

# Promising Practices Guide | HOPE Project



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# Introduction

The HOPE (Helping Ourselves Prevent Exploitation) project has recruited, trained and supported peer mentors with intellectual disabilities to develop and deliver workshops about sexual exploitation.

The initiative has been funded by the European Union's Daphne programme and has run from January 2017 to its planned conclusion in June 2019. The development of a Promising Practices Guide that identified good practice in relation to addressing sexual exploitation and/or peer mentoring in England or Bulgaria is one of the agreed outputs.

The HOPE project developed in response to the way in which sexual exploitation is largely unrecognised and hidden in terms of its impact on young people and adults with intellectual disabilities. The victims can be unaware that they are being exploited and this can be matched by families, friends and professionals failing to recognise, report or respond.

However, the UK Department for Education "Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition" (2017) confirmed that "any child, in any community, may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and all practitioners should be open to the possibility that the children or adults they work with might be affected."

The UK research report "Unprotected, overprotected: meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation" (Franklin, Raws and Smeaton 2015) identified that young people with intellectual disabilities were at greater risk of sexual exploitation because:

- ▶ They may lack knowledge or information about sex, relationships and how to keep safe
- ▶ Professionals, parents and families can falsely assume that young people with intellectual disabilities cannot be sexually exploited and do not need to learn about avoiding risks and keeping safe
- ▶ They may have a limited capacity to consent to sex
- ▶ They may have difficulties with communication and lack understanding of what is being said or done
- ▶ They are often isolated with few friends. Their desire for friendship and relationships can leave them vulnerable to clever abusers
- ▶ They can be very trusting and unlikely to believe that anyone would lie to them or cause them harm
- ▶ They can be susceptible to online grooming and exploitation through social media.

The research identifies that

"there is a recognised need to empower young people with intellectual disabilities so that they can recognise exploitation in general and disclose abuse but there also needs to be more preventative work through education, raising awareness of sexual exploitation and safety skills development."

The HOPE Project has been supported by BILD in England and by the Social Association St Andrew (SASA) as part of their outreach social work programme mainly with Roma Communities in Bulgaria. The European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) have been sharing the project's progress across Europe.

The specific issues relating to sexual exploitation in the marginalised Roma communities in Bulgaria are outlined in "Mobile work with children and young people of vulnerable communities – reaching the unreachable" Rizov (2016). These include:

- ▶ poverty and social exclusion leading to risky behaviour that includes paid sexual work, pimping and human trafficking for sexual exploitation
- ▶ early marriages and early parenthood
- ▶ girls leaving school at the end of primary school to be "hidden" at home before early marriage
- ▶ low reporting because of lack of trust and prejudice against existing health, social and legal services
- ▶ trained outreach workers are trusted and are critical to improving the reporting

The outcomes for the HOPE Project have focused on:

- ▶ reducing the vulnerability of women and children with intellectual disabilities to sexual exploitation
- ▶ developing peer led accessible learning programmes that promote an understanding of sexual exploitation through exploring good and bad relationships
- ▶ increasing the knowledge and confidence of the young people who take part in the workshops to recognise, resist and report any sexual exploitation
- ▶ providing learning for professionals about sexual exploitation co-delivered by peers with intellectual disabilities
- ▶ peer mentors developing transferable knowledge and skills in planning and delivering learning programmes
- ▶ disseminating the results and providing tried and tested resources for replication and roll out

The HOPE Project has delivered these outcomes by:

- ▶ recruiting, training and supporting peer mentors to develop and deliver accessible awareness training workshops
- ▶ identifying schools, colleges and youth clubs to host training workshops and subsequently supporting the young people to complete their individual workbooks and action plans
- ▶ supporting the peer mentors to develop and deliver workshops to improve the knowledge and responses of professionals to sexual exploitation
- ▶ ensuring that all of the resources that have been developed will be freely available for replication
- ▶ developing a Promising Practices Guide which will share good practice taking place in Bulgaria and the UK.

The project has resulted in an increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of sexual exploitation and its potential impact on the lives of young people with intellectual disabilities.

This has been for the following groups:

- ▶ young people with intellectual disabilities aged 14 to 25
- ▶ Frontline staff and managers in schools, colleges and services supporting and working with young people with intellectual disabilities
- ▶ specialist multidisciplinary professionals
- ▶ peer mentors

This Promising Practices Guide will include key findings from our research together with key recommendations from what has been learnt. We are including examples of Promising Practices from Bulgaria and England that were identified through a call for such initiatives. These have been called Promising Practices because there is still room for further development and upscaling.

The Guide includes new initiatives in the following three areas:

- ▶ Positive ways of working with young people and adults with intellectual disabilities who have been victims or perpetrators of sexual exploitation
- ▶ Supporting young people and adults with intellectual disabilities to stay “safe” with an emphasis on understanding good and bad relationships
- ▶ Recruiting, training and supporting mentors with intellectual disabilities to share their knowledge and personal experiences with their peers



## Facts and Figures

The identification of children and young people with intellectual disabilities who have been subject to or at risk of child sexual abuse is limited in the research evidence.

The World Health Organisation's report on "Violence against adults and children with disabilities" (2012) found that "Children with mental or intellectual impairments appear to be the most vulnerable with 4.6 times the risk of sexual violence than their non-disabled peers."

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights published a report in 2015 titled "Violence against children with disabilities: legislation, politics and programmes in the EU." This confirmed that "girls and boys with disabilities are more likely than their peers to experience violence, sexual abuse and bullying in schools, at home and in institutions across the European Union." The report identified that children with disabilities are often excluded from being taught how to identify risks and how to respond to abuse, violence and exploitation.

In the UK, a study conducted by the NSPCC (Miller and Brown 2014) found that young people with a disability are three times more likely to be abused than young people without a disability. Sullivan and Knutson(2000) examined the case records for 50,000 young people in Nebraska, USA and found that disabled children and young people are 3.4 times more likely to be abused than their non-disabled peers.

The European Union Framework for National Roma Integration strategies (2014) identified that women from Roma communities tend to face multiple discrimination. "Not even in the margins: who are the Roma with Disabilities? (Szporluk ECMI study no 8 Feb 2016) asserts "there does not seem to be sufficient recognition that a disproportionate number of Roma are also persons with disabilities, that they face additional barriers, and that they are entitled to exercise their rights on an equal basis to others."

In England, the Department of Education defined Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in February 2017 as " a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or a young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology."

The Department of Education's advice (2017) confirms "what is clear is that child sexual exploitation can occur in all communities and amongst all social groups and can affect girls and boys." The Health Working Group Report on CSE (2014) confirmed "the presence of a learning disability can heighten the vulnerability of a child or young person to CSE."

The factors that limit the amount of information about prevalence include:

- ▶ The majority of CSE is hidden from public view
- ▶ Victims are encouraged to keep what is happening secret
- ▶ Young people with intellectual disabilities are not seen as being sexually active
- ▶ Lack of understanding of CSE and/or intellectual disabilities by professionals
- ▶ Grooming means that victims do not realise or recognise that they are being exploited

The Joint Serious Case Review Covering Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adults with needs of care and support in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Spicer 2018) asserted that

“..any child, in any community, may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and all practitioners should be open to the possibility that the children or adults that they work with might be affected.”

The review asserted that “all children and vulnerable adults are at risk” and that “sexual exploitation is not restricted to child victims: vulnerability is not determined by age and it is likely that extensive abuse of vulnerable adults is taking place across the country unrecognised.”

The Joint Serious Case Review (2018) emphasised

“...understanding the prevalence of sexual exploitation requires assuming it is taking place and adopting a pro-active approach to look for it, recognising that the most reliable source of information is from the victims and those targeted.”

Research shows that disabled children are less likely to disclose abuse and more likely to delay disclosure than their non-disabled peers (Herskowitz et al, 2007). Boys may be less likely than females to disclose experiences of CSE and less likely to have these identified by others.

The Newcastle Joint Serious Case Review indicated that “sexual exploitation of boys and men is complex and hidden with different models to those identified with female victims. The low incidence of identified cases is likely to be a significant under-representation of the abuse that is occurring.”

The Europol report on Trafficking in Human Beings in the EU (2016) reports that human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is the most commonly reported form reported. Victims are mostly women and girls from Central and Eastern Europe including Bulgaria.

The Annual Report of the National Commission for Combatting Traffic in Human Beings of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers (2017) identifies that:

- ▶ Trafficking for sexual exploitation is the main form in Bulgaria from 2014 – 2017
- ▶ Girls and women, most often of Roma origin, with low social status, low or no education are groomed for street prostitution
- ▶ There is often a lack of awareness by the victim of the possibility of human trafficking
- ▶ A significant number of the victims have specific needs including persistent and/or prolonged physical disorders and disabilities, mental disorders and/or persistent psychological/psychiatric disorders

The Report notes that there are many inter-related factors of vulnerability in Roma communities such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, risk of dropping out of school, low health literacy, segregation, difficult access to social and health services, disabilities, violence, drug abuse and household indebtedness.

In 2008 and 2010, the Bulgarian National Assembly approved two new strategic initiatives, namely the National Strategy for the Child 2008-2018 and the National Youth Strategy 2010-2020. The aim was to improve the quality of life of children and young people in Bulgaria. This included the improvement of sexual health of young adults in “ensuring children’s access in Bulgarian schools to up to date adequate scientific information on sexual and reproductive health issues, prevention of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, abuse of psychoactive substances as well as systematic health education aimed at building understanding of attitudes and skills for safe behaviour and avoiding risky health practices.”

In the schools, there has remained a reluctance to provide sex and relationship education which has been accomplished mainly with the help of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and largely outside of the school environment in youth structures or peer education clubs.

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre reports that Bulgarian children are increasingly at risk of being exposed to harmful internet content. Their 2016 survey identified that one third of Bulgarian children have communicated with a person that they have not met before offline.

“The most unsettling thing is that about 20% of the children have met live with people they first met on the internet.....for children over 15 years of age, on line introductions to somebody unknown has become the norm.”

In England, the Newcastle Joint Case Review (2018) asserts that

“Sexual exploitation could not happen on such a scale without mobile phones, the internet and social media being used to maintain contact with and control victims and arrange activities.”

The report “Digital Dangers – the impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people (Barnardos and Marie Collins Foundation 2015) identifies that

“certain groups of children and young people, such as young people with learning difficulties, appear to be vulnerable to online harm. This is in part due to seeking social interaction on-line that they are not able to achieve off-line and in part due to not fully understanding the consequences of sharing personal information, sending images or arranging to meet strangers met on-line.”

The report outlines specific issues in relation to autism:

“there is an increase in autistic young people being referred to us for internet harm. It seems the way they perceive the world and relate with others leaves them particularly vulnerable to be taken in by perpetrators and yet they can often be really savvy in manoeuvring themselves around the net.”

The UK Safer Internet Centre 2016 survey of 1,512 children and young people aged 13 -18 found that

- ▶ 24% said they had experienced online hate because of their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability or transgender identity
- ▶ Children and young people with disabilities are more likely to have experienced this – 38% compared to 21% of those with no disabilities



# Bulgarian Practices

## EARLY MARRIAGES PREVENTION

### Center for interethnic dialogue and tolerance Amalipe

#### Description

The AMALIPE promising practice is a part of the project: *'Early Marriage – Culture or Abuse?'*. The project was approved and awarded an action grant under the call for proposals in the framework of the Daphne III Programme (2013) of the European Commission (DG Justice).

In compliance with one of the priorities of the call “violence linked to harmful practices” the main objectives of the project are focused on exploring the sociological aspect of the Roma view on early marriage; early detection of the problems in the Roma community; as well as educating teachers, Roma representatives, experts in the field of social work, counselling and health care, NGO's and the police on how to act as a mediator at the occurrence of early/ forced marriage. Furthermore, an education prevention program was developed to raise awareness among schoolchildren on topics like reproductive health, cultural diversity, violence, peaceful resolution of conflicts.

#### Outcomes and Results

The project contained the following dimensions:

- ▶ Sociological research “Early Marriage: Culture or Abuse?”
- ▶ 300 members of the Roma community (including parents, extended family members, Roma activists) developed higher awareness on the topic and were presented with the notion that early / forced marriage is not a cultural norm; respectively getting an education and entering a later marriage is a more favourable practice that does not violate Roma culture, but rather contributes to its development.
- ▶ Close to 500 schoolchildren aged 12-14 received knowledge on reproductive health, sexual education and family planning, they also received encouragement to learn and acquire skills for constructive conflict resolutions; awareness of cultural diversity and modernization of Roma culture.
- ▶ 25 Roma mediators were trained in early problem detection (problems within the Roma community).
- ▶ 50 representatives of the local public services (schools, social services, health community centres, police, others) and NGO's were trained in necessary knowledge on how to act as a mediator.

In recent years they observed a receding tendency in civil unions between minors. This tendency is attributed to the field work among the Roma community, which is carried out by Roma moderators, who are trained to do multifaceted field work to prevent early / forced marriages, and to react in such cases.

The other reason for the encouraging trend is that after 2010 the authorities/institutions started actively engaging in cases of such marriages, along with the moderators. A research within the Roma community in Veliko Tarnovo region, was carried out within the project, regarding the tendencies and attitudes towards the early marriages. It categorically confirms the tendencies detected in 2010, as well as the changes within the Roma community. For example more than 50% of the participants in the study stated that children should complete their secondary education, before creating their family.

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## TRANSIT CENTRE AND EDUCATIONAL PREVENTIVE WORKSHOPS

### Animus Association Foundation

#### Description

The Animus Association Foundation is managing a Transit Center for Victims of Trafficking, especially of sexual exploitation. The Foundation also implements specially designed workshops for disadvantaged children and adolescents with the purpose to prevent Trafficking in Human Beings for Sexual and Labour Exploitation.

#### Outcomes and results

- ▶ For 3 years the Programme Transit Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation at Animus Association supported over 170 people. The Centre has the capacity to accommodate 6 persons for up to 6 months. All victims received prolonged psychological and social support and some victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation have been accommodated in the Centre for a period of up to 6 months. Those in need were offered medical help, particularly for those who have mental disabilities or psychiatric problems. All victims were referred initially from all European countries, and the assistance and support given by Animus Association started in the country of identification for the victim, through the Animus Partner's network.
- ▶ The Educational Preventive workshops have been implemented for 3 years since 2015. Over 80 socially disadvantaged teenagers were trained at 5 different social services in Sofia. At the end of the training, all of the children were less vulnerable to the risks of sexual and labour exploitation as they had been thoroughly informed about the methods that traffickers use to solicit and groom their victims. The children now recognise the risk, what to be aware of and how to stay safe. Children were also taught on important social and life skills which will help them to stay safe.

## Challenges

When it comes to the success rate of the Transit Centre, the level of support that the victims receive varies from case to case, depending on their individual capacity. The holistic programme developed by Animus addresses all of the potential needs of the victims but having effective interaction with institutions and existing social services to support people with mental disabilities and disadvantages still remains a challenge. Long-term medical support for people with mental disabilities and their inclusion into the labour market is a daily unresolved challenge for both the individuals and for our team. While there has been an overall improvement in cooperation with the institutions during the period under review, the level of effectiveness remains unsatisfactory. Reintegrating people with mental disabilities remains an unresolved issue. The lack of sustainability and durability of the services they are being offered makes them vulnerable to recurring sexual and labour exploitation.

When it comes to the Educational workshops, the direct and prolonged contact with the children and adolescents has resulted in the building of trust and self-confidence in the children, and an understanding that they are valued. However it proved challenging to organise and coordinate the delivery of the training with the directors of institutions and social services who, in turn, did not always motivate or encourage the children and youths to participate. In addition, the inconsistency of response from some of the children remained a challenge to the very end. However, this could be understood given the medical and social challenges that these young people have to deal with on a daily basis. Additional challenges experienced were the insufficient preparation and lack of general information and knowledge on the topic of sexual exploitation of staff in the institutions visited and social services.

A major challenge is the continuation and sustainability of these activities that have been funded as short term projects as there is no state funding for the prevention and training for these specific vulnerable groups!

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## SELECTED GOOD PRACTICES FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING OF YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING VULNERABLE ONES

### Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association (BFPA)

#### Description

The Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association (BFPA) focuses on advocacy, and on information and education activities for the whole community, but with a particular emphasis on young people. The organization runs comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care clinics in Sofia and other cities. The clinics function as training centres for health personnel and social workers. BFPA is working in close partnership with the government on a project designed to extend these facilities to other parts of the country. Health and sexuality education sessions for 14-19 year-olds, and training courses for teachers are key parts of BFPA's activity, as well as peer counseling. Programs have been adapted to reach marginalized young people, particularly in the Roma community.

#### Outcome and Results

The association opens up the discussion on trafficking and sexual exploitation through an animated short film 'Two Little Girls' (2011). After the project's conclusion the film Two Little Girls leads its active independent life - it has been shared hundreds of times, it has been viewed multiple times on our YouTube channel, it has participated in film festivals and it has provided a topic for discussion on trafficking in many schools. The association also published a set of handbooks. The handbooks are uploaded to their site; the trainers, who were trained by them continue to spread knowledge; they include the described elements in other target group trainings and they try to promote the described approaches in new target groups, new regions and for new audiences. In 2014, supported by the Rutgers Foundation, they published handbooks for parents, youths, and professionals, titled „Just like the others“. Experts unequivocally define the interactive exercises presented in the handbooks as well-working and meaningful. The exercises also seemed interesting to the parents. They are currently integrating interactive training exercises for peer educators by adapting content to the required goals. As a rule, according to the professionals and youths they train, interactive exercises are well accepted and working.

Learning Action Partnership is part of the BFPA project 'The art to inform' (2013-2018, work is to be continued). The Learning Action Partnership (LAP) is a network for exchange of ideas and implementation of good practices, and it strives to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. LAP was developed within a BFPA project, funded by the OAK Foundation. Good practices and ideas on prevention of child sexual exploitation, which arose from the partnership exchange, tend to find funding in different ways - through another donor, or through integration into some appropriate related project. In this sense, the LAP continues to exist as a network with good sustainability.

Throughout the Keep me Safe project they trained several groups of professionals who work with young people with special educational needs, as well as one parent group. However, they did not work directly with special needs people. The trained specialists join them for further upgraded trainings on related topics, which is how they are useful to their work. This is a kind of thematic sustainability and they stay in touch with each other. Follow-up trainings are funded by our other projects.

## Challenges

The challenges they face are mainly that the topics they tackle are still, more or less, a taboo; thus parents are often excluded throughout the work with children and pupils.

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## PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE THROUGH YOUTH PARTICIPATION

### Gavroche Association

#### Description

The teenage character of Victor Hugo gives the name of the Gavroche association – non-governmental, non-profit and non-religious organization, which was established for the sake of care for homeless children. The association looks after small homeless street children in the city of Varna and the region of Varna. That is why they chose one of the first drawings of Victor Hugo from his manuscript about “Gavroche and Kozette” as their symbol. “Gavroche” tries to kinder the good energy of the public and involve it in a campaign for protecting children’s rights. Because all Bulgarian children, regardless of their social, ethnic and religious background, deserve warmth and shelter.

#### Outcomes and results

The association conducted group sessions for prevention of sexual violence - the groups were a mixture of young people from social institutions, including people with mental disabilities; and young people without problems who grew up in a family environment. The focal point in these discussions was that the young people were *actively involved* in addressing the topic of violence, particularly sexual violence. The group work focused on discussions, case studies in smaller groups; it included watching video interviews with young people affected by sexual violence in different countries across Europe, getting familiar with stories of public figures, who are assault survivors. The group work also involved the youths designing their own ideas and key messages, and fostering their creativity.

In the process specialists were facilitators - they provided solicited information and advice, provided work materials, and ensured a secure environment; still the leading role was for the young people who talked about topics from their experience and context, discussed ideas and agreed on common products – such as messages on violence, prevention, and consequence; as well as visual reproduction through photos that were distributed among peers, among other services and on the Internet.

The young people outlined the causes and risks of violence, summed up what prevented them from talking and sharing. Blending youngsters brought up in institutions with young people without problems who grew up in a family environment has enabled everyone to learn that they are not so different and that they can work together. Young people who have grown up in social institutions and have deficits, find it harder to understand their rights, and are accustomed to have their views ignored. During the sessions, they were given the opportunity to express themselves freely, to initiate and lead activities, which was a new experience for them. The final product were 20 photographs conveying experienced pain, or the offered support and sharing – in short the young people's perception of the world of violence. The photographs were connected to key messages addressed to peers, citizens and people who determine the country's policies. There was enhanced knowledge about the ways of getting involved in sexual abuse, and falling victim to it. Created were opportunities to express and spread messages, for group communication and teamwork.

## Challenges

Changing attitudes is difficult. It is also a challenge for the specialist to withdraw and leave the process to be led by the participants; to provide guidance and support when asked; and not to impose definitions resulting from experience and specialization.

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## POPULAR OPINION LEADERS TRAINING – A SUCCESSFUL METHOD FOR COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

### Health and Social Development Foundation (Hesed)

#### Description

yMIND (Youth Migrants'/Minorities' Inclusion, Non-violence and Diversity Education) is an innovative project that promotes better social inclusion of newly-arrived migrant and Roma children and youths through comprehensive diversity education, both in school and in community-based settings. The promising practice presented here builds on their experience in providing community-based educational services in an informal educational setting, and uses work methods for closed/remote minority communities.

## Outcomes and Results

The model they offer for implementation in non-traditional educational environment is the Popular Opinion Leader (POL) - Training of leaders of Social Networks. The model has proven its effectiveness in altering behavioural characteristics among closed communities, such as the Roma, and has achieved promising results. POL identifies and trains the popular individuals – those who enjoy approval in their friendly circles - to act as trainers within their social networks to influence effective and lasting behavioural change. POL is based on the Social Diffusion Theory or Diffusion of Innovation Theory, according to which behaviours typically follow adoption by opinion leaders and then spread through a social network: new behavioural traits can be formed when a sufficient number of popular personalities, whose opinions are appreciated by other community members, are involved in the imposition of a new value. The influencers and the leaders of opinion are individuals whose opinion and beliefs determine the views of others - they account for about 10-15% of each population.

Initially, the POL model was adapted within the framework of the yMIND Project, funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ Programme. After the adaptation period, within the same project, key professionals of Hesed, have been trained to work after this model. They continue to use it in their youth work as part of a social service called Centre for Street Children, delegated by the municipality of Sofia. Naturally, as the scope expands, we are continually looking for additional funding from European Union Projects, and from private and corporate donors.

For the purposes of the yMIND Project, the popular opinion leadership training was adapted to the issue of gender-based violence (GBV), focusing on attitude changes regarding such violence in the community. Within yMIND, POL was implemented in three large Roma communities, involving over 80 individuals whom young Roma people believe and tend to follow. This has given a boost to the attitudes and behaviour of young Roma, both male and female, with regard to gender-based violence (including sexual exploitation).

A key factor for a successful approach is the selection of leaders for the peer groups. These young people must be part of an innate friendly circle - others in this circle should trust and follow them. At the same time these individuals should have an interest and desire for change. In the process of adaptation of the methodology, we brought in young boys, who were popular among their peers and who exhibited aggressive behaviour. The next youngsters we invited also had leadership positions, but did not owe their popularity to aggressive behaviour. These were the people who became agents of change.

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## MY BODY - RESPECT AND SELF-RESPECT

### PULSE Foundation (Foundation for Positive skills of the person in the society)

#### Description

The Prevention of Violence Against Children Programme started as part of a pilot project of the PULSE Foundation as early as 1999; The programme aims at sensitizing children, parents, educators and their social circle about protection of their rights and the protection of their personal boundaries. The 20 years of experience and hundreds of seminars conducted by the PULSE Foundation team, created a **good practice** for working with specific target groups: it was tried and deemed effective over time. The Bulgarian team built on the main message of the book: “It’s My Body” has been written to help adults and preschool children talk about sexual abuse together in a way which minimizes embarrassment/difficulties and fear, but emphasizes self-reliance and open communication.

#### Outcomes and Results

Membership in National Network for Children (NNC) and The Alliance for protection against gender-based violence is the platform for the circulation of the results and expertise among NGO specialists in Bulgaria. It is important to note that in June 2015 the PULSE Foundation was elected regional coordinator of NNC for Southwest Bulgaria and our representative joined the Alliance’s Governing Council/board. These positions allowed for a broader dissemination of the work among organisations and institutions in the region and at national level, as well as for a better knowledge of several organizations working in the sector of child protection. PULSE Foundation is a base for training and interning of university students in the region.

In order to reach a wider audience, all the published materials on the project are available on the organisation’s website. In social networks, they regularly share information and photos about the project’s implemented activities. Another venue to spread the results of our work is through the coverage that the PULSE Foundation activities receive from local, national and international media.

#### Challenges

From what they have done so far they derived the conclusion that they need to increase the team’s efforts towards prevention. In the future, their team plans to work with increased intensity in kindergartens and schools. Strong efforts should also be directed at educators/teachers and school authorities. The experience we have gained with the implementation of The Prevention of Sexual Violence Against Children Programme is the basis for present and future activities in schools and kindergartens that are to build up on their work thus far.

Another key conclusion comes from their work with professionals - Child Protection Services, police, court, prosecution and others: It is necessary to continue to hold regular trainings, round tables, forums, case conferences, etc. which sensitize the professionals to the issues, and offers the environment for joint, coordinated and purposeful work in the best interests of the child.

After the successful transfer of the work model to the town of Dupnitsa and Blagoevgrad, and due to the need for outsourced activities in small towns and villages, they are convinced that this kind of work will continue to be a model for the PULSE Foundation in a wider geographic scope. The established and ongoing partnerships with the Know-How Centre for Alternative Child Care at New Bulgarian University, as well as with the Knowledge, Success and Change Association are extremely valuable for the effective implementation of a comprehensive regional program for children's rights protection and support for the victims of violence.

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## PREVENTING THE TRAFFICKING OF PEOPLE (Prevention of trafficking in human beings) FROM THE ROMA COMMUNITY, INCLUDING PREGNANT WOMEN FOR THE PURPOSE OF SELLING BABIES

**Co-Participation Association (Sauchastie) in partnership with the Municipality of Varna (Preventions Directorate)**

### Description

The organisation provides field work in Roma neighborhoods by community outreach workers. They provide social and psychological support, crisis interventions, case management with young people and families vulnerable to grooming and/or exploitation. They offer structured work with families and groups, work with other community representatives to increase their sensitivity to the problem. And they work with representatives of the institutions working with the community, to overcome the stigma attached to the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. They have established a local partnership network between the above-mentioned institutions for prevention and caring for survivors/victims of sexual exploitation.

### Outcomes and Results

As part of the project a total of 20 extended families (including neighbors and friends) were consulted. The 20 extended families targeted by the project, belonged to the poorest population of Maxuda (living quarter in Varna) and Kamenar (village in Varna municipality), and their family history included a precedent related to women trafficking for child-selling, or other types of trafficking. Approximately 1000 people were exposed to the project's information campaign. Of these, short information sessions were held in small groups for a total of 88 people. Individual counseling was conducted with 54 people with risky behavior; case work was conducted with 22 families. At present, there is a tendency to reduce the incidence of trafficking in women for the purpose of child-selling in the Roma neighborhoods of Varna.

The work on selective prevention of sexual exploitation focused on families vulnerable to trafficking of pregnant women. But this preventative work required high trust and confidentiality, as families and clans were highly sensitive to the topic. The field contacts with these groups of families happened among complex and intertwined relationships of kinship, friendship and neighborhood. The process usually started from the family's outmost circles, through the more distant relatives and acquaintances of endangered families and mothers, until the team's messages eventually reached the most vulnerable family members. In Roma ghettos the problem of baby-selling has invoked sensitivity and proactivity among the settlements' larger groups of families and young people, who would otherwise show a higher tolerance to the problem of "human trafficking". The trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation continues to be an extremely serious problem for the Roma ghettos, albeit changing, and shifting into "softer" manifestation. To some extent this shift further complicates the preventative work—as it now needs to be systematic and wide-ranging with regard to a wider variety of interrelated risk behaviors.

The project was financed by the Municipality of Varna and the Bulgarian National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Upon observations that the cases of trafficked Roma women for the purpose of child-selling were decreasing in the Roma settlements in Varna, the funding was suspended. Currently the work model is being implemented as a component of programmes for prevention of trafficking in human beings from the Roma community; these programmes are financed by project funding.

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# English Practices

## Building Circles

### Description

Building Circles works to transform lives of people with learning disabilities, encouraging friendships and providing a social platform so that those who are isolated or lonely benefit as much as everyone else. They believe everybody deserves the opportunity to have and make friends.

### Outcomes and results

The organisation delivers training sessions to adults with learning disabilities to empower them to keep themselves safe from sexual abuse and exploitation. Training is bespoke and designed to meet the needs of the individual(s) to be trained. In addition, they deliver training to adults with a learning disability in the following crucial areas:

- ▶ basic sex education
- ▶ financial abuse prevention
- ▶ internet safety, and racism/discrimination training
- ▶ relationship training.

To date they have trained over 1000 adults with a learning disability and had overwhelmingly positive feedback. They have had many disclosures which isn't good but shows the project is working. Some historical and some current so they have been able to ensure service users remain safe from further harm.

In addition, service users have felt empowered to understand abuse and what to do to prevent it. They employ co-trainers with a learning disability and have given paid work experience to 8 adults with a learning disability to date.

Employing co-trainers with a learning disability has been a huge success, enabling them to go on to other paid work. Adapting the training to suit all levels of ability and concentration, formulating strategies and working with key staff to ensure the training is delivered in the best way for service users increasing the training packages offered to meet the demands of service users.

Training adults with more complex learning disabilities and ensuring the most vulnerable service users are kept safe from abuse. This has been overcome by working closely with staff and key workers and they have introduced a staff training package to help with this. Engaging adults with learning disabilities is sometimes an issue. By having the training fun and informative attendance is good.

Gloucestershire county council funded the work. Some income came from selling other training packages out of the county and within Gloucestershire. This training as well as their other training packages are available to purchase at a small fee to cover costs. Training can be delivered to staff, groups of adults with learning disabilities, one to one sessions etc.

## Challenges

Keeping the most vulnerable adults safe from abuse is an ongoing challenge and issue. Non-verbal and service users with learning disabilities are often most at risk so this continues to be a challenge.

\*\* Please note that Building Circles also offer an array of other services all based around friendship, preventing social isolation/loneliness and keeping adults with LD safe from harm \*\*

## The Chatterboxes

### Description

The Chatterboxes is a youth action project run by young people with disabilities aged 11-25 years old. Their main aim is to raise awareness of disabilities and create a community which is equal for all whilst being surrounded by friendship and laughter. Within all groups there is a focus on transitions and supporting members to build skills to help them in the future. Activities include cookery, safety workshops, arts and crafts, film making, magazine design and much more. AQA Awards are also completed by members as well as using a peer mentoring scheme throughout the projects where older members mentor younger members. They train mentors to support other members within the group, providing a safe environment where they can share their knowledge and personal experiences. The main Chatterbox Project is currently funded by The National Lotteries Reaching Community Fund.

### Outcomes and results

The Chatterbox Project has trained a total of 18 young people as mentors in the last year (June 2017- June 2018). They have also provided them with AQA Peer Mentoring Unit Awards; enabling their achievements to be formally recognised. Young people have redesigned and developed a peer mentoring package specifically for other young people with disabilities which can be used in schools and other youth settings: Designed by current Chatterbox peer mentors, it is youth friendly, uses lots of visual tools and is designed to be delivered by young people for young people. They have improved their confidence and self-esteem by becoming peer mentors. They have developed their leadership skills by attending peer mentoring training. Peer mentors within the group have regular informal meetings with the Peer Mentor Co-ordinator to evaluate their individual progress and needs as well as providing regular peer mentoring training refreshers.

Within the project, they use to follow a one to one peer mentoring approach but after observation and evaluation by both young people and staff, it was decided that a more favourable approach for the Chatterbox Project was to have peer mentoring within a group setting. Bearing in mind that there are various sessions on a weekly basis of a two hours duration and they are always busy developing transitioning skills (i.e. cooking, budgeting, etc), designing easy read, disability and youth friendly materials (i.e. leaflets, posters and website content and layouts for various organisations) and providing experiences and expertise to ensure services, buildings or publications meet the needs of disabled young people, it was quite challenging to fit the development of the peer mentoring package within the sessions.

## Challenges

Ongoing challenges and issues are future funding, selling the bespoke package to generate income, and empowering young people to deliver the training themselves whilst ensuring they get the right balance and don't overwhelm the young people. The YMCA Youth Department is an approved provider of training through the 'Peer Mentoring and Befriending Foundation'. They have used this experience to train young people within the wider youth department. Within the Chatterboxes they have used this experience to train young people as peer mentors to support younger members within the project, as well as in college and school settings.

**Keep Safe (ySOTSEC-ID/Safer IDD, Tizard Centre, University of Kent & Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Be Safe Service)**

## Description

Keep Safe is a group intervention for young people with learning disabilities who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour (initially 12 - 18 years, and following the Children and Families Act, now up to 25 years) and their parents/carers. The programme can also be delivered as an Individually Focused Family Intervention. It was developed, and feasibility trialled by a collaborative of practitioners, researchers and people with learning disabilities.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation, some University of Kent PhD time and other pro-bono input funded the development and feasibility trial. Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner and Safer Bristol Partnership funded the final Keep Safe manual and resources completion phase, supported the inaugural public Keep Safe training, and delivery of the feasibility group by Be Safe Bristol.

## Outcomes and Results

Engagement and completion rates were high for both Young People and Parent/Carers, including those with complex histories as both those who had harmed sexually and victims. Sexual knowledge alongside relationship and self-management skills increased, whilst harmful sexual behaviours decreased. From the feasibility trial, we learned that it is not always practical or appropriate to deliver Keep Safe as a group intervention, therefore guidance was developed for delivering Keep Safe as an individually-focused family intervention, as well as group delivery in the Keep Safe manual. The initial positive results and feedback have led to plans for an additional shorter, earlier, school-based intervention with parent/carer involvement "Keep Safe 4 All", hence funds are being sought for this in addition to funds for a larger, robust trial of Keep Safe.

Things that have worked:

- ▶ The integrative Keep Safe model and its accessible and engaging materials and manual from collaborative practice development
- ▶ the modular Keep Safe structure which builds skills across the intervention for the Young People and their Parents/Cares

- ▶ the evolving storyline of a character and their family context as an example
- ▶ the feasibility study demonstrated Keep Safe can be successfully delivered with promising feedback and outcomes.

the 2 day Keep Safe training gets positive feedback and enables practitioners to deliver in practice with 250 practitioners being trained to date from a broad range of professional backgrounds, with further training events planned.

## Challenges

- ▶ Securing funding for collaborative practice development and feasibility, delivering with substantial collaboration with people with learning disabilities against tight deadlines and budget
- ▶ integrating the practice and evidence base into a coherent, deliverable, UK focused intervention with accessible, engaging materials for young people and their parents/carers.

Securing funding for more systematic evaluation remains an ongoing challenge. Growing practice where, despite learning disabilities seemingly being high on policy agendas- in practice thresholds, austerity, institutional discrimination maintains health and social inequalities.

More Information: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/tizard/sotsec/ySOTSEC/ySOTSEC.html>; contact: Rowena Rossiter at [R.Rossiter@kent.ac.uk](mailto:R.Rossiter@kent.ac.uk) or Stephen Barry, Be Safe Service Clinical Team Manager at [stephen.barry3@nhs.net](mailto:stephen.barry3@nhs.net) or on 0117-3408700.

Malovic, A., Rossiter, R., & Murphy, G. (2018) Keep Safe: the development of a manualised group CBT intervention for adolescents with ID who display harmful sexual behaviours. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities and Offending Behaviour*, Vol. 9 Issue: 1, pp.49-58. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIDOB-10-2017-0023>

## Lincolnshire

### Description

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Children Services funded train the trainer workshops for special schools, colleges and other multi agency professionals. The training equipped professionals to work with pupils with SEND to build a positive attitude towards sexuality, wellbeing, keeping safe and the prevention of sexual exploitation. LCC also has three RSE programme officers to support schools in preparation for the implementation of statutory RSE curriculum in 2020. Special schools have been supported to ensure they provide an inclusive environment for young people by incorporating reasonable adjustments within their RSE Curriculum Planning. Other key priorities have included 'up skilling' the Children's Workforce to give them confidence to have sensitive conversations with young people, and supporting the Integrated Sexual Health Services to adopt the Autism Reasonable Adjustment Mark.

The initial Train the Trainer RSE Workshops were funded by Lincolnshire County Council through the Promoting Independence Project and Better Care Fund. Circles of Support continues to be funded by a charity who receives funding from Adult Care Services in Lincolnshire. RSE Programme Officers have been funded by LCC as part of the comprehensive offer to improve children and young people's health and care in Lincolnshire. Fixed term posts were created, to support schools over a period of two years.

## Outcomes and Results

RSE and Circles Workshops equipped sixty professionals including SENCOS, pastoral, safeguarding, teaching assistants, employment support officers and early help workers with required knowledge and confidence in speaking to young people about the difference between relationships and friendships as well sexuality, same sex relationships and consent. Circles training have assisted over eighty young people in the last year with plans for the future and having discussions about building relationships and keeping safe. Thirty young people have taken part in further RSE training. Fifty percent of schools have been audited to assess RSE provision and supported to develop curriculum for all pupils including those with learning disabilities. Five Transitions coordinators in schools and colleges continue to work in partnership with SRE Trainer. Primary, secondary and special schools have been audited to assess provision of RSE and, supported to develop a curriculum which is inclusive for all children with protected characteristics including those with SEND. Workforce training was extended to Barnardos, Social Workers, Early Help workers and Children Homes workers. Circles training enabled professionals to assist young people in writing person-centred plans and having discussions about building friendships and relationships.

## Challenges

Parents and carers are still an ongoing challenge in terms of their understanding of the importance of SRE in the prevention of sexual exploitation and the human rights of young people with disabilities to have the same opportunities as others, having the right to a sex life and having relationships if that is their wish. Priority given to RSE within the school timetable remains an on-going challenge, particularly in secondary schools. There is a distinct lack of uptake in secondary provision. A reluctance to engage young people with special educational needs and disabilities in discussions about sex relationships persists amongst some professionals and agencies.

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## Queen Alexandra College

### Description

This initiative focuses on developing and delivering inclusive accessible sex and relationships education for young people with learning, physical and sensory disabilities and/or autism. Queen Alexandra College (QAC) is a specialist college for young people aged 16-25 with a wide range of complex needs and disabilities. Its 280+ students are drawn from all over England and approximately 40 live in the residential accommodation provided at the college. The ethos and culture at the college is rooted in the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The senior managers have ensured the development and delivery of sex and relationship education across the college by recruiting a Personal and Sexual Health Education (PSHE) lead who combines a background of Special Needs Education and sexual health. She ensures that the college provides an ongoing sex and relationships programme to all students which includes all aspects of sexuality, sexual health, risk taking behaviour, online safety and managing relationship issues positively. In 2017, the PSHE team was strengthened by the recruitment of an additional member. He has acted as a positive role model for the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning) community in the college and as well as specialist mentoring he acts as the LGBTQ coordinator.

There are three specific initiatives as part of the college's PSHE initiative. These are:

1. SENSRE (Special Educational Needs Sexual Relationship Education): Training and mentoring provided for professionals who provide sex and relationships education and support to people with complex needs in a wide range of settings. Delegates pay to attend the courses. Organisations buy consultancy time. The PSHE team have also delivered in their own time at times.
2. SHPIG (Sexual Health Planning and Implementation Group): This is a multidisciplinary group of people from diverse backgrounds in the West Midlands who deliver relationship and sex education with young people with learning disabilities and autism. There is no funding for this group – it is seen as being of mutual benefit for its members
3. SPARK (LGBTQ+ alliance): This is a student led LGBTQ+ alliance based in Queen Alexandra College. There is no funding for the group, which exists as part of the college life. The group fundraises for anything they need.

### Outcomes and Results

SENSRE: Delegates who have undertaken the training feel more confident, engaged and prepared to provide sex and relationships education and develop supporting policies for their organisations

SHPIG: Currently working on a regional gap analysis of local schools to identify their needs in delivering relationship and sex education (RSE)

SPARK: Took part in partnership research with Coventry University's "Young, Disabled and LGBT+" project, identifying the challenges facing young disabled LGBT+ people growing up in Britain today. SPARK members took part in a presentation at the British Academy in February 2018 and are currently involved in writing a chapter of the forthcoming book about the project.

## Challenges

SENSRE: How to ensure that ongoing support is provided for the delegates to implement what they have learnt back at their workplaces.

SPARK: Maintaining momentum when key members of the group finish their courses and move on from the college.

## THE SPEAK OUT PROJECT

### Description

The Speak Out Project is an integral part of The Women Centre Cornwall's 'Community Engagement Programme' which aims to increase access to specialist sexual violence and domestic abuse (SV/DA) support services for women/girls with learning disabilities in Cornwall who have/are experiencing Sexual Violence, Domestic Abuse and/or Exploitation. The overall aim of the Speak Out Project is to: "Ensure Women and Girls with learning disabilities are empowered to recognise abusive relationships and when seeking help are treated with respect and dignity by all agencies."

Within this the "**DIVAS**" Peer Educator Programme has been developed. We commissioned ARC to work with the Women's Centre to develop a Peer Educator Train the Trainers programme to highlight the experiences and explain the vulnerability of women with learning disabilities to domestic abuse, sexual violence and exploitation. This 4-hour training programme was co-produced with Trainers with Learning Disabilities and focuses on the women's lived experience. Running alongside this the Women's Centre worked on advertising the project and recruiting women and girls with learning disabilities to train to become trainers and to develop the Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Programme to be delivered to professionals in Cornwall. The Women's Centre have funded the Community Engagement Project through the TAMPON TAX FUND which continues until March 2020.

### Outcomes and Results

This project is already beginning to achieve some of its key objectives. A Peer Education Model is being implemented in Cornwall (DIVAS). Women & Girls with Learning Disabilities are empowered and upskilled by developing their training and presentation skills, groupwork skills and life skills (DIVAS). A network to promote DA/SV awareness and DA/SV safe spaces is being created (Speak Out Advisory Group). Best practices to prevent, minimise and respond to abuse and harm is being shared (Speak Out Advisory Group/Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategic Group).

It has been an extremely positive experience for the Women's Centre (specialists in working with sexual violence, domestic abuse and exploitation) to co-produce a training programme with a specialist Learning Disability organisation (ARC). Also, as detailed above this project has benefitted the DIVAS group members and the Women's Centre staff and volunteers. Raising the profile of the need to prioritise extending support to this group of women. We have recognised the truth behind the statement "I am not hard to reach, generally people just don't know how to reach me"

## Challenges

There are some significant challenges to delivering a successful Speak Out project. Most pertain to any short-term funded project in Cornwall but are made more complex because of the additional needs of the women with learning disabilities. There is a need for additional funding to support the development of the peer educator project and the wider Speak Out Project. This will need to involve additional staff posts. Recruiting new group members whilst retaining current group members who wish to remain involved is also challenging.

# Key Themes

People with disabilities experience the same forms of physical violence, sexual abuse and molestation and neglect as the general population. However, they experience these abuses at much higher rates. For example, people with disabilities are victims of nearly 1 million nonfatal, violent crimes every year, including rape, sexual assault, aggravated and simple physical assault, and robbery. People with disabilities are also more likely to experience several less common forms of abuse. Unfortunately, in many cases, the victim knows his or her attacker. The majority of abusers are family members, relatives, caregivers, neighbors, classmates, educators or staff members assigned to support the person with disabilities.

All the promising practices selected try in their own way to help people with disabilities with the beforementioned problems. In many cases, sustainability from funding streams remains a challenge, and seems to be an ongoing struggle for each organisation working on the given subject. But the success rates of the projects show that the effort and contribution of so many organisations help to tackle the problem in a substantive way. When the young people who are targeted gain enough confidence to stand up for their own decisions, and possibly be trainers themselves, the taboos surrounding the topic can be overcome.

The Promising Practices were selected on the basis of 3 criteria:

1. They include positive ways of working with young people and adults with intellectual disabilities who have been victims or perpetrators of sexual exploitation
2. They support young people and adults with intellectual disabilities to “stay safe” with an emphasis on understanding good and bad relationships
3. They have an aspect of recruiting, training and supporting mentors with intellectual disabilities to share their knowledge and personal experiences with their peers. This will include the positive impact on both peers and mentors.



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