

# CSE Principles #1:

## We want and need services

**Young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) have made it clear that they need and value help from a range of services. This includes specialist CSE services which can provide a welcoming space where they will be listened to and where they can meet people who understand what they're going through. It also includes help from other services, like education, housing, youth work, counselling, health, children's social care and the police. All such services need to be accessible to, and work appropriately with, young people.**

"We are not [visiting the CSE service] to do anything other than talk about how we are, so it is taken a lot more seriously than when you are in school. Even when I did see a counsellor in school, it was about getting back to lessons rather than what was wrong...It makes me feel more comfortable knowing I have my worker I can talk to and be listened to."

**(Young person, 'The Alexi Project')**

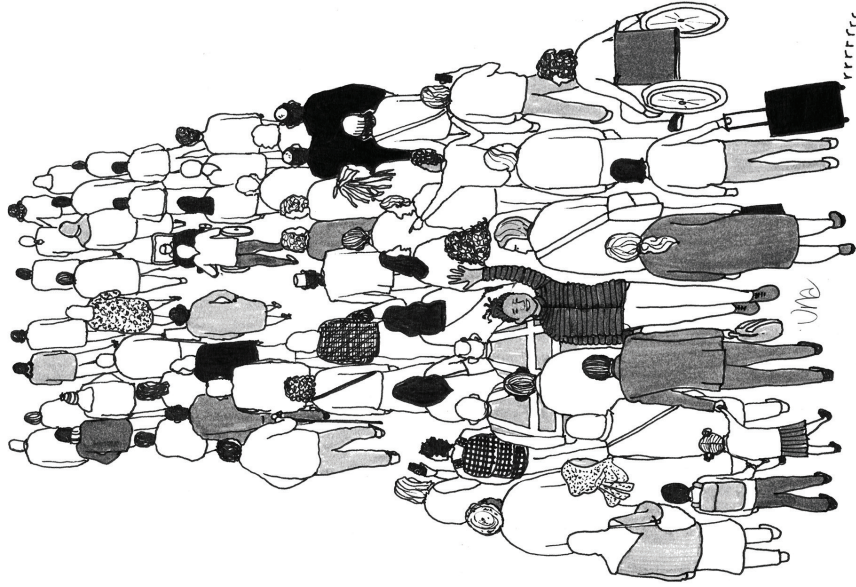
"If you're having to come [travel] this far, are there enough services?"

**(Young person, 'The Alexi Project')**

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This is one of ten principles for working with young people who are affected by sexual exploitation, created as part of The Alexi Project by the 'International Centre: Researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking' at the University of Bedfordshire. Comic illustrations were produced by Una and supported by the Young Researcher's Advisory Panel. To learn more and view the other postcards visit [www.alexiproject.org.uk](http://www.alexiproject.org.uk)  
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CSE Principles #2. Show us you care.



## CSE Principles #2: Show us you care

**There is a clear message from young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) that showing care is really important. This means having a compassionate attitude, but it also means demonstrating care through what is actually done: being kept informed about your case and having your needs noticed and met, for example. Young people value professionals who are able to display genuine understanding and thoughtfulness. Having boundaries is part of this – caring enough to have rules in place to protect a young person.**

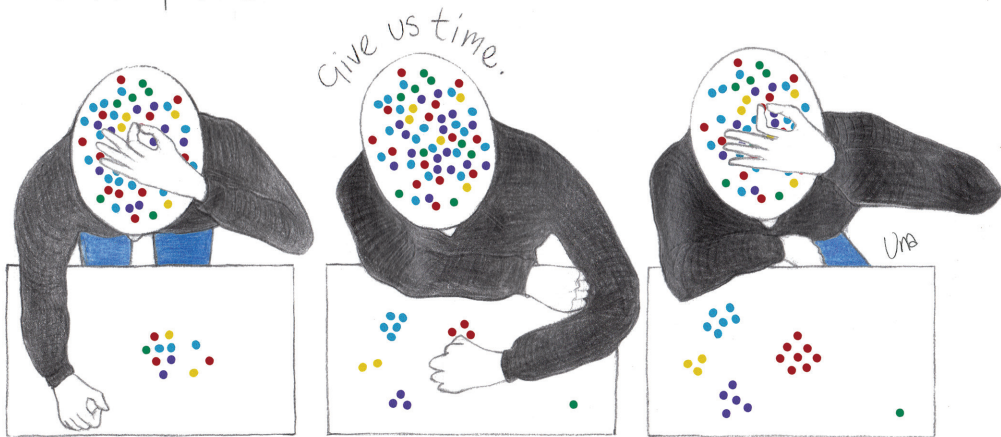
“They make you feel wanted; at home. If you ask for more help, they’ll give you it and they’ll not make you feel awkward for asking for it...They make you feel like you’re not putting anyone out. So you’re not wasting anyone’s time or anything. They’re always there for you.”

**(Young person, ‘Helping me find my own way’)**

“She [the foster carer] didn’t care to be honest. If I went missing, she’d say ‘Where you been?’ I’d say ‘Out’ and that would be it. She never asked any more questions. She should have convinced me not to, asked me ‘What’s up?’ Sat me down, asked me if I was alright, but she never did.”

**(Young person, ‘Barnardo’s Safe Accommodation Project Consultation’)**

# CSE Principles # 3.



We might have a lot of thoughts to process.

## CSE Principles #3: Give us time

**Young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) who come into contact with services are often worried and scared. Service procedures can be alien, confusing and overwhelming. Young people may have experienced rejection by other services, and feel anxious that they will not be believed, or that action will be taken that they do not want. Some young people experience pressure to disclose abuse, so it's essential to recognise the importance of taking time, and allowing young people to talk when and if they are ready. Talking about abuse, trusting professionals, recovering – it all takes time.**

*"Once you get a kid through that door, you know their past on a piece of paper, but you don't know about their rules, like their view. So, like, you've got to talk to them, you've got to sit down and think 'Mate, I'm gonna put time into this' and after a couple of months, like, they're open to you, they'd think 'All right, she's gonna stick around.'"*

**(Young person, 'Barnardo's Safe Accommodation Project Evaluation')**

*"I would have liked more time in these sessions and to have done them for a few more weeks. I would really like to do these sessions again. It's nice to talk in private and share my ideas."*

**(Young person, 'Out of the Box')**

Share information about us in a responsible and sensitive way CSE principle #4

**THINK!**  
Before you  
speak.



Una

## **CSE Principles #4: Share information about us and with us in a responsible and sensitive way**

**Young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) understand that professionals need to work together to help them, and that information about them will sometimes have to be shared. What they emphasise is that this information is personal to them. If information is shared inappropriately it is hurtful, can be damaging to young people, and shows a lack of respect for them as individuals with rights. It is important, wherever possible, to get permission beforehand, and only share information when it is necessary and appropriate. Sensitivity is also important when helping the young person access information about themselves.**

*"If I tell Lucia something confidential I want it to stay there – unless it's something really, really serious. It doesn't get spread round here [the CSE project]. It's like Peter [another project worker] won't know my details – he'll just know my name and who I am, whereas Lucia knows more about me... It's important because it's my life."*

**(Young person, 'Helping me find my own way')**

*"Here they say – 'Where do you want to read it? (her case file) Do you want someone there? Should we have a plan in case there is something that is written you don't agree with?...You could be upset'. Very considerate. Other services don't do this."*

**(Young person, 'The Alexi Project')**



You can tell me, you don't have to tell me...



CSE Principles # 5. Treat us with respect and give us choices.

## **CSE Principles #5: Treat us with respect and give us choices**

**Young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) value relationships with professionals that are characterised by care, respect and perseverance. Part of respecting young people involves giving them choices wherever possible. Choice relates to the everyday details of practice, such as where to meet a worker, what food and drink will be available and who will be present, as well as more significant decisions. In this way professionals can demonstrate their trust in the young person's ability to make choices, and acknowledge their respect for the young person as an individual.**

"She's been really helpful...I was kind of worried because I don't know what the police told her about my case... So then when she got here she was like, 'You can tell me, you don't have to tell me, I don't mind.'"

**(Young person, 'Children's Voices')**

"Sara was explaining what they'd do, and then said 'Well you can either go to the place where, like Sara's office is, or you can do them in college', and at first, because I didn't know Sara, I was more comfortable being in college with friendly faces and stuff, so that's where we carried on doing our meetings, at college, and we booked a room in the library, and that's where we go every Thursday at 11 o'clock, to do our meetings."

**(Young person, 'The Alexi Project')**

CSE Principles #6. Offer us opportunities to develop as people.



## CSE Principles #6: Offer us opportunities to develop as people

Young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) want professionals to recognise that they are more than victims, and have talents and abilities that can be developed. CSE is one part of a life story, and acknowledging this will help services treat young people as though they have a past, present and future. Development opportunities can involve being part of groups with other young people, as well as going outside of the service environment for trips and visits to different places. Creative methods like drama, music, art and poetry may all contribute to recognising young people's strengths, developing their resilience, self-expression and self-esteem and offering them new opportunities.

"The workshop that they give to us – afterwards they give us like interviews about it. So when we said 'this should be changed', 'that should be changed' – they said 'well why don't you deliver it?'...It was an amazing experience. It felt good because...the young people [that we delivered it to] thought it was better being delivered by us."  
(Young person, 'Helping me find my own way')

"A couple of weeks back I did interviews for a person here, for a new [member of staff] here and that just put me on cloud nine that because I thought - no-one's ever really trusted me that much before. I just felt that bit more responsibility and stuff...so it were scary – you know growing up a bit – but fantastic."  
(Young person, 'Helping me find my own way')



CSE Principles #7 Give us a voice.

## CSE Principles #7: Give us a voice

The act of communicating about their experiences can be therapeutic for young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE). However, their experience of services often involves being or feeling silenced, and lacking the opportunity or support to speak. Where these opportunities have existed – either through talking or writing or drawing – young people can identify instances where this led to action being taken on their behalf, or simply feeling listened to. Young people have also highlighted the importance of opportunities to ‘speak out’ to help others – they believe in the power of ‘voice’ to create change.

“Like the photography project - that helped me because when it comes to captions – I like writing and I... I didn't really speak about [sexual exploitation]. I didn't really do that. I just bottled it up and I needed to get it out in another way and I think if I hadn't have done it I think I would have just been bubbling it up.”

**(Young person, ‘Helping me find my own way’)**

“My social worker, yeah, when I had sommat to tell her, she wouldn't listen. She'd just keep going on and on about what she thought... Sometimes you're in that situation when they think it's all about what they're saying, like you don't get a word in edgeways. They've gotta think about how you actually feel telling someone about sommat serious an that”

**(Young person, ‘It's wrong...but you get used to it’)**

Well, it's only to be expected, really!

Nmmmm...



CSE PRINCIPLES #8 DON'T DISCRIMINATE.

## CSE Principles #8: Don't discriminate

**Young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) report different types of discrimination, relating to their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, the neighbourhood to which they belong, or perceptions of their family background or behaviour. They can also feel judged for being sexually exploited, and feel that these perceptions have informed professional reactions and responses. Sometimes this is reflected in negative, discriminatory language – expressed verbally or in written notes. Young people therefore feel strongly that professionals should think carefully about the way they talk about – and to – young people, and should question their assumptions about young people's behaviour.**

**"When you see young people on the streets don't call them attention seekers, don't call them prostitutes, see the bigger picture - why are they on the streets? Why don't they want to go home? Why do they want to stay out? See the bigger picture."**

**(Young person, 'DfE consultation')**

**"She [the police officer] tried to blame my upbringing for the people that I was associating with and stuff. She said because I grew up without my dad being there...I'd always had an older boyfriend to have a father figure, and she kind of like blamed me for what had happened."**

**(Young person, 'Making Justice Work')**



Try to make sure we see and talk to the same person.



CSE Principles # 9.

## CSE Principles #9: Try to make sure we see and talk to the same person

Young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) recognise that it is not always possible to work with the same person, but they are frustrated at having to repeat their accounts, and being passed to different workers or services. Meeting with and talking to the same person can help build up a trusting relationship, which can mean the young person is more able to talk about what is happening. This in turn can help keep them safe. Young people also highlight that being in contact with the same person is helpful for making sure they, and their family, are kept informed.

"Sometimes you have to keep retelling your story over and over again to different police officers because they keep switching and assigning different officers to your case."

(Young person, 'Making Justice Work')

"Let's say I'm the young person, I tell you something, yes I know you have to go tell your supervisor and everything, but let's say...the case gets passed on to different services. I think the key worker that was initially there should remain in contact with that young person so she doesn't feel like she's just told that person something, they've told someone else and now they've moved on."

(Young person, 'It's wrong...but you get used to it')

CSE Principles #10. Stay hopeful: Things can change.



## CSE Principles #10:

### Stay hopeful - Things can change

**While the accounts of young people affected by child sexual exploitation (CSE) contain many indictments of professional practice, they also contain praise and an acknowledgement that individuals can make a big difference. Where young people have received good support, they can identify how circumstances have changed for them. It is important that professionals believe things can change – that they persevere, and don't give up. That belief can become a source of hope for young people when they are going through very difficult experiences.**

"The police do an excellent job in keeping young people safe. They helped me find a safe place to stay and without them I never would have been here now. They have helped me understand that what happened was not my fault and that I was not to blame."

**(Young person, 'Children's Voices')**

"Because Tom [my worker] has had experiences with almost exactly the same situations as mine, he's taught me about what's happened – where they [the young people] are now and that's almost made me think, this isn't going to be forever. I can be a normal teenager... definitely Tom's making me think that I can get past this."

**(Young person, 'Helping me find my own way')**

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