard the emotional well-being of researchers and participants during the research processes in efforts to ward off re-traumatisation and secondary/vicarious trauma. This can include providing a safe environment to which participants (young researchers and respondents) can retreat at any stage of the research process, by having a separate room allocated for this purpose, and giving them a choice not to participate in activities or to pull out of the process at any stage (Busua, 2004; UNHCR, 2005; Plan, 2009; SANLAAP, 2010). It is also important to consider that C&YP’s choices in relation to giving or withdrawing consent may be constrained, particularly in resource-poor settings, and should be given to how to redress such dynamics (Graham, et al., 2013).

Mentoring, regular de-briefs and supervision can also help young researchers to offload and be a safe space for reflection. Wherever possible, professional counselling should be available.

Recognising and building C&YP’s competencies

Bradbury-Jones (2014) argues that to address perceived competency barriers in relation to C&YP it is important to start by assuming that C&YP are competent to form their own views, inherently capable, and able to learn the necessary skills to engage in participatory research.32 This requires a shift from a deficit towards a strengths-based model. All but one key informant argued that C&YP’s competencies tend to be underestimated and, with training and support, young researchers can often exceed and exceed expectations (Ibids. 1-8 & 10). Participatory research processes should be supported by skilled facilitators who can provide guidance in accordance with the levels of skills, knowledge and previous research experience of the C&YP involved. Some young people have stressed that it is important that they “…adults don’t lead but empower us” (young person cited in Houghton, 2015).

Similarly, all three young key informants in this study said they wanted professional researchers to provide them with ‘tools’ and advice, and as when required (Ibds. 4, 5 & 9).34 Providing timely and tailored guidance can promote independence, foster competencies and instil confidence in C&YP to initiate and undertake their own research projects. In the words of one key informant:

“…help us learn how to do it by ourselves” (Int. 3r)

McLean and Modi (2016) suggest that mentoring can be a useful tool in this context. The young researchers involved in their study were mentored throughout the participatory research process, which also included elements of self-monitoring, where C&YP reflected on and assessed their own capacities, such as organisational, problem-solving, social and research skills, at regular intervals. Similarly, Addy (2015) employed peer-to-peer teaching sessions during which peers taught each other how to use some of the research tools, as part of a youth-led study investigating urban crime and youth employment in slum areas in Kampala, Uganda. These opportunities to share strategies to promote young researchers’ self-efficacy.

Giving C&YP ample opportunities to rehearse research skills, for example by undertaking practice surveys and interviews, and providing ongoing support and constructive feedback, was also highlighted as crucial by all key informants (Ints. 1-10). In addition to group training, Coser et al. (2014) suggest that facilitators may need to provide one-to-one learning support to some young researchers.

One relevant initiative identified through the call for evidence used a training programme to engage C&YP in research as studies in on gender-based violence. The training followed this format:

Ask: the topic of the session is introduced to young researchers by asking them what they know and think about this topic.

Explain: simple language and visual examples are used to explain the topic.

Activity: this can take many forms from role-playing games to small tasks in pairs or groups. These activities keep young people engaged and provide opportunities to practice interviewing skills.

Reflect: The group comes together and reflects on key messages from the session. Participants can ask any questions or for clarifications. (Girl Effect, 2017b)

The training manual also outlines several key principles that can help to keep C&YP engaged as described below.

Key principles of keeping children and young people engaged

Young people-led: give young researchers the opportunity to give their input and voice their opinions before teaching them the research methods and technical skills.

High energy: keep the training fun and interactive. The idea is that young researchers will learn more if they are doing as much as possible rather than sitting and listening for long periods of time.

Interactive: encourage young researchers to learn by experience through role-playing and exercise. The aim is for them to learn by making mistakes and reflecting on this.

Confidence building: the training should give young researchers opportunities to grow in confidence and receive positive feedback. Making mistakes is the best way to learn.

Simple: everything should be explained as simply as possible. Academic concepts and theories should be simplified, and jargon should be avoided. (Girl Effect, 2017b)

Adapting the research design to suit the C&YP involved

Research design and processes may need to be adapted and tailored to reflect the availability of time and resources; furthermore, they should suit the requirements and interests of the C&YP involved. This may involve simplifying complex processes. In addition, there is value in focusing on areas in which C&YP’s views have the most benefit the research and to tailor the research design accordingly (SANLAAP, 2010).

Several papers focusing on child/youth participatory research discuss modifying research methods for data collection to accommodate low literacy levels (Addy, 2015; Block et al., 2013; Holland et al., 2010). Three key informants highlighted the benefits of using or undertaking activities verbally or using drawings (Ibids.).

Learning from involving C&YP in qualitative data analysis processes shows that even those who are not necessarily communication literate, the methods employed in this study considered C&YP’s preferred modes of communication and, for instance, recognised that the C&YP involved were not interested in reading through all the transcripts. Instead, adult researchers shared the content of such transcripts with C&YP through informal conversations. Grouping data thematically before sharing it with young researchers and facilitating data coding verbally using flip charts can also help to make data analysis more accessible to C&YP (Lushey and Munro, 2015).

2.4.8 Dissemination and impact

Several key issues emerged from the reviewed evidence in relation to dissemination of research findings from participatory research. These include challenges related to communicating sensitive data on sexual violence and wider questions regarding the impact and legacy of C&YP’s involvement in participatory research.

Challenges in communicating sensitive findings

Disseminating outputs from participatory research initiatives can be a difficult balancing act, not least because the messages C&YP produce may challenge existing norms and power structures. Sharing sensitive findings back to communities and policymakers can evoke uncomfortable feelings and put C&YP involved in dissemination activities at risk. There may also be a disconnect between young researchers’ findings and adults’ perceptions of C&YP’s involvement (McLean and Modi, 2016; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017) and the act of raising awareness on sexual violence by C&YP can, in some cases, be met with disbelief and resistance by both peers and adults (Bovanick with D’Arcy, 2016).

Taylor and Percy-Smith (2008) highlight the inherent paradox that can arise from child/youth participatory practice, suggesting that even when encouraged to articulate their views, C&YP often experience a lack of validation and their influence is constrained by adult values and priorities.

Drawing on participatory research using Photovoice where exploring problems or challenges and sharing their feelings and put C&YP involved in dissemination activities at risk. There may also be a disconnect between young researchers’ findings and adults’ perceptions of C&YP’s involvement (McLean and Modi, 2016; Ngutuku and Okwany, 2017) and the act of raising awareness on sexual violence by C&YP can, in some cases, be met with disbelief and resistance by both peers and adults (Bovanick with D’Arcy, 2016).

In the words of one young researcher, “We had a dissemination event for a research project using Photovoice where children put up pictures. Some pictures were taken away because they were not [considered] appropriate for the facilities. [They were] about issues of rape by the police, domestic girl workers acting as sex objects. The pictures would show a home, or a public place in town that could be identified and [we] were told to put them [the pictures away].” (Int. 9)

Several papers discussing for sharing highly sensitive and political research messages should consider issues of legality, ethics and vulnerability. In one study findings from research into rape of sex workers by police in South Africa were communicated in ways that respected sex workers’ stories but left the door open to work with police on improving the situation (Sonke Gender Justice and SWEAT, 2017). It is also vital to ensure that confidentiality is not breached, deliberately or accidentally, during dissemination events (Ibids. 6 & 8). One key informant reported an incident during which a group of young researchers disclosed the identities of perpetrators and victims during a presentation that sought to
draw attention to problems of SVAC perpetrated by individuals... the police – causes a lot of challenges. [Children] talk about things that people in government and the police do not want to hear... Children do not speak necessarily as a trained researcher who is well grounded in research ethics, they are basically telling their story – very straightforward –, for example: ‘a policeman from this station in Kampala raped me’ – it’s very sensitive.” (Int. 8).

It is important for those undertaking sexual violence research to acknowledge that communicating sensitive data can be challenging. Including vulnerable C&YP in such activities can present particular ethical challenges. Young researchers should be supported in carefully thinking through the possible implications of sharing their own or others’ personal stories in group or public settings. At the same time, facilitators should also communicate the importance of confidentiality to listen to C&YP’s experiences and perspectives, and provide safe opportunities to do this, should they choose to share personal information.

Challenges in achieving impact
Related to the previous challenge, the scoping review found that most of the research explored within this scoping review is undertaken in ‘invited spaces’ (Cornwall, 2004, p. 78) where C&YP’s activities take place in existing structures that are typically defined or controlled by researchers. Recognising and acknowledging the limits this places on C&YP’s influence is of key importance to analysing their participatory nature and avoiding overlooked claims of empowering practice.

This raises the overarching question of how to apply, in practice, an ethos of contributing to social justice, which is at the very core of participatory research. More specifically, it identifies a challenge arising from moral obligations towards those involved in participatory research and the wider constituency they represent. According to one key informant:

“...the role of a researcher is different from that of a clinician or counselor and potentially more traumatizing because of an inability to ‘help’ the victim. Researchers identify problems and needs, but may feel unable to provide any assistance that helps survivors cope with their experience of sexual violence” (p. 6).

Dealing with emotions of helplessness whilst feeling the burden of moral obligation towards research participants can be a source of considerable emotional and psychological stress for researchers and render them prone to vicarious traumatisation. Devising a focused research uptake plan that includes an advocacy element aimed at promoting social change can help to transform researchers’ feelings of helplessness. It is useful to plan a key stakeholder analysis at an early stage and to devise a strategy for political engagement, including: awareness/information/education, planning, and implementation in the aftermath of research projects.

Expectation to improve the situation of individual children (young researchers or respondents) as part of the research project.

This is a contentious issue deserving careful consideration, particularly given that some of the C&YP involved in participatory research may hold expectations in terms of what the project is able to achieve in relation to social change or support, either on an individual or collective basis. A study by Gil Effect (2017a), for instance, noted that some respondents believed that research would translate into immediate action and provide relief in their community. Similarly, researchers interviewing children about their experiences of taking part in the ‘Good Schools’ survey in Uganda reported that the expectation to improve the situation of individual children (young researchers or respondents) as part of the research project might be overlooked, misunderstood, or informed by unrealistic expectations in relation to the amount of funding, levels of resources or time allocation available to participatory research.

There are number of available resources providing guidance on engaging vulnerable C&YP in digital interviewing (e.g. Wellcome, 2017; Tavassoli et al. 2014) and preparing young researchers for speaking engagements and dissemination events, through training on communication skills and public speaking, should include strategies for addressing different stakeholders.34 Risk assessing these processes is also crucial and can be undertaken in participatory ways, involving C&YP in anticipating challenges, both personal and those that come from external audiences. It is important that preparation and training recognise potential barriers: for example, young researchers may feel intimidated at the prospect that their question their agency, competencies or entitlement to participate and may experience in this field of work. As Coles et al. (2014) note:

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PART 3: REFLECTIONS FOR RESEARCH PRACTICE

3.1 Ensuring safe engagement of vulnerable C&YP in participatory research

The scoping review has illustrated the pivotal importance of ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of all parties involved in participatory (and non-participatory) sexual violence research. Considerations as to whether it is safe and appropriate to involve vulnerable C&YP in such research are particularly pertinent given the highly sensitive nature of the topic and the significant challenges associated with involving vulnerable groups. Such decisions should not be taken lightly and need to be preceded by comprehensive risk and capacity assessments for those who are to be involved as participant-researchers and respondents and those who plan to facilitate the research and support them.

3.2 Risk and needs assessments

Individualised risk and needs assessments should be carried out for children and young people who will potentially be involved in participatory research on sexual violence. Decisions as to whether their safe and positive involvement is possible should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and should engage the child/young person concerned. Where possible (and commensurate with age and capacity) C&YP should be involved in conversations about the risks associated with their engagement in the research and about whether these can be managed. These conversations should focus on what needs to be in place to enable their safe participation. The primary concern should always be that participatory research does not put the child/young person, or any of the adults involved, at risk of harm, while the potential benefits (and hence risks and negative implications of excluding individuals from such opportunities) should also be taken into consideration.

3.3 Capacity assessments

Conducting capacity assessments of those planning to facilitate participatory research with C&YP people can help to ensure that staff are well equipped to handle ethical concerns, including those relating to child protection, and that initiatives are appropriately planned, designed and resourced. Considering who holds responsibility for supporting C&YP involved in research (both young researchers and respondents), and what resources staff and participants will require, both during and after their involvement, must be a central part of ethical project planning. As part of this, professional researchers may need to acknowledge their personal and professional limitations (for example, due to a lack of their own relevant work experience and collaboration with other services or professionals who can provide relevant forms of support). The boundaries of the role of a professional researcher in a participatory research initiative raise complex questions and are being and making these boundaries transparent is therefore crucial. Participatory processes involving closer, longer-term relationships between professional researchers and C&YP may have real benefits in this context, although there are significant time and resource implications.

3.4 Training and support needs of professional and participant researchers

The challenges discussed in this scoping review highlight the importance of providing adequate levels of support and training for both C&YP and adults involved in participatory research. If this is not considered (Brown 2010), there is a risk of imposing responsibilities on C&YP for which they are insufficiently prepared or lack the necessary skills or confidence to undertake. Equally, if professionals are not adequately equipped themselves, for instance if they lack the relevant skills and knowledge in relation to trauma-informed working practices, or if initiatives are not appropriately funded and resourced, this can render participation tokenistic, or worse, put those involved at risk of harm.

It is important that participatory research is underpinned by specialist training, good leadership, management structures and an organisational commitment to this type of work. Building time for proper supervision and regular debriefs can help to safeguard both adult professionals and participant-researchers against the harmful effects of secondary or vicarious trauma. Reflective practice and shared decision-making can promote an environment in which professionals feel safe to raise concerns and to respond appropriately to emerging issues or risks.

A list of practice resources identified through the scoping review has been included in Appendix H.

3.5 Resource implications

Involving vulnerable C&YP in participatory research has significant resource implications. These must be considered and realistically reflected in funding bids and project planning. Funders must recognise the real and often hidden costs of good participatory research practice. Enabling trauma-informed practice, onward referrals, meeting additional support needs and planning for proper dissemination and sustainability all require additional resources, which should be anticipated at the outset. Helping funders recognise the costs involved with participatory research with C&YP is essential to promoting the development of safe and ethical practice.

3.6 Promoting understanding of sexual violence

Many of the challenges discussed in this report demonstrate the need to foster critical reflection and engagement with the topic of sexual violence and with patriarchal social norms and beliefs (see Dartnell and Gevers, 2017). Due to their ability to promote critical reflection and their potential to build the capacity of those involved, participatory research projects addressing SVAC can contribute to promoting better understanding of sexual violence, both at individual and collective levels. Again, this raises pertinent questions about the level of preparation, the content of training, and the support that is needed to adequately assist adult and young researchers for participatory research in this field.

3.7 Promoting ethical research practice

Ethical research practice needs to be underpinned by high levels of expertise and research infrastructure, including capable ethics committees who can scrutinise and apply sound ethical judgment to participatory research projects. Instead of taking an overly risk-averse or purist approach to reviewing ethics applications, however, it may be helpful if ethics boards offered clear guidelines, advice and support on how to navigate the risks identified in research proposals. This can enhance the creation of ethical spaces for research on sensitive and difficult topics and build the capacity of researchers to involve vulnerable C&YP in safe participatory ways.

The report highlighted three key areas for improvement:

- (i) There is a need to foster critical reflection and understand the implications of those involved, participatory research projects addressing SVAC can contribute to promoting better understanding of sexual violence, both at individual and collective levels.
- (ii) There is a need to foster critical reflection and promote the capacity of those involved, participatory research projects addressing SVAC can contribute to promoting better understanding of sexual violence, both at individual and collective levels.
- (iii) There is a need to foster critical reflection and promote the capacity of those involved, participatory research projects addressing SVAC can contribute to promoting better understanding of sexual violence, both at individual and collective levels.

As noted previously, this work must be underpinned by specialised training, an understanding of trauma-informed work and a critical engagement with patriarchal social norms. This requires prioritising time and space in the process for dialogue, reflection and debate. It also prompts the complex question of how to address gendered social norms that normalise sexualised forms of violence in practice. Although there are some promising initiatives, such as the ‘GV’ project in northern Uganda,39 that use a range of tools to promote critical engagement with gender inequality at the local level and to promote sexual and reproductive health issues in community contexts (Adams, Salazar and Lundgren, 2013; Igras et al., 2014), more needs to be done globally to address patriarchal beliefs and social norms that underpin gendered and sexualised forms of violence.

3.8 Redressing geographic biases

Due to the limitations discussed in Part I, the report did not review the literature emerging from LMIC as much as might have been desirable. The broader literature highlights a gap in knowledge on issues relating to sexual violence against C&YP including prevalence data, from LMIC. This highlights the need to encourage and fund more research activities in these regions to reduce biases towards HIC and establish a more representative picture of sexual violence affecting C&YP globally.

3.9 Validating different types of knowledge and knowledge creation

The scepticism toward participatory research, its scientific rigour, and the validity of evidence resulting from such approaches is well documented (Challenging Heights, 2013; McLean and Mod, 2016; Plan, 2009; van Blerk, Shan and Shanahan, 2017). In the face of this, there is a clear need to confirm the values of participatory approaches, indicating that more research and evaluation activity is needed to rigorously assess and document the impact of participatory research.

At the same time, the report has highlighted the need to accommodate and validate a variety of ways of conducting research in this field and to recognise different types of knowledge and methods of knowledge creation. This also requires acknowledging C&YP's role in this process, to recognise their potential to build the capacity of researchers to involve vulnerable C&YP in safe participatory ways.

3.10 Choosing appropriate levels of participation

A key message emerging from the scoping review is that the desire to promote C&YP’s engagement in research on sexual violence should not override the principle of ethical and meaningful participation. Despite offering some clear benefits, it should not be assumed that participatory research necessarily produces ‘better’ research (Holland et al., 2010, p. 379), nor should it be assumed that participatory research is automatically an ‘empowering’ experience for those involved, particularly if the aims of the research are not linked to advocacy for social change (Donà, 2007).

Different forms and levels of C&YP’s participation in research have validity, if it is for purpose. The focus should therefore be on how C&YP are engaged in the research process rather than on ‘how much’ participation is achieved (Gallagher, 2008; Holland, 2010).
It is argued here that it may be more appropriate to offer differentiated degrees and levels of involvement in various stages of the research, and enact these well, rather than "...trying to enmesh C&YP in all aspects of the research." McCay, 2012, p. 64).

Researchers and funders should critically examine on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate to involve vulnerable C&YP in participatory research, to consider what purpose and whose needs their involvement serves, and whether participation can be enacted ethically and meaningfully in a given context. The following questions, though by no means an exhaustive list, may be helpful for professional researchers when considering adopting participatory approaches in this field of work:

What is the scope in the research process for C&YP to exert influence?

- What are the external and internal structures that define the context in which the research takes place and how do these affect power-sharing arrangements between those involved in the research project, and specifically between adults and C&YP?
- Is the locus of power and responsibility to manage the research transparent to all involved, i.e. does everyone know who holds ultimate responsibility, or how responsibility is shared?
- Are the funders’ responsibilities and levels of input within the process of research?
- To what extent are we, as professional researchers able to, or consider it right to, hand over responsibility to C&YP?

How do participatory approaches add value?

- How will a participatory approach add value to the research process and outcome?
- Does it help to identify research questions of relevance to C&YP and their communities?
- Will it help to answer the research question(s)?
- Which C&YP should or can be involved?
- How can we promote inclusive practice and enable participation of C&YP with different needs and perspectives?
- Whose voices will be missing?

What is the remit of safeguarding responsibilities in the research context?

- Have we put in place robust safeguarding measures and referral pathways?
- How are adult and participant researchers supported to deal with disclosures?
- Given that safeguarding standards vary across the globe, how do we ensure consistency in international projects?
- Is it sufficient to refer safeguarding responsibilities to local partners and if so, how do we monitor that safeguarding obligations are met?
- What are the research expectations with regard to improving outcomes for C&YP who have been victimised? How do we clarify and manage expectations, in terms of what level of support C&YP can expect?

...Is the participatory approach considered appropriate in the context?

- Is it appropriate for researchers and others involved in the research, considering individual characteristics and vulnerabilities?
- Is the approach feasible and appropriate in the context in which the research takes place (e.g. community, policy discourse, academic field)?
- How can we ensure involvement of C&YP in the research is meaningful rather than tokenistic, i.e. how do we ensure we are not involving C&YP to tick the ‘participation box’ or validate our findings?
- Are the approaches considered safe and ethical?

- Does the research adhere to rigorous ethical standards? Are these internationally recognised and comprehensive?
- Do adult and young researchers understand the importance of confidentiality, anonymity and data protection?
- What are the benefits and risks of involving a child or young person in the research and how are these identified and assessed?
- Can we take time to understand the specific situation of the individual child/youth/person, their needs, vulnerabilities and competencies?
- Can any identified risks be mitigated or managed effectively?
- Are we able, where appropriate, to actively involve C&YP in risk and needs assessment processes?
- What are the possible negative implications of excluding C&YP from the research process?
- Will adult and young researchers receive adequate levels of training and support to undertake the research in a way that reduces harm and maximises benefits?
- What level of emotional and practical support might C&YP need before, during and after their involvement in the project and are there resources to support access to this?
- Can we support transition and ensure that participatory research continues after the life of the specific project, supporting and benefitting young researchers beyond their participation in the project?

References:


Feinstein, C. and O’Kane, C. (2008) ‘Children’s and adolescents’ participation in research: meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation. Barnardo’s, Barking. Available at: http://www.bld.org.uk/information/unprotected-overexploited


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APPENDIX A: SEARCH PROTOCOL

APPENDIXES

PARTICIPATION LITERATURE REVIEW: SCOPING DOCUMENT

Title of the project:
‘Being Heard’: Promoting ethical and meaningful participation of children in research on sexual violence

Project outline:
One of the key aims of the ‘Being Heard’ project is to investigate and support ways for young people to be actively involved in research on sexual violence. To this end, we will conduct an international scoping exercise to explore models of engaging children and young people in research on sexual violence. The aim of the scoping review is to investigate participatory research initiatives with children and young people to share good practice and enable more researchers to ethically and meaningfully involve children and young people in studies on sexual violence.

The scoping will explore such issues as:

- Definitions
  - How is ‘participation’ conceptualised in the research, policy and professional literature?
  - How do we define ‘children and young people’? What are the specific issues relating to different age groups, capabilities, experience, etc.?
  - What meanings are given to ‘participation’ in the context of research on sexual violence involving children and young people? Which concepts are agreed, which are contested?
  - How do we operationalise ‘participation’ for research?

- Participation models and techniques
  - What is the range of participative models and techniques deployed in sexual violence research and/or participatory research with children and young people?
  - What do we know to work, or not work, with specific groups and in different contexts?
  - What do we know about the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of these different approaches (e.g. consultations, action research, etc.)?
  - What initiatives exist internationally that engage young people in studies on sexual violence? Have outcomes of such initiatives been evaluated or documented?

- Evidence base
  - What evidence exists regarding the replicability of participative research models?
  - What do we know about the effectiveness of participation work?
  - What are the benefits of engaging young people in studies on sexual violence and what is the supporting evidence base?
  - What evidence exists regarding the conditions that need to be in place to make participative research on sexual violence with different groups of young people possible and effective? Are there examples of good practice?

- Feasibility
  - What needs to be considered when involving young people in research on sexual violence?
  - What are the ethical, logistical or other challenges surrounding young people’s participation in research on sexual violence?
  - How can researchers make good decisions about weighing up the risks versus benefits of involving young people in studies on sexual violence? Which considerations need to inform decisions as to whether participatory models are appropriate?

- Ethics
  - What ethics guidelines exist? What needs to be included in ethical protocols to ensure the safety and well-being of participants during their involvement in a research project?
  - What skills and knowledge do ethics boards need to assess research protocols for ethical compliance?
  - What skills and knowledge do ethics boards need to assess research protocols involving young researchers undertaking research on sexual violence for ethical compliance?

Summary of key questions
1. How is participatory research on sexual violence with children and young people conceived and defined?
2. What is/are the rationale(s) for children and young people’s participation in research about sexual violence?
3. What strategies or approaches have been used to support children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
4. What challenges face researchers undertaking participatory research with children and young people on sexual violence?
5. What are the key ethical, methodological and logistical issues emerging from children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
6. What are the benefits or contributions of participatory research methods in this field?

Which sectors will the scoping cover?
- Sexual violence against children and young people
- Gender-based violence
- Child sexual abuse
- Child abuse, maltreatment and neglect
- Commercial child sexual exploitation
- Child trafficking

Participatory research methodology
- Participatory and community research
- Community development including models and methods of community-led development of services?
- International development?
- Children’s rights/human rights
- Ethics

Marginalised C&YP (non sexual violence specific)
- Street-based youth
- Public health
  - Sexual and reproductive rights
  - Sexual and reproductive health
- Youth justice (overlapping issues relating to ethics e.g. in group work)

What is the geographical remit?
- International
APPENDIX A: SEARCH PROTOCOL (continued)

Range of sources
- Research reviews – specifically those relating to sexual violence/participation of young people in research
- Academic papers – theoretical/evaluative/practice examples
- Evaluations
- NGO/voluntary sector reports/practice examples/evaluations (including grey literature)
- Official reports (including from national governments/statutory agencies and international agencies, organisations and institutions)
- Practice resources see – http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1654-qualitative.html
- Key informants/experts – send out email requests for literature from experts and existing networks (SVRI, ECPAT, ISPCAN etc.).

Other inclusion and exclusion criteria?
Include if:
- post 1989 (based on CA1989 and fact that small amount of key participation literature emerged in the 1990s)
- all countries if material is available in English
- relates to young people under 25 (unless specific to sexual violence/abuse)

Exclude if:
- not focused on ‘marginalised’ children and young people
- not related to the definition/discussion/practice of a participative approach
- doesn’t include any potential for methodological learning

Databases
NB also databases produced as part of International Centre projects to date
1 Social Care Online
2 ASSIA
3 Discover
4 SocINDEX
5 Sage Premier
6 Google scholar
7 British Library EthOS
8 Cochrane Library
9 Campbell Collection
10 PsyARTICLES
11 PsyINFO
12 pubmed
13 Hand searches of organisational websites (websites of NGOs; INGOs; UN agencies; relevant networks; research/academic institutions, Childhub, Participatorymethods, Save the Children, CRIN, SCIE, NSPCC’s Inform)

APPENDIX B: CONCEPT NOTE

Defining participatory research
For the purposes of this review ‘participatory research’ is taken to mean any research in which there is a degree of collaboration between those who are normally solely the ‘subjects’ of research and those undertaking research. For these purposes ‘collaboration’ is defined broadly as including any opportunities to inform the research process which extend beyond solely providing data (e.g. undertaking an interview; completing a survey). This may include informing research questions; sampling; research design; governance; data collection; analysis; reporting and dissemination. Degrees of collaboration (and therefore ‘participatory practice’) will vary along a spectrum from opportunities to consult on some of these issues to research which is fully instigated and led by participant/researchers. A useful model to characterise this spectrum is a three-tier typology of consultative, collaborative and participant-led practice (Landsdown and O’Kane, 2015).

Qualitative research practice which involves interviews, surveys or focus groups but does not enable participants to inform the research process in any way (beyond providing personal data) is NOT classed as participatory research in this project.

While creative research methods, ethnographic research and consultation work are NOT synonymous with participatory research we recognise some clear overlap. In cases where data collection methods enable participants to have a high degree of control and inform the questions asked or how they are asked or take part in ‘sense making’ and analysis (even within an individual interview) this may be considered aligned to participatory research practice (at the consultative end of the spectrum). For the purposes of this project this type of work will also be considered within this review.

To complete the scoping review of participatory research on sexual violence affecting children and young people we start from a shared understanding of the meaning of ‘participatory research’ as follows:

“A range of methodological approaches and techniques, all with the objective of handing power from the researcher to research participants... Participatory research involves inquiry, but also action.” (participatesgs.org, n.d.)

The language of ‘participatory research’, though used variably in different contexts, can be taken to denote some shared principles...
and assumptions. Three key characteristics of participatory research are:

A focus on collaboration among stakeholders: this means a shift in the position of those who have traditionally been the ‘subject’ of research, to take on active roles developing and delivering the research, usually in partnership with researchers or practitioners themselves. As Pain (2004) suggests:

“The cornerstone of Participatory Research is that it involves those conventionally ‘researched’ in some or all stages of research, from problem definition through to dissemination and action.” (p. 652)

A concern with social action: this means that research is concerned with outputs and influence beyond the generation of knowledge or theory to generate tangible benefits and changes for those involved – either as individuals or communities. Social action may include the capacity building inherent in these processes, campaigning work, and/or influencing and changing practice (as in a participatory action research project). As Williams and Brydon-Miller note (2004), participatory action research...

...combines aspects of popular education, community-based research, and action for social change. Emphasizing collaboration within marginalized or oppressed communities, participatory action research works to address the underlying causes of inequality while at the same time focusing on finding solutions to specific community concerns” (p. 245)

Opportunities for research participants to self-represent: the collaborative approach at the heart of participatory research offers research participants – or those whose lives, concerns or communities are being investigated – an opportunity to represent themselves and their concerns more directly rather than being depicted by others. This marks a critical shift in traditional research relationships and specifically addresses some of the key concerns about perpetuating traditional hierarchies and power relations associated with representation. As Plummer (1996) notes:

“[Telling your story] under conditions of one’s own choosing is part of the political process”.

It also aligns to broader concerns with valuing multiple subjectivities as opposed to searching for objective ‘truths’ in research.

Rationale and benefits: Redressing traditional power dynamics

Considered together, these three characteristics mean that there is an underlying concern in all participatory research with issues of power. Specifically, this means a commitment to redressing some of the traditional power dynamics inherent within normative processes of research and associated dissemination activities: what Fals Borda defines as ‘bottom up’ approaches to knowledge generation (1982).

As a result, participatory research is unlikely to position itself as ‘politically neutral’ but rather actively seeks to addresses issues of social justice. As Pain notes:

“...one of the main benefits of participatory research... is its ability to forefront the perspectives of marginalized groups and actively challenge social exclusion with them.” (Pain, 2004)

Broadly speaking, the rationale for participatory research can be split into two themes: epistemological (or instrumental) and political (or moral). In epistemological terms, participatory research may be providing a means of accessing unique, original, and thus subjective perspectives which so far have only been held by those with direct experience of a phenomenon. This rationale suggests that participatory research approaches improve understanding of phenomena. In political terms, participatory research recognises that control of the production of knowledge and related discourses are fundamental acts of exerting power. This suggests a role for research in creating social change.

“...social spaces where people can make meaningful contributions to their own well-being and not serve as objects of investigation.” (Bernmayr, 1991)

Diversity and degrees of participation

Despite these shared characteristics, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of research practice that may be considered participatory. Participatory research takes on several guises and uses a range of diverse techniques. It is used in a range of research disciplines and settings, including, but not limited to, social geography; health research; applied social research; international development; child and youth studies and practice and community settings.

Another key aspect of this diversity is the degree to which ownership and control are transferred to different stakeholders – and specifically to those who have traditionally been the subject of research. This will vary both between research projects and within different aspects of the same research project. So, for example, a research project led by academic researchers may work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders during data collection and possibly analysis phases but have far fewer opportunities during the writing up or representation of that research. Alternatively, community-based organisations who employ a researcher to support their own work may lead and manage an entire research project and take control of how the findings are used. Equally, different individuals among the same stakeholder groups within a project will experience different levels of influence and control within the research processes.

History

Defining participatory research is supported by a basic understanding of its development and key influences. Broadly speaking, key influences on the development of participatory research are associated with a range of sources (Healy and Knapp, 2003), many of which originate from the global South. These include: community work and social pedagogy from Latin America (Freire, 1970); participatory rural appraisal techniques used in development work across the global South (Chambers, 1997; Boyden and Ennew, 1997); participatory action research (Fals Borda, 1982) and the ‘action research’ model from which it is derived (Levin, 1972; feminist research (McInroy, 2000). In addition, there are close parallels with the movement prompting service user involvement in health and social care research (Beresford and Carr, 2012). Considering these diverse influences, it is apparent that they share concerns with social justice; challenging traditional hierarchies involved in knowledge development; privileging ‘seldom heard voices’ within research processes and outputs; and creating social change.

Given the issues around the marginalisation and vulnerabilities associated with childhood, it is no surprise that a significant body of participatory research has concerned itself with children’s lives and involving children and young people in research processes. The development of children’s participation in research coincides with wider concerns with children’s participation rights as enshrined in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and subsequent policy and practice developments globally (Hart, 1997). It can also be linked to simultaneous thinking developed by the sociology of childhood (Lenns and Prou, 1990) which sought to highlight children’s agency and challenge ideas about children as passive “unknowing” subjects.

Defining children’s participation

In line with Article 12 of the UNCRC, one common definition of children’s participation (not specific to research) is: the right of all children and young people to be involved and influential in decisions about issues which affect their lives and those of their communities, in accordance with their evolving capacity. Other writers highlight a need to also focus on children’s influence and opportunities resulting from children’s involvement in decision-making (Gallagher, 2006). Similarly the UNCRC proposes the principle of “...[empowering] children as individuals and members of civil society, thus giving them the opportunity to influence their own lives.” (Save the Children, 2006)

Several frameworks have been developed to help assess and characterise children’s participation (Hart, 1992; Treseder, 1997; Landsovn, 2001; Sher, 2001 and Reddy and Ratta, 2002). All of these models share a concern with differentiating participatory practice by the degree to which children hold ownership and control. Lansdown and O’Kane’s recent framework for monitoring and evaluating children’s participation (2010) provides a broad and accessible summary of these degrees into three levels of participation: consultative; collaborative and child-led (see Figure 1 in the report). Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011) have mapped these levels onto the research process depicted diagrammatically (see Figure 2 in the report) – showing increasing levels of research involvement:

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

It is possible for children and young people’s participation to take place at several of these levels simultaneously within a single research project. Many writers (including Hart, 2009) stress a need to avoid viewing different levels of children’s participation as a ‘hierarchy’. Instead they highlight that different levels of participation are possible or appropriate at different times, depending on the capacity, interests and circumstances of individuals, the funders’ requirements, and resources available to the project. It is valid to recognise, however, that collaborative research and the facilitation of child-led research initiatives are undertaken more infrequently due to intensive resource requirements and more challenging power-sharing arrangements. Children’s involvement may take place during or part of all the research process including but not limited to the following activities: defining research questions; research governance and planning; data collection; analysis and reporting; and dissemination. Finally it is worth noting that an important consideration when thinking about children’s participation (as opposed to adult participation) both in research and practice is the interplay between children’s rights to participation and their rights to protection. While the UNCRC proposes the principle of “the indivisibility of rights” and highlights their mutual dependency, much has been written about the tension between protection and participation rights (Healy, 1998; Archard, 2004; Hinton, 2008; Healy and Darlington, 2009). In reality it would appear that a pragmatic approach is often adopted that has tended to prioritise children’s protection rights above those of participation (Feinstein and O’Kane, 2008). There is evidence that this tension may be particularly pronounced in work addressing children and young people viewed as particularly marginalised or vulnerable.
REFERENCES:


Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011) Guidelines for research with children and young people. London: NCB.


APPENDIX C: ACADEMIC LITERATURE REVIEW

List of final inclusions after two stages of coding

Category 1: Literature on participatory research methods, children and young people and sexual violence (or other relevant marginalised groups/issues)

DATABASE: ASSIA


DATABASE: NSPCC Inform


DATABASE: International Journal of Qualitative Methods


DATABASE: Sage Premier General


DATABASE: Reflective Learning in Action Research


DATABASE: Social Index


DATABASE: DISCOVER


DATABASE: ASSIA


DATABASE: Sage Premier General


**APPENDIX D: RESULTS OF GREY LITERATURE SEARCH**

**Database:** Eurochild


**Database:** Participatory Methods


**Publications identified on ‘Participatory Methods’ that were no longer accessible:**


World Bank (n.d.) ‘Hear our voice: the poor on poverty.’
APPENDIX E: MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR EVIDENCE


APPENDIX F: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORMS

BEING HEARD: A scoping review to inform developing guidance for children and young people’s participatory involvement in research about sexual violence

The ‘Being Heard’ research project

The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire, has been commissioned to undertake a scoping review to inform developing guidance for children and young people’s participatory involvement in research about sexual violence.

The ‘Being Heard’ research project seeks to collect and review international evidence on young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence – including a consideration of the meaning, purpose, challenges and opportunities of doing so. It will then seek to apply this evidence base to the development of new draft international guidance to support researchers considering or undertaking participatory consultation or research with young people on sexual violence.

Interviews with key informants

As a professional with experience of conducting participatory research activities with children and young people to explore or address sexual violence, we would like to ask you to take part in a research interview as part of the review; whether or not you participate is entirely up to you.

The interview would last approximately one hour and take place at a time suitable for you over the phone, via Skype, or in person. It would be semi-structured and cover questions such as:

- How is participatory research on sexual violence with children and young people conceived and defined?
- What is/is the rationale(s) for children and young people’s participation in research about sexual violence?
- What strategies or approaches have been used to support children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
- What challenges face researchers undertaking participatory research with children and young people on sexual violence?
- What are the key ethical issues emerging from children and young people’s participatory involvement in research on sexual violence?
- What are the benefits or contributions of participatory research methods in this field?

The interview would be audio-recorded and transcribed (with your agreement) to ensure we have an accurate record of what you have told us.

Use of information

All information that you share in the course of an interview will only be used for the purposes of the research project, unless you or someone else is at risk of significant harm if we do not pass that information on. When information is to be used publicly (e.g. in a publication or presentation) any information identifying you will be removed. Participants will be identified by professional grouping (e.g. ‘project manager’ or ‘researcher’), and not by name. You will have four weeks following the interview to withdraw your consent or retract any information you have shared, if you wish.

Notes of the interview will be transcribed, anonymised and securely stored in locked cabinets and password-protected computers. All original data (handwritten notes, recordings, etc.) will be securely destroyed 12 months after the completion of the project.

Complaints

If you are unhappy about how you are treated as part of the research, please get in touch with Dr Silvie Bovarnick (silvie.bovarnick@beds.ac.uk).

Further information

If you have any questions or require any further information about the research please do not hesitate to contact Dr Silvie Bovarnick (silvie.bovarnick@beds.ac.uk).

Please review the statements in the consent form below and if you agree with them and are happy to take part in an interview, please sign a copy of the consent form and return via email/post.
CONSENT FORM for key informant interviews

Please sign at the bottom of the page to confirm that you have read and agree with the following statements:

- I have read and understood the information sheet about the Being Heard research review.
- I understand that taking part will mean being interviewed by a researcher over the phone, via Skype, or in person for approximately one hour.
- I understand that taking part is voluntary and I can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that information from the interviews will be stored securely and treated confidentially.
- I understand that if I share any information about professional practice that raises concerns about significant harm to a child or young person (or vulnerable adult) this will be responded to by the research team in keeping with Keeping Children Safe standards (www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk) and information may be passed on to my manager or others responsible for safeguarding in my organisation.
- I understand that everything I say will be anonymised so that no one can identify me in the final report.
- I give my consent to be interviewed.

Signed:

Please print your name:

Are you happy for us to record the interview? ☐ Yes

All recordings will be stored securely, will not include your name, and will be destroyed 12 months after the project ends.

NOTE: If this form is returned by email, proof of signature will be obtained by printing a copy of the accompanying email and storing it with the completed form. Additional recorded verbal consent will be confirmed at the beginning of the interview audio-recording.

APPENDIX G: TOPIC GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

1. Introduction to self and relationship to research on sexual violence with children and young people (C&YP) (or closely associated issues)
2. Definition: What is your understanding of participatory research; what does it look like in practice?
3. Practice examples: Can you describe some of the participatory research initiatives on sexual violence with C&YP that you have been involved with (either as researcher; facilitator; research manager; funder; participant)?
4. Benefits: In your experience, what are the benefits of these types of research approaches in exploring sexual violence?
5. Limitations: What are the limitations of these research approaches in exploring sexual violence?
6. Strategies (or useful learning) for undertaking or enabling participatory research with C&YP to address sexual violence. Possible prompts:
   - a. strategies linked to particular research ‘stages’ – funding; planning; sampling; governance; data collection; analysis; reporting; dissemination, etc.
   - b. strategies linked to involvement of different research stakeholders: funders; participants; community organisations; research institutions; research audiences, etc.
7. Challenges (and associated useful learning) when undertaking or enabling participatory research with C&YP to address sexual violence. Possible prompts:
   - a. challenges linked to particular research ‘stages’ – funding; planning; sampling; governance; data collection; analysis; reporting; dissemination, etc.
   - b. challenges linked to involvement of different research stakeholders: funders; participants; community organisations; research institutions; research audiences, etc.
8. Ethical issues/dilemmas that have emerged in this work.
9. Resources: What do you perceive a researcher needs in order to support more work of this kind to take place (including practical guidance or toolkit type resources)?

APPENDIX H: PRACTICE RESOURCES

Blogs


Conference Paper


Manuals, toolkits and guidance


Training Packs


Webinars


Websites


Participate (n.d.) Participatory Research Methods. Available at: http://participatetoday.org/methods/


StoryCenter (n.d.) Available at: https://www.storycenter.org (Last accessed: 13 November 2017).


Videos


